

NATIONAL BABY WEEK COUNCIL.

DR. SALEEBY ON THE SOCIAL PROBLEM OF MOTHERHOOD.

Sir John Kirk took the Chair at the representative gathering which attended Dr. Saleeby's interesting lecture, the last of a series given at Dr. Williams' Library on behalf of the National Baby Week Council. In the course of his opening remarks he said that the worth of the baby to the nation was incalculable. Dr. Saleeby said that broad views must be brought to bear upon the subject. We had to consider every point in infant mortality. Waging war against this evil we ought to have a diagram in our minds as to what we were out to prevent; large things, smaller things, almost trivial things. What kills babies? Poverty undoubtedly, but prosperity too. Take great manufacturing centres as an example of the latter fact. Where most wealth was made most babies were killed. One great change was in progress. The sinister importance of the deadly third quarter of the year which killed infants off like flies with diarrhoea was disappearing, the last diarrhoea year was 1911. There was a complete reversal of conditions now. The first quarter of the year was the most dangerous to the children with its gastric and respiratory troubles. Infant mortality had been reduced by one-third in the last generation. What babies were we saving? Middle-aged babies or babyish babies? We are saving the child in the last stage of the first year of its life. We have achieved great and splendid results in this direction, but more and more attention must be concentrated upon how to prevent neo-natal mortality. The problem itself has changed. In 1902 it was a medical problem of infancy; it is now a social problem of motherhood. Statistics as to stillbirths—tremendously significant in view of combating pre-natal dangers to the child—are almost impossible to get. England, and it appears America too, are still ruled in this direction by a law made in 1836. Solutions of the problem of infant mortality which neglect the cause of the mother are useless. The child lives or dies according to the ante-natal environment of the mother. To-day even more than in the past the maternal factors utterly outweigh the material factors.

An inquest held at Lewisham concerning the deaths of two babies at the Sydenham Infants' Welfare Centre which concluded this week, resulted in an open verdict in the case of the first infant, whose skull was fractured, and of "manslaughter against some person or persons unknown" in the second. In addition to the children who died, four others were injured, one of them having a broken arm. At the inquest the nurse in charge of the children at night, after being cautioned by the coroner, gave evidence.

POST GRADUATE WEEK AT YORK ROAD LYING-IN HOSPITAL.

The Sixth Post Graduate week for midwives opened on Monday, June 24th, at the General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, with a reception by the Matron and Staff.

Tea was served in the entrance hall, which looked as bright and hospitable as possible. Numerous little tables were dotted about, gay with flowers and laden with dainty fare, which was much appreciated by the guests. There is a friendly atmosphere in this hospital which ensures success to a social gathering, and from the Matron downwards the Staff were evidently on hospitable thoughts intent. There was a large gathering.

The old pupils, were, of course, at home at once, picking up the threads and renewing acquaintance.

Other Post Graduates, some of whom had come from long distances, were heard to express their appreciation of the opportunities that the week would afford them.

The afternoon's programme concluded with a lecture from Dr. Fairbairn, on "Delay in the Second Stage of Labour."

Dr. Fairbairn began by saying that there was, as a rule, more than one factor which helped to produce this condition.

If a uterus was below the average power, it could manage quite well, under easy conditions but any increased resistance it was unable to cope with.

In these days, he said, the prevention of disease was considered of far more importance than its cure.

The midwife could do a certain amount of preventive work by considering what conditions interfere with uterine action, and by doing her best to prevent them.

The condition of the mother was all important. The midwife should advise exercise in the fresh air and sunlight, as by this means her resistance to infection would be greater.

She must remember that anything that fills up the pelvis, such as a distended bladder, would check uterine action.

Mental disturbance must be avoided, and fatigue remedied by inducing sleep if possible. It was easier to prevent the condition than to deal with it after it had developed.

Dr. Fairbairn advocated the injection of pituitary extract when the head was low down, so that forceps could be easily applied, as its administration, sometimes resulted in still birth.

In the House of Commons on Monday, Mr. Hayes Fisher moved the second reading of the Maternity and Child Welfare Bill, by which it is proposed to extend the powers of local authorities in England and Wales with regard to motherhood, and the care and welfare of the infant population of the country.