

ST. PAUL'S EYE HOSPITAL, LIVERPOOL.

Pioneer work is always interesting and important, because of its potentialities, and few more important schemes have been promoted than that inaugurated at St. Paul's Eye Hospital, Liverpool, by its founder, the late Mr. George Edward Walker, for dealing with the scourge of ophthalmia neonatorum—a scheme carried on with such enthusiasm by his son, the late Lieutenant-Colonel Arthur Nimmo Walker, a brilliant ophthalmic surgeon, killed at the Front in September last, while serving his country in the R.A.M.C.

The importance of treating ophthalmia neonatorum has of recent years come much to the fore, and many infants have been saved from life-long blindness owing to the prompt way in which the disease has been arrested. The special contribution of St. Paul's Eye Hospital to the treatment of these cases is the realization first that many of them are due to gonorrhoeal infection and a purulent discharge in the mother, and, therefore, that mother as well as child, needs treatment; and secondly, that, in a disease occurring in the case of so young a child, it is often desirable that if the infant goes into hospital the mother should accompany it. In St. Paul's Hospital, therefore, a ward (the Alfred Booth Ward) is set aside for the reception of mothers with their infants. To judge from the appearance of some of the tiny patients, it is well for them that they have been admitted to an institution where active treatment can be pursued without intermission, day and night.

The results obtained are most satisfactory. Of cases occurring in Liverpool from 1908–1916, 1,255 have been treated, 1,193 have been discharged cured absolutely, 53 damaged but not blind, and seven blind; the blind all occurred in the years 1908–1912. One hundred and seventy-five cases were received in the same period occurring outside Liverpool and usually sent to the hospital in an advanced state of disease. Of these, 124 were cured absolutely, 38 discharged with the eyes damaged slightly but not blind, and 13, alas, discharged blind. Twelve of these cases occurred between the years 1908–1912 and one in 1915, which seems to indicate both that treatment is becoming increasingly effective and also, perhaps, that midwives and parents are co-operating with the hospital to an increasing extent by bringing the cases under its care with less delay.

A midwife, under the rules of the Central Midwives Board, is directed to notify to her Local Supervising Authority, any discharge from the eyes of an infant in her care, "however slight." She should also, as is the practice advocated in Liverpool, take a smear of the discharge and have the swab sent for bacteriological examination when the nature of the infection can be definitely ascertained. The mother can then be advised if necessary to secure treatment for herself, as well as her child.

The Matron of this interesting hospital is Miss

McLean, and under her supervision the patients seem thoroughly happy and comfortable.

In addition to the work in connection with ophthalmia neonatorum the hospital deals with many cases of accidental injury to the eyes occurring at the docks and in engine-rooms, &c. It has a well-equipped theatre and the great magnet is a valuable aid in extracting particles of steel &c., which may have become embedded in the eye.

M. B.

BIRTH-RATE COMMISSION.

The National Council of Public Morals has decided to resume and reconstitute its Birth-rate Commission, which received the thanks of the Government for its report in 1916. This course is dictated by the great changes wrought by the war. The Commission is to consider in the form of a Reconstruction Inquiry the following matters:—

The extreme and persistent fall of the legitimate birth-rate in the United Kingdom; and the causes and prevention of the illegitimate birth-rate.

The contemporary movements of population in the Dominions, and the proportional distribution of the sexes throughout the Empire.

The economic problems of parenthood in view of the rise of prices and taxation and their possible solutions.

The housing problem in relation to parenthood.

The present spread of venereal disease, the chief cause of sterility and degeneracy; and the further menace of these diseases during demobilisation.

The increased industrial employment of women of child-bearing age.

The constitution and uses of the coming Ministry of Health as an instrument of racial reconstruction.

The need of a census immediately after the war, and of a permanent anthropometric department in the Ministry of Health.

The co-ordination of these enquiries in Great Britain and the Dominions with those of the Depopulation Commission in France and the Paris Faculty of Medicine, and of the Federal Child Welfare Bureau in the United States. Similar work in other countries.

Communications may be addressed to the Rev. J. Marchant, Secretary, National Birth-rate Commission, 20, Bedford Square, W.C.

THE MASSACRE OF INNOCENTS.

The holocaust caused in a maternity home attached to a Paris hospital by the shells of the German long-range gun, has caused a wave of horror and indignation through France which even the tragedy of the killing and wounding of 200 worshippers in a church on Good Friday did not arouse. A shell burst in a ward of mothers and babies killing one mother and baby and a young nurse outright, and injuring other mothers, infants, and two nurses. The Croix du Guerre has, by order of M. Clemenceau, been conferred on the nurse (Madame Lair) who was killed at the patient's bedside.

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