

The Midwife.

Midwives' Act Committee.

The thirteenth meeting of the Departmental Committee appointed by the Lord President of the Council to consider the working of the Midwives' Act, 1902, was held at the Privy Council Office, on Wednesday, May 19th, Mr. Almeric W. FitzRoy, the Clerk of the Council, in the chair.

The following witnesses attended:—Mr. A. Rivers-Willson, Ph.D., L.S.A.; Mr. E. Parker Young, L.S.A., M.R.C.S.; Mr. J. Theodore Dodd.

The Maternal Death Rate.

An interesting and important point brought out by Miss Rosalind Paget, a member of the Council of Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, as well as of the Central Midwives' Board, at the recent Jubilee Congress of District Nursing at Liverpool, was the effect of skilled nursing on maternal mortality in child-birth. Many of the Queen's Nurses are also certified midwives, and the Institute receives reports of all maternity cases attended by its nurses, and village nurse-midwives. The maternal mortality of cases attended by these trained workers is just below 1 per thousand, while the average maternal mortality of England and Wales is 3.8 per thousand. In our issue of last week these rates were printed as just below 1 per cent. and as 3.8 per cent. respectively—an obvious clerical error.

Liverpool and District Trained Midwives' Association.

A large and enthusiastic meeting of the members was held on Friday, May 14th, in the Common Hall, Hackins Hey, Liverpool, to hear an address by Miss Rosalind Paget.

In the course of the address, Miss Paget fully described the constitution of the Midwives' Act and the numerous difficulties which had to be surmounted ere it became law.

Afterwards Miss Paget spoke at some length, and gave the members some valuable advice upon organisation, etc., which was listened to with great attention.

Miss Paget's replies to questions put by some of the members were both helpful and instructive.

Home for Mothers and Babies' Training School for District Midwives.

A Drawing-room Meeting took place on May 25th at the Deanery, St. Paul's, in support of the Home for Mothers and Babies and for the higher training of midwives at Wood Street, Woolwich. Lady George Hamilton was in the chair, and the speakers were Dr. Annie McCall, Miss Jane Walker, M.D., the Archdeacon of Lewisham, and Miss Gregory, Hon. Sec. and Founder of the Home.

In opening the meeting, Lady George Hamilton said that she would leave it to better speakers than herself to explain how necessary it was that midwives should receive a higher training, but in the meantime she would like to emphasise what a constant and serious-minded attention the public should give to the fact that in 1910 the Midwives Act would come into full operation, and that the nation had to face a shortage of well-trained midwives.

Dr. Walker said that people seemed to think that childbirth was a purely physiological process and that any attendant would do, whereas it was frequently abnormal and pathological, and required the exercise of much skill and knowledge; also that when the Act came into full force, and the public were only able to call the help of doctors and certified midwives, that they, becoming limited in number, would be able to charge higher fees and thus make a better living, for the salaries of midwives at present were not a living wage.

The Venerable Archdeacon of Lewisham, in moving the adoption of the report, said that the Council desire that a two years' training should be required in Great Britain, as it is on the Continent, and that, to enable them to do that, they much required a general hospital at Woolwich to help them carry out their scheme, which people spoke of as "Miss Gregory's fad."

Miss Gregory then rose and gave a most convincing account of the work. Not only were the lives of mothers, but of children, saved. She stated that 120,000 children died yearly, and 60,000 of them in their first month of life, and that skilled midwives were able to prevent much infant mortality. They had sent out 19 trained midwives, and their letters to her and accounts of their experiences of the untrained midwives and their work sounded more like stories of last century than this one. The only reason she could learn why these drunken midwives were engaged in preference to well-trained ones was that their patients liked drinking themselves. They were trying to get up post graduate lectures and triennial meetings for their past pupils, who still frequently helped the Home out of their earnings of from £70-80 per annum. She then told of a nurse who had recently broken her engagement

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