

The Midwife.

FLIES.

On Thursday, June 17th, Dr. Adkins, the County Medical Officer, gave an interesting lecture on "Flies" to the Exeter Branch of the Midwives Association and N.U.T.N. He began by saying that Miss Bell (Superintendent Q.V.J.I.N.) had asked him to get Dr. Golden to address them; that had proved impossible, and he had offered himself as a substitute. Just now, the fly is occupying a good deal of the limelight; in Parliament, in county associations, in local councils and committees, the fly and his doings seemed the subject of much discussion. The only person who did not consider the fly particularly was the householder, and he had perhaps most reason to plan a campaign against the fly and his tribe. Certainly a few years of careful planning and concerted action would make the fly an extremely rare insect. The householder should think of flies in connection with *infant mortality* and the *war*. At first sight there seemed little connection, but it is certainly a fact that many of the infants born die during their first year owing to the work of flies—in poisoning milk, and in carrying disease.

The war in South Africa was responsible for 20,000 invalids. Of these only one quarter suffered from wounds, the rest—15,000 were the victims of *typhoid* and *other fly-borne diseases*. That being so, we should all pause and think how necessary it is to do all we can now to prevent and prepare for the inevitable result of the tremendous battles now being fought.

To come to the fly himself—we have several varieties: those that bite, the blue bottle, the house fly. The blue bottle is easily noticed and makes much more fuss than he is worth, so to speak; it is, however, the house fly we have to consider. There are two varieties—the house fly proper, and the lesser house fly, one of the latter is found to 30 of the former.

The male house fly is comparatively harmless; he flies about and of course possesses the unpleasant characteristics of his kind; it is the female fly however that is our chief enemy. She loves to feed in dustbins and anywhere where filth and excreta can be found; then she finishes her repast, if possible, by a taste of the baby's milk or some sugar. The fly loves to gorge, and the typical "fly marks" on windows are the traces of its vomit and *feces*!! The female fly always chooses a dustbin to lay her eggs in, if possible. A warm, damp, dark place is the ideal. The lecturer was very insistent upon the necessity for catching the female and her eggs. She lays about 500 a month. Many people advocate a dustbin with a *tight cover*; Dr. Adkins suggests an *open* dustbin, provided that it can be emptied

and properly cleansed every week. By having an *open* bin, we know where the fly and her eggs are and they can be destroyed; whereas if the dustbin is closed to them, it is clear that the eggs are deposited in some other place, where we cannot find them and consequently more flies come! Flies in themselves are a sign of the presence of dirt in some form or other. Dr. Adkins gave some interesting stories about flies.

Recently he was inspecting a camp. It was lunch time, and he was struck by the fact that the horse bins were free from flies! He commented on this to a groom, who soon accounted for their absence. They had only gone to the officers' mess and would return shortly.

Then we heard of the small child who was told that God made everything, and that he was not to collect flies to give to spiders. The small boy remarked that God may have made the spiders, but that the devil must have made the flies, because it said in the Bible that Beelzebub was the god of flies.

Dr. Adkins now talked about the flies' natural enemies, the swallow and the marten, and he gave a practical hint that was probably new to everybody. He said that the swallow will never occupy a fouled nest, and that one should always destroy swallows' old nests, then they will come and build again.

In conclusion, various ways of curing the plague of flies were mentioned. Paraffin was said to drive them away, and there were endless kinds of fly papers. These, however, were not really much use, because only the male fly gets caught. The same remark applies to poison put down in saucers, and to the sticky fly leaves. The male gets caught while the female discreetly retires to the dustbin and lays a few hundred eggs. A teaspoonful of formalin in a pint of water is a good fly-trap. But the best thing to do is to keep the house quite clean, and then flies will disappear. People living in single rooms should make use of big brown paper bags for their refuse, leaving the bag open to entice the fly to lay her eggs, and then burning the whole.

Dr. Adkins then presented each nurse with a set of three leaflets, giving the life of the fly and an illustrated account of its disgusting habits. It was consoling to the audience to know that the good things provided for tea had been well covered during the lecture, nobody feeling anxious to meet any flies just then!

LECTURES ON BABIES.

Dr. Ralph Vincent regrets that he is compelled to abandon the Course of Lectures, the introductory one of which was delivered on June 8th, owing to his military duties.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)