

The Certified Midwives Total Abstinence League.

A well attended and enthusiastic meeting was held in the Outpatient Hall of the London Temperance Hospital on Friday evening last, April 16th, to inaugurate the Certified Midwives' Total Abstinence League.

Dr. Annie McCall ably filled the chair, and introduced the subject, placing before midwives the importance both to themselves, and to their patients, of total abstinence from stimulants.

Dr. R. J. Collie followed with a pessimistic speech as to the prospects of reclamation of those who have once given way to intemperance, and quoted his own experience, and the opinion of other medical men, and of a city missionary, to show, as he said, the hopelessness of the eradication of the habit when once established. A mental specialist had said: "I say, and say it deliberately, that the sooner these people drink themselves to death the better."

Happily this experience is not universal, and many men and women are now leading "godly, righteous, and sober lives," who at one time gave way to the alcoholic habit.

The speaker said that nurses and midwives were brought into closer contact with patients than even medical men. They should impress upon nursing mothers that alcohol is a drug, and that stout is not a food, and no more useful in increasing the flow of milk than any other fluid. Further, it was found chemically that alcohol taken by the mother enters her milk, and therefore is absorbed by her baby. Nurses and midwives knew well that alcoholic patients produced puny, miserable, underfed children.

Dr. Collie urged upon midwives both for the sake of example, and for their own, never to take alcohol at confinements. He instanced a day in which he has attended three confinements before twelve o'clock and been offered two whiskies and one brandy during that time. He begged midwives to impress upon their patients to absolutely bar alcohol if they wished to be healthy and happy and bring forth a strong and vigorous nation.

The next speaker was Miss Rosalind Paget, Member of the Central Midwives' Board, who said that she had been twenty-five years a midwife, and soon after she had taken her certificate an incident had occurred in the practice of a midwife friend which had deeply impressed her with the evils of intemperance. Her friend received an urgent summons from a man who said his wife was very ill, and he could do nothing with the midwife in attendance. She went and found the woman dead on the bed, the room like a shambles, and the woman called a midwife sitting by the body hopelessly drunk, singing a low, comic song. That incident had greatly impressed her, and that was why she had always felt so much sympathy with the temperance movement.

Miss Paget further said that as the only midwife on the Central Midwives' Board, she felt that to some extent she was the direct representative of

every certified midwife on the Roll, and she felt this responsibility keenly. The question of intemperance was brought before her most forcibly at the Penal Cases Board, when from time to time the Board were compelled to remove midwives from the Roll for drunkenness. She held the reputation of her profession very dear, and it was a great grief to her when such action was necessary. It might be thought that the midwives so removed were "bona-fides," but of the ten midwives removed from the Roll for drunkenness while on duty, at the last three Penal Boards, five were midwives "by examination."

Miss Paget referred to the peculiar temptation of the solitary midwife to have recourse to alcohol. She was, perhaps, routed out of her bed to go to a case, and returned tired and chilled to an unmade bed, no fire, and no one to get her any hot food. To take stimulants then might be the excusable beginning of a sad ending. Discretion was the better part of valour. The one thing that was of supreme value to midwives was their reputation. They could not be too careful of it.

Those who had read Othello, and everyone should do so, would remember the quotation:

"Oh, that men should put an enemy into their mouths to steal away their brains!"

At any moment a midwife may have to meet a grave emergency. She must keep her brains clear or she may have to say with Cassio:

"My reputation. I have lost my reputation. I have lost that immortal part of myself—my reputation!"

Miss Alice Gregory, Secretary of the Home for Mothers and Babies, Woolwich, said that most midwives must want their patients to become abstainers when they see many of the homes; but it is quite impossible to fight intemperance unless one is a pledged abstainer. It had been said, and she believed it was true, "if you make a friend of a woman in her confinement she is your friend for life." She should use that influence on the side of temperance. How many women date drinking habits from their first confinement? "I never used to take anything till my first child was born."

Miss Richardson, Matron of the London Temperance Hospital, in extending a very hearty welcome to those present, said that early in her hospital career she began to see that she could not in fairness ask her patients to give up stimulants if she was not prepared to do so herself.

The proceedings closed with a hearty vote of thanks to Miss Richardson, proposed by Dr. Roocke, and seconded by Miss Bertha Taylor, Matron of the Clapham Maternity Hospital.

The Central Midwives' Board.

APRIL EXAMINATION.

The list of successful candidates at the April Examination of the Central Midwives' Board is now published. The number of candidates examined was 285, and of these 231 passed and 54 failed. The percentage of failures was thus 19. As we have devoted so much space in this issue to the Nursing and Midwifery Conference, we shall publish the list of names next week.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)