

The Midwife.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S NATIONAL MOTHER-SAVING CAMPAIGN.

By the kindness and courtesy of Lord and Lady Howard de Walden, a meeting as interesting as it was important, was held at Seaford House, Belgrave Square, on October 6th, to inaugurate the campaign which is about to be launched for certain specific purposes; the main purpose being to stamp out, or allay, puerperal fever, which is causing such a high maternity death-rate, and which is slightly on the increase. The words of Sir George Newman, K.C.B., Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, in his recent annual report, were utilised by the chairman as the keynote of his speech:—

"Puerperal sepsis is in the main a preventable disease."

Dr. T. Watts Eden, F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., who was spoken of by one of the speakers as the most eminent physician obstetrician in the country, and one of international reputation, presided, and made a strong and urgent appeal for national support for the scheme.

The main points of his speech were as follows:—The story of the last 15 years reveals the depressing fact that maternal mortality has shown no diminution; comparisons of such countries as Holland, Norway and Sweden are not favourable to our own. Between three thousand and four thousand women lose their lives every year from this cause. He stated that the whole subject was very complex, but emphasised certain special difficulties in which it is involved: The reproductive process is beset with risks to life from beginning to end, namely, risks while baby is being carried, risks during the birth, risks during convalescence, and, in addition, a multitude of minor risks which do not actually imperil life. One half of the deaths, he declared, are due to one single cause—*puerperal fever*.

Are we not right, he asked, in urging that the expectant mother should be the object of special care throughout her time? This is the basis of what we call our ante-natal campaign, which he was glad to say was making great strides in all parts of the country.

Speaking of certain complications of pregnancy—a small proportion—which give no warning of their approach (the great majority give timely warning), Dr. Eden said that they can only be robbed of danger by bringing all the resources of science to bear upon them, which, as a rule, will only be possible in hospitals. He stated categorically the indispensable requirements to deal with the situation: (1) Doctors and nurses should be trained to the utmost degree of efficiency; (2) There should be an adequate and universal ante-natal service; (3) An ample hospital accommodation for all who cannot be properly treated at home. Our supreme duty is *prevention*. We want to find out, the doctor said, why some of our mothers fall a prey to this very serious illness, and we shall only do that by *research*. Speaking of the danger of "germ carriers," he pointed out that there are pregnant women who are carriers of the germs of Septicæmia (Puerperal fever). Until the baby is born, the germs give no sign of their presence, and then their chance comes; they attack the patient, and the result is not due to dereliction of duty on the part of those who attended the patient. Dr. Eden concluded his address by an earnest appeal for funds for the following combined scheme, of increased hospital accommodation, and facilities for research.

The Bishop of Willesden, in whose Diocese the hospital stands, moved the following resolution:—

"This meeting pledges its support to Queen Charlotte's National Mother-Saving Campaign, and urges the Metropolitan Mayors and Mayoresses to establish and support Borough Committees for the purposes of awakening the public to the continuing high maternal mortality, and of collecting funds towards the campaign as initiated by Queen Charlotte's."

It was ably seconded by Dr. F. E. Scrase, F.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., President of the Metropolitan Branch of the Society of Medical Officers of Health. The Mayor of Paddington, and the Mayor of Fulham, and others spoke to the resolution, which was carried unanimously.

After cordial votes of thanks to Lord and Lady Howard de Walden for their courtesy in lending their house for the meeting (and their hospitality in providing a dainty tea for their guests), and to the chairman, had been carried with acclamation, the meeting terminated.

BEATRICE KENT.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

The Central Midwives' Board has had under consideration the amendment of the Registration of Nursing Homes Bill to the effect that non-county boroughs and urban districts employing whole-time Medical Officers of Health should be the Registration and inspecting Authorities for Nursing Homes (including Maternity Homes) in their district.

The Board strongly deprecates the amendment in question in so far as Maternity Homes are concerned and has instructed the Secretary to advise the Minister of Health and also the County Councils Association of this opinion.

It has also instructed the Secretary to ask Colonel Fremantle, M.P., if he will kindly take such steps as are possible to bring about a deletion of the amendment, at any rate in so far as Maternity Homes are concerned.

MATERNAL MORTALITY.

Sir George Newman, speaking at a meeting at the Central Hall at which Lady Barrett, M.D., Dean of the London School of Medicine, presided, to representatives of Women's Organisations from all parts of the country said, as reported in *The Times* that in reference to Maternal Mortality there was need for ante-natal hygiene. If all the 750,000 women expecting babies had a knowledge of ante-natal hygiene and were willing to practise it, he was convinced that there would be a substantial reduction both in mortality and impairment. One of the immediate necessities, therefore, was to find some way of bringing an appreciation of this fact home to the women themselves so that they would be prepared not only for the possible risks of maternity, but would realise that many of the minor discomforts and disabilities were removable. Another need was to make available for every mother skilled and competent assistance at the time of childbirth. Arrangements had been made by the responsible authorities for the more thorough training in obstetrics of the pupil midwife and the medical student. But there was still need for reform. The large number of women qualifying for the certificate of the Central Midwives' Board was making it difficult for the medical schools to provide their students with a training and experience as full as they required, and it was a matter for consideration how far it was expedient to have an enrolment of upwards of 63,000 certified midwives while less than one-quarter of them were actually practising midwifery. This and other questions, including the administration of maternity benefit, were now receiving the attention of the Ministry.

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