

# The Midwife.

## THE CARE OF THE HEALTH OF THE CHILD.

At the recent Annual Congress of the Incorporated Sanitary Association of Scotland held recently in Glasgow, prominence was given to the important national question of the care of the health of the child. As reported in the *British Medical Journal*, Dr. A. Campbell Munro, County Medical Officer, Renfrewshire, divided his address into four parts—the prenatal care of the child, care in infancy, in the period between infancy and school age, and during school age. He hoped that in the coming years there would be a compensatory increase in the birth-rate to make up for the wastage of the most virile manhood of the nation in the war. It was satisfactory that notification of births was now compulsory, and he should like to see a roll—not of honour—of the local authorities in Scotland who had not adopted the system voluntarily. But even this compulsory notification did not lead far, and it was essential that official health visitors should be appointed, and provision for this was contained in the Notification of Births (Extension) Act. It ought to be made penal to sell or buy long-tube feeding bottles. There was also a wide sphere of usefulness for voluntary infant health visitors' associations, and between these and the local authority and its officials there should be the most intimate touch. There should be infant consultations and consultations for expectant and nursing mothers, prematernity homes, and post-natal homes. Child welfare committees would be a better name than infant health associations. There was great need for the passing of a Midwives (Scotland) Bill, and when the Act was in existence the Medical Officer of Health should be the "supervising medical officer" over the practising midwives. Maternity benefit, under the National Insurance Act, required revision; the money should be payable only on the certificate of the medical adviser to the Insurance Committee that the mother had received proper attention in connexion with her confinement. Dr. Campbell Munro moved that the Congress should resolve that measles and whooping-cough be made compulsorily notifiable; but the motion was lost on a vote being taken.

Dr. J. W. Ballantyne, of Edinburgh, spoke specially on the prenatal care of the infant. He said he would not go back beyond the marriage of the parents, being content to leave to the eugenists the directing and perfecting of matrimony among the "fit." He recommended, however, that newly married couples should make an immediate choice of their medical attendant, and not wait till the emergency conditions of a threatened miscarriage sent them

to the nearest practitioner. He recommended, also, that the wife should put herself under medical supervision and care as soon as she suspected herself to be with child; to wait until the pains of labour were upon her was certainly the very reverse of prenatal prevision. Medical men and women should likewise be ready to accept the responsibility for the care and supervision of the expectant mother during the whole time of her expectancy, and be ready to treat any of the complications of pregnancy which might arise, and so save many infantile lives. In all large towns prematernity homes for unmarried girls and rest-homes for married women should be provided where pregnancies could be watched over medically and where tired women could rest in the later weeks of their term of expectancy. Financial aid should be forthcoming in the four weeks preceding labour as well as in the month following it, as was being done in France. If this aid were given, it would send women earlier to their doctors, and it might, along with the discovery of a reliable blood test for pregnancy, bring the notification of pregnancy within reach. Prematernity wards, prenatal nurses (to visit and advise expectant mothers among the poor), and antenatal clinics and consultations at maternity hospitals, were other most desirable things, and should not be outside the range of authorities in large cities. He instanced a case of a woman who gave way to drink in the last month of her pregnancies who had recently been under his care in the prematernity ward of the Edinburgh Royal Maternity Hospital, and had been preserved from temptation during her critical month, had been safely delivered of a healthy child, and had been sent safely home again.

### MIDWIVES BILL FOR SCOTLAND DEMANDED.

Dr. Ballantyne concluded by seconding a motion made by Dr. Campbell Munro, "That in the opinion of this Congress it is important that the Midwives (Scotland) Bill should be passed into law without delay." The motion was put to the meeting and carried unanimously.

### NOT BEFORE TIME.

A great campaign to call public attention to the urgent necessity for safeguarding infant life in this country will be undertaken in the autumn by the National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality and for the Welfare of Infancy. A meeting will be held in support of the movement on October 26th, at the Mansion House, E.C.

An anonymous donor has given £5,000 to establish a maternity department at Cardiff Infirmary.

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