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MEDICAL TIMES

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PARIS.

[FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.]

Philanthropy and Medical Science.—Diminution in Infant Mortality by the Couveuse.—Madame Henri's Couveuse Department at the Paris Maternity.—Subsequent Care of the Children.—An Acute Stage of Hospital Reform.

Philanthropy and medical science are closely allied; Mme. Henri, the accomplished *sage femme en chef* of the Maternity Hospital, has given a practical proof of this by founding and organizing a *couveuse* department at the Paris Maternity Hospital. All the qualities necessary for the success of this enterprise, power of organization, foresight, a scientific knowledge of hygiene in all its applications, ventilating and disinfecting buildings, with the medical treatment of infant life, joined to a powerful, well directed will and a warm, generous heart. The outcome of all these qualities make an epoch in the medical treatment of infant life.

The depopulation cry which has quite scared the gray-headed members of the Paris Academy of Medicine, and occupied so many of their meetings, lends an additional interest to Mme. Henri's medical and philanthropic enterprise. Before her *couveuse* department was in full working order, only, as Mme. Henri expresses it, "doing what she could," infant mortality was greatly reduced. Now, that a greater number of children can be admitted and treated, with the united care and utmost medical skill, as our description of the *couveuse* department will show, it may be foreseen that infant mortality among the new-born will be reduced to a very much smaller figure. In the early days of the *couveuse* the mortality was reduced to 33 per cent. Mme. Henri's improvements have reduced it to 63. It is to be hoped that this encouraging present and promising future will bring comfort to the gray-haired academicians, and furthermore suggest to them and others to go and do likewise. Special pleading is not necessary to establish the fact that if the greater part of the babies prematurely born grow up to be strong men and women instead of dying in babyhood or childhood, the population is increased by so many lives, which in their turn will furnish more; thus Mme. Henri's medical philanthropy appeals not only to scientists and philanthropists, but also to social economists.

The *couveuse* department of the Maternity, which was inaugurated a few weeks ago, consists of several wards specially arranged—all gay and pretty. The general ward is 30 meters long, and is warmed by a thermosyphon, the pipes springing from it are carried round the room; this system is similar to that of hot-houses; in fact, these prematurely born babies *are* reared in a hot-house; the walls are painted, a necessary hygienic precaution, but estheticism does not suffer. Mme. Henri has carefully chosen a subdued rose tint; the floor composed of many-colored flagstones is also picturesque and hygienic. The furniture is exclusively of iron, thus all antiseptic measures are easily carried out. On one side of the room there are 14 cradles arranged in a row, on the other side 14 *couveuses*. It is perhaps time now to minutely describe a *couveuse*, which is, in reality, a large oblong glass case, with an upper and lower compartment. This case is mounted on four feet, with castors; in the upper compartment there is a soft, clean little mattress; on this the baby is placed. In the lower compartment is the receptacle containing boiling water; this, by a simple arrangement, is emptied and refilled without being removed. The important detail is to maintain in the *couveuse* an unvarying temperature of 30° C. In order to insure this the water must reach 80° C. The babes can thus live several weeks within a glass case. The health of the patients is ascertained by weighing them; the result is tabulated and placed at the head of their *couveuse*. In order to prevent exchanges each child wears a necklace with a locket, on which is inscribed its name, and the date of its appearance at the hospital. The babes are washed and dressed in a special room, called the *crèche*, where the temperature is higher than that of the general room; the arrangements for washing are perfect. The children are suckled or brought up by hand, according to their condition; some are given the breast and the bottle; the milk used for the bottles is carefully sterilized. The wet nurses occupy at night a large dormitory, and by the side of each bed is a cradle for the accommodation of their own child; the inmates of the *couveuses* are in another part of the building. The isolating wards, where babes with contagious affections are

placed, resemble big glass cells, in which is the *couveuse*, or cradle, according to the age and condition of the little sufferer. Mme. Henri intends adding to this babe-rearing establishment a carriage drawn by goats, also a donkey, in order that the babes which are strong enough and old enough can be taken out for an airing, and thus accustom them gradually to the out-door temperature before sending them to their own homes.

The "Union Française pour le sauvetage de l'enfance" and Bequet's "Attachement Maternel" supplement, in a measure, Mme. Henri's enterprise. Mme. Bequet aids poor mothers to bring up their children, and by insuring their hygienic condition combats the invasion of pathological conditions. The "Sauvetage de l'enfance" seeks out and rears, honestly and healthily, all children who are ill used or deserted by their natural protectors, also the friendless and homeless, thus arresting the march of disease and crime among the infant population. The reports of these societies are too bulky to sum up here, but the results of both enterprises are in the highest degree satisfactory, and encouraging as examples of what philanthropy can and ought to do to arrest the invasion of pathological degeneration, which, in the majority of cases, leads to crime.

Hospital reform has reached, in Paris, not only an acute stage but a diffused one. It is asked for everywhere, from the top of the ladder to the bottom. Reform among the staff, reform in the rules and regulations, concerning visiting days, admission of patients, also in the wards, in the gratuitous treatment of outdoor patients, reform in the commissariat department, less waste and better prepared food is demanded. It is asserted by some well informed authorities, that a certain number, or perhaps, more correctly speaking, an uncertain number, of hospital *chefs* greatly prize the honor and power attached to their position, but treat lightly their duties; finding it more lucrative to sit on a great many commissions, sittings resulting in a fee, or to pass their winter in peace and sunshine far away from the sphere of their duties, where soft winds and the scent of orange-flower blooms replace the sight and sounds of human suffering. The "Conseil de Surveillance" of the "Assistance Publique," has been revised, some members of the medical staff attached to hospitals are placed on it, and there is a question of reviving a law which obliges a reelection of hospital physicians and surgeons every five years. There is much to be said for and against this proposition. Every opportunity which favors and calls into action intrigue, is best avoided; elections do this to a lamentable and immoral degree. It is quite possible that reelection might serve to eliminate the best men. It is a general rule here that real medical and scientific worth is in inverse proportion, *not direct*, to the faculty of intriguing. If such men as Potain and Tarnier were not so scarce the cry for reform would not be heard, but now it is wise and perhaps urgent. Let us hope that the result we shall have to chronicle will be satisfactory.

PARIS, February 5, 1894.

OBITUARY.

CHARLES EDWARD BLAKE, M.D.

DR. C. E. BLAKE was born in Holden, Maine, August 14, 1845. He was a descendent of an old New England family on his father's side, and through his mother of the family of John Rogers. His first arrival in California was in 1851. His father, Charles Morris Blake, established and conducted what was afterwards St. Augustine's College, at Benicia. After three years, the family removed to Chili. From here he was sent to Yale College, where he graduated in 1865, in his 20th year. He began his medical studies in the Medical College of the Pacific, in 1870, at which school he graduated in the class of '73, being one of twelve, six of whom, until his decease, were practitioners in San Francisco. He divided the honors and prize with Jos. O. Hirschfelder, in the junior year. Dr. Blake did not aspire to a position as a leader in the profession; yet, as a practitioner, he occupied a prominent place and enjoyed the reputation of being a thorough and able man. He was prominent in the medical societies; was often chairman of a committee in the State Society. He was a member of the Board of Examiners for several years, serving for a time as secretary, doing the work of editing the Medical Register, producing the best volume in its