

INFANTILE MORTALITY

Improvement in Figures

EDUCATION URGED

(By Frank S. Hone, B.A., M.B., B.S., in "The Medical Journal of Australia")

It has been suggested that the time is suitable for a review of the present position regarding infantile mortality, with a view to a discussion on the subject. I will deal chiefly with South Australian figures and conditions.

Reviewing the course of events during the past quarter of a century I would put forward the following propositions:—

There has been a marked and for the most part steady improvement in the infantile mortality figures, which in some places has been greater than was thought ever to be possible at the end of last century.

Closer inspection of figures shows that this improvement has been almost entirely confined to the period of infancy later than the first month of life, and has been due to greater control of post-natal environment, especially with regard to nutrition and the infections of the intestinal tract. Infections of the respiratory tract apparently remain constant.

Experience has shown that no one method is a cure-all, but that success depends on close attention to all the details of a child's life.

The mortality figures for the first month have remained practically unaltered; any change has been, if anything, for the worse.

The causes of death in this early period differ entirely from those in the later period. The important factors are pregnancy and puerperium, whereas in the second period they are food and flies.

The methods of successful attack in the two periods must therefore be entirely different.

For the same definite advance in reduction of mortality in the first year of life to be made during the next quarter of a century, as has been made in the last, we must cease to think and talk of infantile mortality as one subject and rather speak of birth or natal mortality, including in this ante-natal and neo-natal factors, and post-natal mortality.

Extension of Knowledge

I do not wish to dwell at any length on the mortality of the second part of infancy, because the general principles of its control have been fairly well worked out. What remains to be done now is simply the perfecting of detail and the extension of popular knowledge.

The point which I wish specially discussed, because it is, I think, the point on which we should concentrate our attention for the next few years, is the reduction of mortality in the first month of life.

Members need to unite to do the same spade work for reducing mortality in the first month of life as we did in the early years of the century for nutritional cases. These cases early in infancy have so far been untouched by methods at present in use. New methods of attack must be elaborated.

If deaths in the first month are further analysed it is found that the great majority occur in the first week of life. Their causation is therefore natal or ante-natal, and preventive measures must be employed accordingly. Investigation shows that the two great causes at work in this field are syphilis and slovenly obstetrics.

From what has been said it will be realised that our campaign for the reduction of mortality in the first month of life must be directed toward the improvement of ante-natal and natal conditions. This means the supervision of the health of the expectant mother from the beginning of pregnancy.

This does not mean only the education of the public in these matters, but the more systematic and regular training both of nurses and medical students along these lines. Unless great care is exercised the registration of midwives will tend to a perpetuation of the old system of mere attendance at a confinement being sufficient.

Moreover, the obstetric training of students must be amplified so that they supervise beforehand the patients whom they subsequently attend in labor. Accidents from precipitate or unwarranted interference in labor must be emphasised. The effects of such on the mother is one of the reasons why I favor the union of the teaching of obstetrics and gynaecology, for so much gynaecology is a consequence of bad obstetrical management.

Our particular concern is with the effects of such accidents at birth on the life and health of the child, not merely early death, but many cases of diplexia and similar conditions possibly depend on such accidents.

CONTINUED

Ante-Natal Clinics

When members of our profession or of the public oppose the cost of ante-natal clinics because of the few mothers whose lives might be saved by such means we can put forward an additional argument in the lives of the children that would be preserved. From this side we can bring strong support to the movement for better provision for mothers in the way of ante-natal clinics and maternity hospitals.

A movement is already on foot in Sydney for a chair of obstetrics; Melbourne is working in the same direction; and in this University a large part of a recent bequest to the medical school has been set aside for the re-organisation of the teaching in the obstetric and gynaecological departments along these lines as soon as the Government provides the building necessary.

There is one other fact that must not be lost sight of. If we are to press for this ante-natal supervision it is certain that the average householder will not be able to stand the increased fees that must necessarily be charged by the medical profession for attendance on maternity cases. I see no way by which this objection can be met except by the State paying for such work.

This is an additional argument for the resolution of the Federal committee of the British Medical Association which urged the Federal Government instead of spending more money on maternity bonuses as is advocated in certain quarters, to devote the money to the subsidising of all hospitals possessing ante-natal clinics and properly equipped maternity wards. Members of this section should assist in all such movements.

To sum up I would urge as regards this special point:—

Emphasis on the distinction between natal or neo-natal cases of death and post-natal causes.

Compulsory registration of all stillbirths if of viable age.

Continued agitation for increased facilities for ante-natal care and properly equipped maternity wards.

Continued emphasis on the thorough training of medical students and nurses in obstetrics, including in that term supervision of the mother from early pregnancy to a month after delivery.

Education of the public on the necessity of expectant mothers demanding such ante-natal supervision and proper natal care, so that these clinics may not be empty when established.

