

The Midwife.

The Midwifery and Nursing Conference.

The third Annual Midwifery and Nursing Exhibition was opened at the Royal Horticultural Hall on Wednesday, April 27th, by H.R.H. Princess Christian, who was supported on the platform by Lady Balfour of Burleigh and Miss Alice Gregory and Miss Lucy Robinson, certified midwives. Dr. Champneys, in the name of the Conference, thanked the Princess for her presence and sympathetic interest, and this was seconded by Sir Dyce Duckworth.

Her Royal Highness, in declaring the Conference open, expressed her appreciation of the kind wish that she should open the Conference and be its President. It was now forty years since she began to take a deep interest in nursing. Nurses could not be too perfect in order to be just what the doctors wished them to be.

The Princess accepted a handsome basket of flowers, in which the Red Cross stood out against a white background, presented by the little son of the Organising Secretary of the Exhibition, Mr. Ernest Schofield.

THE CONFERENCE.

Dr. Champneys presided at the opening Session of the Conference. Miss Lucy Robinson, certified midwife, presented the first paper, on

THE LIVING WAGE FOR MIDWIVES IN RURAL DISTRICTS.

Miss Robinson said that in the villages and rural districts there were various ways in which midwives could be maintained. They could work as Queen's Nurses in connection with the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, when they were paid a fixed salary, but the greater part of their work was then nursing; under County Nursing Associations, when they also had a fixed salary, and combined nursing and midwifery; but all over England there were small rural districts needing the services of midwives, and the reply to the question: "Can a living wage be made out of midwifery alone" must be in the negative. Midwives must have some other means of support. The average income of a rural midwife working on her own account was probably £16 a year.

Sometimes married women added to their income by taking midwifery cases. Sometimes wives and daughters of the clergy undertook it. But this did not touch the fringe of the question. In other European countries midwives had the advantage of status, salaries, and pensions. We had now a definite status, but the office of a midwife was a patriotic and sacred one, and she deserved assistance. Even if that assistance was represented only by a rent-free cottage it would be a great help to her.

Referring to the fact that women were now afraid to render assistance to lying-in women in

emergency, Miss Robinson told a quaint story of a patient whom she had occasion to visit, who had been alone and unaided at the time of her child's birth. She had rendered first aid to herself with considerable skill, "but," she confessed, "I was horribly frightened, because, you know, it is now against the law!"

THE COMBINED DUTIES OF THE DISTRICT NURSES AND MIDWIVES.

Miss Macqueen, Nursing Superintendent for England, Q.V.J.I., dealt with the above aspect of the midwifery question in place of Miss Amy Hughes, who is on her way to Australia to organise the district nursing there. Discussing whether a combination of the duties of nurse and midwife was desirable, and the standard for nurses in country districts, Miss Macqueen said that there was no doubt that the best trained nurse (i.e., the thoroughly trained Queen's Nurse) was the best. But there were two difficulties in her employment. There were only a limited number of highly-trained nurses willing to work in the rural districts, and midwifery does not attract a great many; there were not enough to go round. And secondly, there were often not sufficient funds available to pay the salary of a fully-trained nurse. The alternative was the village nurse, under the supervision of the Superintendent of a County Nursing Association.

The experience for six years of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute proved conclusively that the duties of nurse and midwife could be combined. There was, moreover, a very limited demand for women who were certified midwives only, but the demand for midwives with twelve months' general training as nurses exceeded the supply. She was not prepared to say that this combination of duties was ideal, but at the present day it met a need. In conclusion Miss Macqueen said that district nursing was one of the greatest preventive agencies of modern times.

The Discussion was opened by the Hon. Lady Acland, who said that the work of midwives in the rural districts was onerous and not very popular, and they should not be expected to do all they did for nothing, or be in constant anxiety concerning their daily bread.

Mrs. Eddie (National Association of Midwives) said that nationally and collectively we paid for Dreadnoughts for the safety of the country, and why not pay nationally and collectively for midwives for the same purpose. She was opposed to combining midwifery and nursing. She thought midwives should specialise in the one thing and keep to that. She did not approve of midwifery being undertaken for pocket-money wages. That was keeping down the payments of the women who had to maintain themselves. She put the living wage for a midwife, at 100 cases per annum, at 15s. each.

Dr. Bygott (M.O.H., Barking) commented strongly on the fact that some associations do not

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