

The Midwife.

NORTH ISLINGTON WELFARE AND MATERNITY CENTRE.

The beneficent influence of a well-managed Infant Welfare and Maternity Centre is not restricted to the good work done for those who attend the Centre, as was exemplified on Friday in last week when the Queen of Spain visited the North Islington Infant Welfare and Maternity Centre at 6, Manor Gardens, Holloway Road, in order to obtain information to help her in starting Centres in Spain, which she is very anxious to do, as the infant mortality is very high, and at present this form of preventive work has not been introduced there, though there are clinics for tuberculous children, known as "Gouttes de Lait."

Her Majesty, who was keenly interested in all she saw, and who was present at four consultations, expressed her desire to keep in touch with this excellently managed Centre, and asked the Hon. Secretary, Mrs. W. B. Keen, to send her an analysis of the work done.

The Queen of Spain also visited the American wards initiated by the American Women's Club, which are in close proximity to the Centre.

THE NOTIFICATION OF OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM.

A case of importance to Midwives was heard at the Marylebone Police Court on November 5th, when Dr. Charles Porter, Medical Officer of Health for Marylebone, proceeded against Dr. Ezekiel Boyd of Seymour Place, Bryanston Square, and Miss Louisa Jones, a certified midwife, for failing to notify a case of ophthalmia neonatorum.

According to the facts brought out in the course of the case, it would appear that the law in regard to the notification of ophthalmia neonatorum needs amending.

It is the duty of a midwife under the rules of the Central Midwives Board to explain that the case is one in which the attendance of a registered medical practitioner is required when there is, in the case of an infant under her care, "inflammation of, or discharge from the eyes, however slight." And further "to send notice to the Local Supervising Authority that medical help has been sought."

Miss Jones conformed to these Rules in both particulars in the case in question. She sent the child to a doctor, and notified her Local Supervising Authority (the London County Council) that she had done so.

Under the Public Health (Ophthalmia Neonatorum) Regulations, 1914, of the Public Health, England Statutory Rules and Orders for the Prevention of Epidemic, Endemic, and Infectious Diseases, a Registered Medical Practitioner is required "on first becoming aware that a child upon whom he is in professional attendance is suffer-

ing from Ophthalmia Neonatorum" to notify the case forthwith to the Medical Officer of Health for the district.

A similar duty is required of a certified midwife "who has reasonable grounds for supposing that a child upon whom she is in attendance, is suffering from Ophthalmia Neonatorum, unless the case has already been notified by a Medical Practitioner."

Dr. Boyd's defence, and an unassailable one, appears to have been that he was not of opinion that the child was suffering from the disease.

In the case of the midwife, diagnosis is no part of her duty, and neither does it follow that because she observed the rule of sending an infant suffering from "inflammation, or discharge from the eyes, however slight," to a doctor, that she had reasonable grounds for supposing that it was suffering from Ophthalmia Neonatorum.

This appeared to be the view of the magistrate, Mr. D'Eyncourt, who (1) said he was not satisfied that the doctor was of opinion that the child was suffering from the disease, and (2) pointed out that the Public Health (Ophthalmia Neonatorum) Regulation under which the proceedings were taken, apparently contradicted the Rules framed by the Central Midwives Board under which the midwife acted. She notified her Supervising Authority that she had sent the child to a doctor, and having done that her duty ceased. He dismissed the case, and granted Miss Jones six guineas costs.

The prosecuting solicitor said that Dr. Porter knew nothing of the notice given by the midwife to the County Council; what he did know was that the Public Health Regulation had not been complied with.

As we last week reported, the Midwives' Institute drew the attention of the Central Midwives Board to this case at its meeting on November 12th and asked the Board to make representations to the Ministry of Health with a view to getting Article VI of the Public Health Statutory Rules and Orders (1914) repealed and brought into line with the Rules of the Board. The Board, we are glad to say, decided to take this course.

When a midwife has advised that medical assistance should be secured, and notified her Supervising Authority that she has done so, her responsibility should cease.

THE ROOT CAUSES OF INFANTILE MORTALITY.

"The root causes of infantile mortality and disease lie widespread and deep in our social system, *i.e.*, in the environment and the life and habits of the people. As such the responsibility for preventive measures necessarily belongs not to one but to many sections of the community and demands concerted effort and 'social' as truly as 'health' service."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)