

### Loss to New Brunswick per year.

145 males at \$404 = .....	\$58,580
107 females at \$256 = .....	27,392

Total loss. \$85,972

Upon a cursory survey of this blind army one is naturally led to enquire why is so great a host deprived of the sense of sight? A partial answer to the question is found in the fact that a large percentage is due to ophthalmia neonatorum or purulent inflammation of the eyes of the new-born babe. This inflammation may originate from different sources as for example the inoculation of vaginal secretions, such as leucorrhœa and menstrual fluids according to Frank Hamilton may give rise to it, also rude washing with soap and sponges in the hands of nurses, by exposure of the eyes to strong light and from colds: Overcrowding, imperfect ventilation and the strumous diathesis are among the predisposing causes. Conveyance of the virus from one child to another and from one eye to the other may be enumerated among the specific causes.

Having briefly outlined the etiology of the disease, I wish to emphasize the statement that the origin of the disease is chiefly due to the entrance into the eyes of the child, either during or soon after birth of an abnormal secretion from the birth canal. It is well known to the medical profession that a large majority of pregnant women have original catarrh and a certain number have other infections discharges. Therefore it would seem a rational procedure to use antiseptic injections in the vagina prior to accouchment. But as the difficulty of destroying noxious germs under any circumstances is admitted and as the task of removing every possible source of contagion from the vagina is well nigh impossible, our chief reliance should next be placed on making direct application to the eyes of the child immediately after birth.

Crede's method is probably the best that can be used for this purpose. It consists of dropping into the eyes of the child a single drop of a two per cent solution (10 grs. to  $\bar{5}$ ) of nitraté of silver after the eyes have been well washed with tepid water.

In milder cases it will be sufficient to use rose water or with the addition of one grain of sulphate of zinc to three or four ounces of water. In the great majority of cases such precautions may be unnecessary, more especially where the possibility of gonorrhœal infection is not to be entertained.

Before society became enlightened upon the subject of vaccination, our blind asylums were filled with the subjects of small pox; but to-day blindness as a result of small pox, is almost unknown. In like manner, blindness as a result of ophthalmia neonatorum will disappear when the nature of the disease, its terrible dangers and its ready prevention or cure shall become thoroughly disseminated. It is the family physician who sees these cases first; for very seldom do they come before the specialist until late in the disease, when perhaps irreparable damage has been done by the total loss of vision.

How important then that the general practitioner should be prepared, not only to diagnose early but to treat intelligently every case of this preventable disease. The day has fully dawned upon the medical world when blindness from this disease is to be no longer regarded as a dispensation from the hand of the Almighty, and this belief still prevails amongst the laity, but they will soon discover their mistake.

Whatever may be our views in regard to popularizing medicine, there can be no question of the advisability of publishing abroad a warning against this disease than against the danger of letting a small pox patient run at large among healthy children. The efforts that have been made in the last few