Ophthalmia Neonatorum

In a leading article dealing with the provisions which have been made for the early notification of ophthalmia neonatorum and urging the necessity of attending to the rules laid down, the Lancet says, inter alia: "Ophthalmic surgeons are agreed that with proper treatment of the eyes at birth the disease can be prevented, and cases of it should become exceedingly rare. There is general agreement that when it has occurred, given adequate and prompt treatment, damage to either eye should be very exceptional, and the loss of an eye almost unknown. In these circumstances the occurrence of a case in any lying-in hospital should be made the subject of careful enquiry. Obstetricians and gynaecologists are not eye specialists, and it follows that every lying-in hospital should have a call on the services not only of a physician interested in paediatrics, but also of an ophthalmic surgeon, so that the nursing staff, the pupil midwives, and, last, but not least, any students attending the practice of the hospital, may have adequate instruction in the methods necessary to prevent the disease. If the first line of defence against ophthalmia is broken, efficient curative methods would thus be applied at the earliest possible moment."

With the foregoing reminder to lying-in institutions we very heartily agree.

We would further like to draw attention to the fact that the methods employed for getting immediate and adequate treatment for Ophthalmia Neonatorum are still very unsatisfactory. Cases occurring in practices of doctors and midwives are frequently not sent sufficiently soon to the special hospital provided in London by the Metropolitan Asylums Board, St. Margaret's Hospital, Leighton Road, Kentish Town, with the result that many cases are admitted when nothing can be done to save the sight.

It is to be hoped that the report of the Committee sitting on the "Prevention of Blindness" which is dealing with this subject inter alia, and is somewhat overdue, will make stringent recommendations to procure immediate treatment of the disease and also for the better education of students and midwives in its natural history, as was recommended in a resolution passed by the Ophthalmological Society in 1920.