Continued emphasis on the necessity of breast feeding and pure milk, and the avoidance of infection in the first year of life.

ADVERTISER 21-6-25

ENGLISH FOLK SONG.

AN ENTERTAINING LECTURE.

The third and final University Extension lecture of the series on "English Folk Song" by Mr. Clive Carey was delivered at the Adelaide University last evening before a large attendance. The lecture dealt with special types of song, such as carols for May Day and Christmas, songs for special occasions, and sea chanties. He traced the movement for the collection and preservation of folk songs since its inception in 1840, when it was first realised that England possessed this magnificent heritage. The formalities of the usual set lecture were dispensed with. There was no chairman, and the lecturer plunged into his subject in a free and happy style that captivated his hearers. His remarks were interesting, instructive, and entertaining throughout.

Mr. Carey made brief reference to the subjects of his previous lectures, and spoke of the difficulty sometimes found in unravelling the strange songs sung. Words of many of the songs handed down had lost all bearing on the present time, and thus became mutilated and misunderstood. He took as an example the song known as "Sir Hugh of Lincoln." The only way to reconstruct some of the verses was to say the words over quickly which sometimes gave amusing and absurd results. This was also instanced in "The Lady's daughter of the West." The lecturer recited the words and showed how they were capable of misinterpretation. "Johnny Doyle" was another song in which some of the rhymes had gone astray. There was a reference to yearlings which he could not understand, but the bursting of a staylace evidently referred to the emotion the heroine of the song experienced. (Laughter.) "The little streamers" had a poetic and almost heavenly flight of fancy, but descended so to speak from the sublime to the ridiculous with a line ending "if the angel had directed me—where shall we go?" (Laughter.) Nancy Ann was not the name of a lady, as generally supposed, but of a Cornish village. The former interpretation led to a corruption of the song. Sometimes the word "angel" referred to the name of an inn. The word "streamer" was used in the sense of that which in olden days had reference to the men who "streamed" the ore in the Cornish tin mines. The song was, therefore, quite probably a corruption of an ancient incident or parable. One explanation by Miss Broadwood was that the song might have been a corruption of an old Latin hymn on the Virgin Mary. Thus it could be seen how the original could become lost.

Dealing with songs of love stories and the personal lives of the people, the lec-

CONTINUED

turer sang to his own accompaniment a song about a keeper and his bow and arrow, which probably went back as far as the thirteenth century. In the olden days they always sat on some of the notes. (Laughter.) Some of the songs were in dialogue form, and illustrations of different persons singing were amusingly given by the lecturer. One song dealt with a courtship by proxy, and mentioned a present of a pair of boots of cork. It was interesting to note that cork was introduced into England in 1600, so they could thus fix the date of the song. Another song which the lecturer sang spoke of a lover being hanged on the gallows. Then there was the song of the type of "the house that Jack built" entitled "The green leaves grew all round," which the lecturer also sang in the manner it was originally supposed to have been sung, with variable vocal inflections. Some of the songs which he quoted had reference to quaint old social and religious customs. Then there was the song sung all over Somerset, referring to Divination, which had a mystical explanation, and was traditional at Eton College. Some of the references in the song were hard to explain, and constituted an extraordinary and laughable mixture. There were two versions of this song in Hebrew referring to the Passover.

Mr. Carey dealt with songs for special occasions in the English counties, and sang extracts from several of them. He showed the relationship they had with pretty social customs, such as wassail, which in the old Saxon had reference to good health and well being. A pretty little song he sang had reference to gathering a branch of hawthorn in olden days. Christmas carols, he said, played an important part in folk songs, and some of these he sang in illustration of his remarks. Finally he spoke on the sea chanty, which was designed to make work easier. In Scotland a number of extraordinarily beautiful songs were sung among the weavers in keeping time with their work. There was the walking song, the rowing song, and the sea chanty which was voiced while working the capstan, and emphasised the hauling of a rope by the sailors.

England, said Mr. Carey, once had a reputation of being most unmusical, and nobody troubled to find out whether there was anything musical really belonging to the country. They knew nothing of the great compositions of the Elizabethan period until quite recently. The prominence of literature was always acknowledged in that period, but it was now realised that the Elizabethan period was also the golden age of English music. Mr. Sharp, a rector in Somerset, once a resident of Adelaide, about 17 years ago discovered some beautiful songs. He published five volumes of 250 songs, and before he died had discovered 3,000 tunes. The lecturer himself had discovered many beautiful melodies among the country people. It was a most difficult matter to get the notes from some of the older people, and he amusingly described his work in this connection in Sussex. It was to be regretted that folk songs were now really dead. Modern amusements militated against the cultivation of folk songs. All they had now was the ghost of a dead past, the memory of a happy childhood, or of some dear old couple sitting by the fire, or the breath of romance. He pleaded for the introduction of folk songs in the schools. They were so simple and so direct with their appeal to the heart that they should be encouraged and would be of far more benefit to the children than some of the music with which they were now associated. (Applause.)

