

THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE FŒTUS.

Under the auspices of the National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, and for the Welfare of Infancy, the first of a special course of lectures was delivered on May 8th at the Royal Society of Medicine, 1, Wimpole Street, W. The Development of the Fœtus, Normal and Abnormal, formed the subject of an interesting paper by Dr. J. W. Ballantyne, F.R.C.P. Edin., Physician to Royal Maternity Hospital, Edinburgh. In his unavoidable absence it was read by Dr. Pritchard. The lecturer from commencement to finish maintained his subject on a high plane; he spoke of the marvels of conception with reverence. The antenatal life, he explained, had three stages, namely (1) *Germinal*, lasting four or five days, perhaps a week; (2) *Embryonic*, lasting six or seven weeks; (3) *Fœtal*, lasting seven months. Step by step he revealed the wondrous changes that develop within the mother's womb, and especially the rapid growth during the second stage of antenatal life, which is the stage during which malformations and monstrosities take place.

To the question "what causes them?" no certain answer can be given, but conjecturally there appear to be many. It is certain, however, that something has happened which has caused the "construction" to go wrong. The lecturer suggested nevertheless several probable causes—namely, the poisons of alcohol, nicotine, tuberculosis, syphilis. Such awful results upon the unborn child cannot be prevented after the conception or the embryonic stage. The only way to prevent them, the lecturer remarked with emphasis, was that the father and mother should be *perfectly healthy at the time of marriage*—a sound eugenic principle, which will appeal to all who give due consideration to the hereditary claims of the helpless, unborn child. The immense importance of ante-natal care was also emphasised.

IN MEMORIAM.

We record with regret the death of Mrs. James, who for many years practised as midwife in a poor neighbourhood in the North of London, known as the "Freehold."

She was herself a working woman, and as such was able to enter in an unusual degree into the difficulties and trials of her patients.

When the Midwives Act came into force in 1902, she omitted, from lack of real knowledge as to its meaning, to register as a *bona fide* midwife. When the term of grace had passed she realised her position with some concern. She was then forty-nine years of age, and, though intelligent, was uneducated. She bravely set to work to study and attend the necessary lectures, and later she successfully passed the examination of the Central Midwives Board.

A crowd of her former patients attended her funeral, and regret for her loss was expressed on all sides. The example of her conscientious Christian life will not soon be forgotten either in her private or professional capacity.

THE EAST-END MOTHERS' HOME.

The Report of the East End Mothers' Lying-in Home, 39, Commercial Road, E., always contains much that is interesting and satisfactory both to the Home and the general public.

At the present time, when so much anxiety is felt about the decline of the population from one or another cause, it is gratifying that the Hon. Visiting Medical Officer, Dr. Cursham Corner, records with regard to premature infants that "many of those infants were satisfactorily started on their life career, by the careful, thoughtful nurses, in whose charge they were placed for the first few weeks of their existence. I can confidently state that our success in rearing premature infants has been a record, and it gives me the keenest pleasure to state this fact in my report."

The Lady Superintendent, Miss Anderson, refers to the increased number of still births. She says: "During the Zeppelin raids the expectant mothers were so excited and terrified that they rushed about the streets seeking shelter under railway arches, &c., with the result that they needed our help too soon, and several infants were still-born or lived only a short time."

So many and varied were the nationalities of the mothers admitted to the Home that she remarks that "the Apostles' gift of tongues would have been useful this year."

In referring to the work of the Staff, she says that one of the happiest features has been its steady efficient work. "Weary and worn they have gone to bed, hoping for a night's rest; but no, the Night Sister ruthlessly wakes them up out of their fast sleep, and, after the never-failing cup of tea, off they set out on the dark wet night, cheerfully and quickly, to the aid of the mother. Twice during the raids, in the midst of bombs and shells, they fearlessly set out. The reward of their unselfish work is the successful record placed before you."

Miss Anderson records that "one who worked with us for many years has had the honour of giving her life for her country." It is pleasant to read that many poor mothers themselves voluntarily place small contributions into the collecting-box at the door, many of which are accompanied by grateful letters.

In the Convalescent Home under the management of Miss Helen Napier, "not only do the mothers benefit physically, but mentally and morally, for the Sister-in-Charge teaches them infant care, cooking, cleaning, knitting, sewing, and most difficult of all things, management of their own homes and economy."

In concluding her report Miss Anderson thanks the many donors and supporters of the Home. She says: "The poor to whom you gave are the carriers by whom you convey your goods from earth to heaven, where the reward of your charity awaits you."

The Annual Meeting takes place at the Home on Wednesday, May 17th, at 4.30 p.m.

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