

THE REPORT OF THE DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE ON MATERNAL MORTALITY.

We have been eagerly awaiting the final report of the Departmental Committee on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, which is issued as we go to press, too late to study. The following article from the *Times* touches on important recommendations:

"The most important finding of the Departmental Committee on Maternal Mortality and Morbidity, whose final report was issued yesterday, is that infection from the mouths and noses of those in attendance constitutes a serious danger and ought to be prevented by the use of masks similar to those worn by surgeons. This is a simple precaution and one which will quickly become universal if employed at once by a few practitioners. There is no reason why it should not be employed, and patients have the right to demand it. The report speaks of the 'accumulating evidence of the danger of droplet infection.' It supports its claim that at least half of the deaths now taking place in childbed are preventable by reference to the mortality figures for England and Wales and for the Netherlands. The maternal death-rate in England and Wales has not fallen below four per 1,000 living births during the last five years. In the Netherlands the rate has not risen above 3.3. During the five-year period 1925-29 the average rates were, respectively, 4.2 and 2.98. Puerperal sepsis was the cause of death of 166 women per 100,000 live-births in England and Wales during the five-year period 1925-29; the corresponding rate in the Netherlands was 99.

"The Committee repeat their pleas for the better training of midwives, for more careful ante-natal supervision, and for extended hospital accommodation. They urge the importance of routine medical examination, and express the view that nurses and midwives should be taught to carry out certain simple diagnostic methods, for example, the determination of blood-pressure. By these means dangers existing before childbed would be recognised and provided against and thus a fruitful source of calamity removed. The occasion of birth, it is urged, should be attended by a discipline similar to that obtaining in the operating theatre. It should be known to all that talking and unnecessary movement increase danger by spreading infection; doctors, midwives, and attendants ought to feel themselves bound in honour to abstain from any kind of behaviour which might conceivably add to the existing risk. None will dispute the wisdom or justice of these recommendations. The expectant mother deserves the best which the science of medicine can give her, and this includes instruction in diet and personal hygiene; the doctor in whose charge she has placed herself deserves that his burden of responsibility shall not be increased wantonly by uninstructed or insufficiently disciplined helpers. It may be that the Committee attach too little importance to those cases in which infection arises within the body of the patient herself. Such cases, in the opinion of many competent practitioners, do exist, and injustice is apt to be done if this fact is not borne constantly in mind."

THE HISTORY OF THE INTERNATIONAL COUNCIL OF NURSES 1899—1925.

Copies of the above work compiled by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick and Miss M. Breay are on sale at the office of the National Council of Nurses of Great Britain, at 39, Portland Place, London, W.1. Price 5s. A copy of this work should be available in every nurse's library.

LETTERS TO THE EDITOR.

Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not IN ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE WONDER OF WIRELESS.

To the Editor of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING.

DEAR MADAM,—The wonder of wireless never fails to amaze me, and this afternoon, in this South Coast Nursing Home, I have had the delight of listening to the opening of the Ottawa Conference, the Presentation of the King's Message by the Governor-General (Lord Bessborough) and his welcome of the Delegates from the Speaker's Chair (a replica of that in our own House of Commons).

Then, when His Excellency had left the Chamber the nomination of Mr. Bennett, Prime Minister of Canada, as Chairman of the Conference, by Mr. Stanley Baldwin. On his assuming the chair the first business was the reading and despatch of the Delegates' acknowledgment of His Majesty's gracious message.

Mr. Bennett's opening speech, followed by the speeches of Mr. Baldwin and the delegates of Australia, New Zealand, South Africa, Rhodesia, and the Irish Free State were as clearly audible as if they had been spoken in this room, and one vividly realised what a perennial source of enjoyment and information is now available for invalids and aged persons who for various reasons are permanently confined to the house through the wireless.

I wonder if any other members of the Grand Council of the International Council of Nurses who spent a never-to-be-forgotten day in Ottawa in 1929 listened in this afternoon too. It was so easy to visualise the surroundings. The beautiful Chamber, the arrival of the Governor-General to the strains of the National Anthem, and his progress up the centre of the Chamber, as well as all the details of that lovely building, with its Peace Tower and Memorial Chapel.

Who of those distinguished nurses who were privileged to see it can ever forget it, or the beauty of the City of Ottawa? We owe to the International Council of Nurses an enlargement of our vision which has, with the aid of the wireless, enabled us to realise the setting not only of this great Imperial Conference but of other inspiring events.

Yours faithfully,

MARGARET BREAY.

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PRIZE COMPETITION QUESTION FOR SEPTEMBER.

Give the incubation period and describe the nursing care and treatment of a case of Whooping Cough. What complications might arise?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)