ADVERTISER 21-6-25

COMMONWEALTH FORESTRY SCHOOL.

In connection with the proposed establishment by the Commonwealth Government of a forestry school at Canberra, the Advisor on Forestry to the Commonwealth Government (Mr. Lang Poole) arrived in Adelaide yesterday on his way to Perth. He took the opportunity of visiting the University in the afternoon, and discussing the Commonwealth proposals with the Vice-Chancellor (Professor W. Mitchell) and other members of the University Council.

MUSICAL STUDENTS

Association Revived

The first meeting of the revived Students' Association in connection with the Elder Conservatorium Association, which fell into abeyance some years ago, and has now been reorganised, was held in the Elder Hall last night, when a large number of past and present students of the Conservatorium were present. Mr. Frederick Bevan, who has been elected as first president, was in the chair.

The objects of the organisation are the advancement of the cause of music in South Australia; to foster a feeling of fraternity and to create opportunities for friendly intercourse and co-operation among all lovers of music; to welcome and entertain visiting artists of renown. Members of the teaching staff of the Conservatorium are eligible for membership, as well as all past and present students more than 20 years of age. At least four reunions are to be held during the year.

The officers for the year are:—Mr. Frederick Bevan (president), Mr. L. G. Keimann (vice-president), committee, Miss Katie Joyce and Mr. Arthur Williamson (representing past students), Miss Elsie Williams and Mr. Alec Burnard (present students), Madame Delmar Hall and Mr. George Pearce (teaching staff), and the Director of the Conservatorium; Mr. Herbert Othman (secretary and treasurer).

Mr. Bevan reported an initial membership of about 300. He said that the meeting of the session would be held on August 3, which would be devoted to original compositions, under the direction of Mr. Arthur Williamson; October 5, when Mr. Charles Schilsky would give some musical reminiscences, and a closing social.

Mr. Bevan gave an address on the life and work of Sir Arthur Sullivan, who, he said, had been a lifelong inspiration to him. Sullivan had been blamed for throwing away great musical possibilities as a composer, and writing that which appealed to the largest number of people, but in doing so he had brought pleasure and happiness to many, and could more easily have written a sonata or a fugue than his detractors could have written a comic opera. Sullivan had said that children should be taught music as they were taught to read. There were many persons who were pleased to say that they did not know one tune from another, which argued that there was something wrong with them mentally or physically.

At the age of 50 Sullivan still confessed himself a student, and took as much pains with his smallest work as with his most important compositions. He was the friend of Tennyson and of Charles Dickens, and first went with the latter to Paris, where he made many friends. Mr. Bevan gave many incidents in the life of the popular composer, his last time of meeting with him having been on the same platform in 1897.

ADVERTISER 21-6-25

AUSTRALIAN CHEMICAL INSTITUTE.

PROFESSOR PRESCOTT WELCOMED.

The members of the Australian Chemical Institute (South Australian branch) met at dinner at the Grosvenor on Monday evening. There was a representative attendance, forty members and friends being present.

The president (Mr. J. Hendry) occupied the chair, and introduced and welcomed the guest of the evening, Professor J. A. Prescott, who has recently joined the staff of the Waite Agricultural Research Institute.

Professor Prescott, in proposing the toast of the Australian Chemical Institute, told how he had come to South Australia from Egypt, and indicated the large field in chemical agricultural research which awaited exploitation here. In responding the President expressed the pleasure of members at the founding of such a Research Institute in South Australia, and more particularly with respect to the good hands to which the chemical side of the new Agricultural Institute had been entrusted.

Dr. W. A. Hargreaves, Director of the Department of Chemistry, proposed the toast of "Our schools of chemistry," and entered a plea that more interest and financial support should be accorded to the training grounds of the science of chemistry. Professor Rennie, who was to respond, was unable to be present owing to illness. Dr. Hargreaves said the company greatly missed their fatherly colleague and adviser, and he suggested that a letter be sent expressing their sympathy in his illness.

Dr. Cook responded to the toast, and pleaded for more true education and less cramming. He stated that the present system of schooling attempted at cramming facts, whereas it was much to be preferred that the memorising of facts which could at any time be obtained from reference books should give place to the marshalling of facts and the combination of ideas.

Mr. F. W. Reid, principal of the School of Mines, in proposing the toast, "The industrial chemist," remarked how much the world owed to industrial chemistry. He referred to the recent developments in the electrolytic treatment of zinc concentrates, and briefly outlined the difficulties which had to be overcome before the present success was attained.