

The Midwife.

THE MIDWIFERY CONFERENCE.

AFTERNOON SESSIONS.

Miss Grace Vaughan presided at the first Session of the Midwifery Conference at the Royal Horticultural Hall, on June 24th, when the first paper, "Plain Words to Midwives," was presented by Miss Olive Haydon, who strongly maintained that post-certificate education is one of the most urgent needs of their profession.

Miss Elsie Hall followed, and urged midwives to organise with a view to improving the conditions under which they work and their inadequate pay, and expressed the view that organisation and better training would beget a better status for the midwife.

At 5 o'clock Miss E. F. Neville (Infant Welfare Centre, Middlesex Hospital) read an interesting paper on "Infant Welfare Work," in the course of which she enlarged on the suffering alleviated by skilled training. She referred also to the valuable training in mothercraft given at 29, Trebovir Road, Earl's Court, in Dr. Truby King's methods, where trained nurses are received for a three months' course, and spoke of the good which can be achieved by infant welfare workers in cases of difficult lactation of the district, by instructing the mother daily until she understands the method to be adopted.

EVENING SESSION.

Miss Blomfield (Matron of Queen Charlotte's Hospital) presided at the evening session when three very interesting addresses were delivered.

THE USE AND ABUSE OF DRUGS IN MIDWIFERY.

Dr. Gordon Ley, F.R.C.S., spoke first on the "Use and Abuse of Drugs in Midwifery." In regard to pituitary extract, he had, he said, given up using it for the purpose of stimulating the uterus in the second stage of labour. Some doctors gave it when the head was on the perinæum instead of using forceps. After the third stage it was valuable in cases of oozing to secure contraction. Its abuse in the second stage led to (1) rupture of the uterus, and (2) the death of the child due to pressure from the forcible contractions of the uterus. Its administration hypodermically was sometimes useful prior to catheterisation. Morphine was, as a rule, only used in labour in combination with other drugs, to diminish pain, or in the treatment of eclampsia. Chloral hydrate in $\frac{1}{2}$ drachm or drachm doses might eventually stimulate pains by enabling the patient to get a thoroughly good sleep, and, therefore, to renew her strength, and also by allaying the nervous symptoms which were so often a cause of uterine inertia.

Dr. Gordon Ley dealt at some length with twilight sleep, produced by repeated injections of morphine and hyoscine. Those who listened to

the revolting description of the conditions produced must surely have realised that it should never be had recourse to except under very exceptional circumstances, and explicit medical directions. It is not surprising to learn that there is a consensus of medical opinion against its use, and that it is dying a natural death. We sincerely hope so.

(To be concluded.)

IRISH MIDWIVES AND FEES FOR CERTIFICATES.

Mrs. Marie Mortished, the Secretary of the Irish Nurses' Union, warns Dispensary Midwife Members, in the *Irish Citizen*, to be ready to act at once on any instructions the Union may have to issue.

There is trouble because the Irish Local Government Board have fixed a maximum fee of 2s. 6d. for signing maternity benefit certificates, and have, without replying to a letter from her Union concerning this limitation, again demanded of Nurse Collins (of Athy) that she should refund payments made to her for this service.

It will be remembered that the system in regard to dispensary midwives in Ireland is to pay them what may be regarded as a retaining fee—for it cannot be regarded as a living wage—for attending the poor law outdoor midwifery cases in a certain area, and to permit them to eke out their livelihood with such private practice as they are able to secure.

The position is—says Mrs. Mortished—that the Local Government Board admits these fees are a matter of private and not dispensary practice, and yet insists on fixing a limit to the amount a midwife may earn by private practice without consulting her Union, or, apparently, anybody at all.

The Irish Nurses' Union have, therefore, informed the L.G.B. that, if they carry out their threat and dismiss Nurse Collins without condescending to explain their actions in this matter, a situation may be created in which the Board will find it necessary to dismiss 250 other Dispensary Midwives as well.

Meanwhile the Union counsels its midwife members not to alter their usual custom in regard to charging for these certificates, but to ask for whatever fee they have been in the habit of charging.

SUGAR CENTRES.

The new arrangements for the supply of sugar to Child Welfare Centres came into operation on June 13th. Permits for the extra ration will be issued direct by local Food Control Committees, and the present system will cease to operate.

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