

Edinburgh, and Dublin, to which could be attached local teaching centres in different large towns, might ultimately be organised upon such lines, as to bring both the theory and practice of elementary nursing within the grasp of all women desirous of entering hospitals to be trained and registered as professional nurses.

We should thus lay a firm and sure foundation of practical knowledge, before the Probationer was required to enter upon the responsible work of nursing the sick in the wards. Under expert teachers, her temperament and capabilities would be tested, and she would be compelled to submit herself to an examination, without which experience and certification, it would be difficult to obtain entrance at a hospital of repute.

(To be concluded.)

ROYAL BRITISH NURSES' ASSOCIATION.

COURSE OF LECTURES.

No. 2.

H.R.H. Princess Arthur of Connaught, Vice-President, presided at the second of the Course of Lectures organised by the Royal British Nurses' Association, when Lady Barrett, M.D., spoke on "The Preservation of Child Life." The Room of the Medical Society of London, 11, Chandos Street, London, W., where the lecture was given, was crowded to the doors.

H.R.H. Princess Arthur of Connaught said: "Ladies and gentlemen,—It gives me great pleasure to preside, for the first time, at a meeting of the Royal British Nurses' Association, especially as the subject of the lecture is one of extreme national importance. Lady Barrett is well known as one of the greatest authorities on questions relating to infant life, and we all look forward with great interest and pleasure to hearing her speak this afternoon. To nurses, a lecture on this subject must be of considerable interest, as their knowledge and training causes them to be particularly well qualified for child welfare work. The work which they have done for the nation during the great War has been beyond all praise, and when this is over I think that we will find their services in connection with another important branch of national work, the preservation of infant life, is scarcely less valuable.

"I have very great pleasure in calling upon Lady Barrett to address you this afternoon." (Applause.)

THE PRESERVATION OF CHILD LIFE.

Lady Barrett illustrated her lecture with diagrams shown by the epidiascope, and pictures of an up-to-date municipality which has made arrangements for dealing with this great need.

The first point mentioned by Lady Barrett was that at the present time, and even before the War commenced, the natural increase in the population

was gradually lessening. In most countries the births predominate over the deaths; and there is a continual increase in the population. That increase up till the year 1911 showed a gradual diminution. That was somewhat a cause for alarm, and, at the present time, we were losing valuable members of the population in the great War, and it was that which had made the subject press so urgently on the minds of the whole country.

Lady Barrett then showed a diagram prepared in the year 1912-1913, which, she said, was really of greater importance now than when it was produced. It showed that an increase which was 13 per cent. had come down to 10 per cent. But children did not die at a uniform rate all over the country. In certain areas the percentage of infantile deaths was very much higher than in other parts, and even in one town the infant mortality rates varied a good deal. In the city of Manchester, for instance, the different wards of the city showed an extraordinary difference in the infant mortality. In some wards the rate was 200 and 224, and in others it was as low as 110 per thousand. Again, infant mortality—*i.e.*, the deaths of infants under 12 months old—did not take place uniformly over that period, it was much heavier in the early part than in the late.

The next diagram showed the number of deaths in 1913 at different ages. Under one year the deaths were 95 per thousand, from 1 to 5 years about half that number. We did not find anything so big again till we came to the period between 20 and 40. The period 40 to 60 was larger. Over 70 years of age we had 117 per thousand.

Lady Barrett also showed that there is a relationship between the deaths of children and the deaths of their mothers. Dewsbury was the blackest rate in the country for maternal deaths. There, over 8 mothers died out of every thousand who gave birth to a child—it was a terrible mortality. Then, in Dewsbury, the percentage of children who died under one week old was 41 per thousand. So we were beginning to see that there is some very close connection between those causes which produce the death of mothers in childbirth, and the death of infants in a very early stage of their life. The number of children born dead also varied with the death-rate of their mothers. The important matter to ask ourselves was whether we could find any conditions which acted during the period before the birth of the child which produced this bad effect on both mother and child. Another point was that not only do the deaths in young infancy vary very much with the maternal rates, but, where the infant mortality is high there the mortality of children under five years of age was higher. If there was a place, or if there were circumstances, in which infants died very largely under 1 year of age we were also likely to find that the children who survived that early stage showed a higher mortality than did the children in other places. The circumstances which killed off the younger

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)