

greater than the growth in the medium without toxin." This point is strikingly exemplified in our illustration on page 354.

OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM.

Now that ophthalmia neonatorum is a compulsorily notifiable disease, it may be hoped that the nature and seriousness of this disease may be appreciated, and that it will eventually be eradicated by attacking it at its source.

Ophthalmia of the newborn is a contagious disease of the conjunctiva, the membrane covering the eye and lining the eyelids, and its origin is usually irritation caused by purulent vaginal secretions of the mother which have been allowed to cling to the eyelids and reach the eyeballs of the infant.

Formerly it was the custom to speak of a baby having "sore eyes" or a "cold in the eyes," and many were the old wives' remedies applied to eyes in this condition, mother's milk, and saliva, amongst the number. Often midwives were unjustly blamed for carelessness in allowing the babies to catch cold, but now that the origin of the disease is better understood it is realised that the blame should not primarily be attached to the midwife, nor even to the mother who has been the medium for conveying infection to the child. Until the question of the infection of the mother is considered, and steps are taken to trace this infection to its origin, and to treat it at its source, ophthalmia neonatorum, leading, in severe cases, to ulceration of the cornea, and subsequent blindness, we cannot hope that the disease will be eradicated.

It is estimated both in this and other countries that half of those who are blind for life have lost their sight during the first week of life, which means that they are blinded by a preventable disease.

But, though the midwife cannot be justly regarded as the cause of the disease, she can, by careful management of her cases, prevent its development, and herein lies one of her greatest fields of usefulness, for what greater service can a midwife render than to preserve intact the sight of a child who would otherwise lose his sight?

Her first duty then, as soon as the child's head is born is to cleanse the eyes from all discharges and to wash the child's hands, so that he may not convey infection by rubbing. It is the custom of some medical authorities to advise the instillation of nitrate of silver as a routine practice, but others prefer to have the eyes washed out twice daily with boric acid lotion; keeping a close watch for the slightest indication of trouble. If a midwife is working in connection with a hospital she will, of course, follow its usual practice; if on her own account she uses her own discretion, bearing in mind her obligation under the Midwives Board to advise that medical assistance be sent for in the case of any discharge from or inflammation of the eyes, however slight.

THE QUEEN AND SCHOOLS FOR MOTHERS.

The matinée held at the Palace Theatre on February 24th, in aid of the Schools for Mothers in Fulham, Poplar, Shoreditch, and Stepney, at which the Queen was present, produced a profit of £769 2s.

The four schools will each receive a quarter of this amount.

THE MIDWIVES (SCOTLAND) BILL.

The Midwives (Scotland) Bill, introduced by Mr. Barnes this year into the House of Commons, is the same as that of which he took charge in 1912, the backers being as then, *i.e.*, Mr. Ainsworth, Mr. Arthur Henderson, Mr. Robert Harcourt, Mr. Duncan Millar, with the exception of Sir George Younger, and with Dr. Chapple in addition.

The Bill is an improvement on the English Bill, inasmuch as it provides for the appointment of two certified midwives on the Central Midwives Board for Scotland, appointed by the Privy Council, but inasmuch as the Board is composed of eleven persons this representation cannot be considered adequate.

The members of the Board are to be paid for reasonable travelling expenses, and the Board may pay the expenses of midwives required to appear before them, they may also compensate midwives who have been suspended while dis-infecting or while waiting for the decision of the Board, if the case is decided in the midwife's favour; the power of suspension during the period before the case is heard, and decided, and also for disciplinary purposes is provided for.

Forms and books are to be provided gratis. Payment of the fee of a medical practitioner called in, in emergency, on the advice of a midwife, is also provided for.

The Bill introduced by Lord Balfour of Burleigh into the House of Lords is substantially the same.

THE HOPE FOR THE FUTURE.

Mrs. Griffiths, wife of the Dean of Llandaff, who presided at the annual meeting of the Monmouthshire Training Centre for Midwives, held at the Maternity Home, Herbert Street, Newport, said that among the many special activities of the present day nothing was more splendid than the training of women for maternity work. In their social work sometimes they often found that within a stone's throw of the Hospital, where some wonderful cures were effected, there were slums and insanitary conditions of the worst kind, which tended to feed the hospital with patients. They loved the maternity work because it did such an enormous amount of good for the future.

Mrs. Pilliner urged that every child should be given a good start when it came into the world so that in the future it might become a strong and healthy citizen.

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