

The Midwife.

Echoes from India.

THE TRAINING OF INDIAN MIDWIVES.

The late Lady Curzon took a very deep and practical interest in a scheme for training Indian midwives.

A fund was started, and Indian ladies and gentlemen, as well as Europeans, subscribed liberally. This money was given over to trustees to be used in the form of midwifery scholarships. These scholarships are called the Victoria Memorial Scholarships for Dais.

Any women's hospital undertaking to form a class to teach Dais midwifery, gets a certain number of these scholarships. A local committee of not less than three is formed. This committee reports from time to time to headquarters on the number of women in training, and the progress made, etc. The scholarships amount to from eight to ten shillings per month, just sufficient to board each woman, who either lives in her own home or is provided with a room in the hospital.

The idea of the promoters of this scheme was to get hold of the indigent Dais and train them, but so far this has not been possible. They will not come, though many efforts have been made to induce them.

The Punjab Government requires that a woman studying midwifery in the vernacular must attend classes for two years before she can take the Government examination.

The course is not difficult; a translation of Barnes is the text book generally used. They must be able to conduct a normal case, but examiners in their questions seem to attach most importance to their knowing when a doctor ought to be called.

Since the scheme was started a number of women have been trained, and the number entering for training, while not large, is increasing every year.

But these are not of the indigent Dai class. They are women of different castes, in some parts chiefly Hindus, in other parts chiefly Mohammedans, with a fair number of Christians. Many of them are widows.

Hospitals differ in the practical training they give. In some they are taught general nursing in addition to midwifery. In others they help only in the out-patients' departments, and in others they simply attend the lectures on midwifery in the hospital, and get their cases outside.

Many of these women pass good examinations, and become excellent helpers, but with the people have not the standing of the old-fashioned indigent Dai. Their outside practice is chiefly among their own immediate friends, or women who, through attending hospital, have got to like our ways, and who know that having one of these Dais means that should anything go wrong a doctor will be called without delay. These Hindu and Mohammedan women who take up this work deserve every encouragement, as it often means great opposition from their friends, especially if they belong to a good caste.

There was one woman who was most anxious to learn; her husband was quite willing that she should do so; she seemed really fond of her work, and would make an excellent midwife. A woman who knew her attended the out-patient department, and found her douching a patient. She told this to others, and among them to some of this Dai's own relations. The result was that they refused to take food from her hand, saying that by doing this kind of work she had made herself unclean. One wonders how long she will be able to stand this.

A good number of Christian girls and women are being trained in hospitals as midwives; most of these have been educated in mission schools.

When the course is finished they either continue in the hospitals, go out to village dispensaries, or marry village Christians, so that many Christian colonies out in the country districts have one or more of these trained midwives. Not only are they a help to their fellow Christians, but some of them have come to be loved and trusted by their heathen neighbours.

The trustees of this fund, while acknowledging that the class of women now trained are a very valuable asset, recognise that they are not the class for which the scholarships were primarily meant. They have again asked the doctors to make fresh efforts to induce the indigent Dai to come for training. The Inspector-General of Hospitals for the Punjab suggests that a short course of lectures be given, using charts, dummies, pelvis, and head.

The course to consist of about 12 lectures, and each Dai, instead of having the scholarships given monthly, to be paid so much for each lecture attended.

Attendance at hospital for practical work or

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