

THE NATIONAL HEALTH.

THE MOTHERCRAFT TRAINING SOCIETY.

"In every work the beginning is the most important part especially in dealing with anything young and tender."—*Socrates.*

The wonderful success of the Mothercraft Training Society, at present located at 29-31, Trebovir Road, Earl's Court, S.W.5, but soon, if funds permit to be removed to Highgate, is due, no doubt, to the correctness of the fundamental principle upon which the work is based, that of tackling the problem before it at the beginning, "with a view to conserving the health and strength of the rising generation, and rendering both mother and offspring hardy, healthy, and resistive to disease"; and also "to uphold the Sacredness of the Body and the Duty of Health."

In pursuance of these and other objects special lectures and demonstrations in Mothercraft are given on Monday and Thursday afternoons, when an opportunity is also given for students to do practical work in the nurseries, if they wish. These Courses are intended only for expectant mothers, young or inexperienced mothers, and girls about to be married. The fee for the course is three guineas or according to the student's means.

We were fortunate recently in being present at one of these lectures—that on "The Expectant Mother," given by the Matron, Miss M. Liddiatt, to some sixteen expectant mothers of the educated classes, young and earnest students, who followed the lecture with close attention and punctuated it with pertinent questions.

The Expectant Mother.

Miss Liddiatt reminded these students that at the last lecture she had spoken to them of what happens when baby is coming, and how its health depends upon the condition of the mother's blood. The baby is such a little parasite that it makes great demands and the expectant mother should study the details of the laws of health in relation to herself and her child.

Miss Liddiatt mentioned that in New Zealand three months after marriage every one receives a booklet entitled "The Expectant Mother, and Baby's First Month," issued by the Infant Welfare Division of the Department of Health in New Zealand, and presented by the State.

Specially Important Points.

The following points were specially emphasised by Miss Liddiatt:—

Fresh Air.—It is important from the point of view of health that the expectant mother should have plenty of cool, fresh air, and sleep with open windows. It is bad to sleep in a heated room.

Exercise in the Open Air.—While advocating outdoor exercise Miss Liddiatt warned her students not to do too much. There should be moderation in walking as in everything else. If half-an-hour's walking exercise were taken daily, the person who observed this rule was not going to suffer from constipation to the same extent as the one who did not do so.

Expectant mothers sometimes enquired what they might and might not do during the nine months of pregnancy. The teaching of Dr. Truby King, founder of the institution, was that whatever the mother was accustomed to, might be continued in moderation. It was some use to do exercises, as this toned up the muscles, but they should be carried out under medical advice.

A question as to riding was here asked, and Miss Liddiatt said that any one used to riding might continue it, on a quiet horse.

Boots and shoes should have low heels. Corns should be attended to as they make walking difficult.

Diet should include fresh fruit, vegetables, salads. As a general rule anything may be eaten in moderation. Plenty of water should be taken, preferably between meals. No alcohol.

The bowels should be kept open, *the breasts* cared for, and especially in the later months the nipples carefully cleansed.

Sleep.—The expectant mother should have plenty of sleep. If this was difficult at night, owing to the activity of the child, some sleep should be secured in the daytime.

Minor Discomforts.

Miss Liddiatt then discussed minor discomforts, such as morning sickness in the early months, heartburn, swollen legs, cramp, frequency of micturition.

In the case of loss of blood a doctor should be consulted, but the patient should not go to him, but go to bed, and send for him. Special care was necessary at the times when the periods were normally due.

Every pregnant woman should be examined, and a point of importance was the periodic examination of the urine.

By intelligent prenatal supervision serious difficulties during labour could, to a great extent, be prevented.

A visit to the wards showed that cool, fresh air, in plenty, was provided for the babies, big windows opening on to the wide balconies being the rule.

Whenever possible the cots are taken out on to the balcony.

The nursery is kept warm, and here the babies are taken for their baths and other attentions. White enamel paint, and blue covers make it attractive and cheery. There is no expensive furniture, the object being to show the pupils how best they can manage conditions which they meet in their subsequent work.

Thus the useful and pretty screens are clothes horses, enamelled white, and covered with a dainty and simple washing material.

Charts are carefully kept, showing the rise or fall of the supply of mothers' milk, and though breast feeding is encouraged and urged, each child is studied, and milk mixtures, prescribed according to each individual case, may be given. These are prepared by the students according to the directions given. The senior students are also encouraged to make suggestions which are criticised by the Matron.

The Society, and the Centre in Trebovir Road, are an asset in the health of the nation, and are doing splendid preventive work for both mothers and babies. They could be multiplied indefinitely with advantage, and to both nurses and expectant mothers who have assimilated the teaching given belongs the responsibility of passing it on to others.

A DEATH TRAP.

The danger to the life of infants of garments fastened with a running tape was exemplified at an inquest held at Hull recently on a ten months' old baby.

The father deposed that the child was just learning to walk and he thought she must have crawled to the foot of the bed where her sister was asleep, and, overbalancing, her nightdress had caught on the bedpost, and the tape in the top had held her by the neck.

This is not the first recorded case of the kind.

Babies' garments should never be of a pattern which makes such a catastrophe possible, but fashioned simply to slip over the head. Perhaps some of our readers will describe the patterns they had found most suitable.

The catastrophe recorded above is a terrible one which nurses and midwives should note, and teach patients to avoid.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)