

The Midwife.

The Educated Midwife.

The value of the educated midwife is unquestionable. In connection with her practical work her mental training enables her to grasp the principles of aseptic midwifery, which are of paramount importance to the safety of the parturient woman, and further, to understand the need for a scrupulous observance of these principles in her daily practice. Statistics prove that it is quite impossible that the medical profession should undertake all midwifery cases, and consequently that midwives are a necessity to the community, which is, therefore, concerned in the provision of a most efficient type of such workers.

What are the prospects of such being provided? A dearth of candidates for training is reported by the Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives, and others, and the reason alleged is that the salaries frequently offered to such women when trained are not sufficient to afford a bare subsistence.

One has only to study the advertisements of midwifery posts to verify this. £1 per week is frequently considered a suitable salary to offer a certified midwife, and often she is expected to be a trained nurse also. What inducement is there in a salary of this kind to any woman to take up midwifery? The salary and emoluments received by a raw hospital probationer considerably exceed in value the pittance offered in such instances to a trained nurse and certified midwife, who has undergone an arduous and prolonged training, and is a valuable skilled worker.

Before such workers can afford to undertake district midwifery some means must be devised by which salaries, upon which they can live in reasonable comfort, and with some prospect of making provision for their old age, can be assured to them, otherwise the most desirable women will naturally turn their attention to other branches of work, such as institution service and private nursing, and the general midwifery of the country will remain in the hands of the second, and third-rate, if even they can be induced to undertake it. It seems probable, however, that there will shortly be such a shortage of midwives for work amongst the poor that some scheme will have to be devised which will attract them to the public service.

One plan would be to employ them, as poor law medical officers are employed, as public officials, but probably some voluntary scheme would, at a first experiment, work best.

We know of no better use to which a millionaire could apply his surplus cash than to endow the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute with a Fund for the purpose of providing necessitous districts with competent midwives, and such midwives with adequate salaries. A considerable part of the expense incurred might be recovered in the form of fees paid by the patients, through well organised Provident Clubs, but a living wage should be ensured to the midwives whose work is harassing and responsible enough without constant anxiety as to ways and means.

Ligature of the Funis.

The question is sometimes asked by midwives how soon the funis should be tied after the birth of the child, and the rational answer seems to be that so long as nature continues to supply the child with blood through this agency it is to its advantage to receive this supply, and that, therefore, unless there are special reasons to the contrary, the cord should not be tied until it has ceased pulsating. Dr. Galabin suggests that the blood transferred from the placenta to the child during the few minutes after birth serves to supply the extra amount of blood required to fill the pulmonary circulation at the time when the lungs take the place of the placenta as organs of respiration. He further states that to tie the funis immediately is equivalent to bleeding the child to the amount of three ounces, a bleeding which would correspond to one of about 80 ounces in an adult.

Midwives and Infantile Mortality.

The Mayoress of Bradford recently entertained seventy registered midwives of the city of Bradford to tea, after which an informal discussion took place as to the means of preventing the present wastage of infant life. Midwives form a valuable agency through which mothers can be approached, and instruction given as to the care and feeding of newly-born infants, and it is important that efforts should be made to secure their co-operation in this national work.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)