

Cecilia Jarvis (No. 493), Edith Emily Smith (No. 24673).

SECRETARY'S REPORT ON EXAMINATION.

The Secretary presented his report on the April examination, which showed the percentage of failures to be 12.8. The Chairman said that they started with a percentage of failures of 22 per cent. The decrease was not due to a lowering of the standard, but to the better teaching of the pupils. It is further interesting to notice that the failures at the last examination from the training schools were 9 per cent., from the private tuition candidates 20.9.

The next meeting of the Board was fixed for June 30th.

The Training of Midwives.

The Duchess of Hamilton presided at the fifth annual meeting of the Woolwich Home for Mothers and Babies (Training School for District Midwives) held at the Deanery, St. Paul's, on Tuesday last. Canon Holmes, referring to the decreasing population, said that those who worked among the cottage homes knew there was no greater danger to the country than the untrained nurse. Dr. J. S. Fairbairn stated that the training imposed for the certificate of the Central Midwives' Board was altogether too short for those who had not had previous hospital work. The loss of infant life was appalling, and it would pay the State to do something. Miss A. S. Gregory also pointed out that England lagged far beyond Continental nations, which insisted on longer periods of training.

The Rural Midwives' Association.

The seventh annual meeting of the Rural Midwives' Association was held on Tuesday, May 31st, at 3, Grosvenor Place, by kind permission of Lady Esther Smith.

In the unavoidable absence of Mr. H. J. Tennant, M.P., through illness, Dr. Champneys occupied the chair.

Dr. Champneys, in his opening speech, gave a short history of the movement. He said that the Act which came into force this year had stopped the offices of the friendly neighbour except in cases of emergency, and at first it seemed likely there would be an appalling shortage of midwives ready to take their places. But that fear was not likely now to be realised, and indeed from some places the report came that there were too many. The London County Council state no more are required in the County of London, so that the question resolved itself into one of redistribution.

A great many midwives who presented themselves for examination did not intend to practise at all, but in April, 1909, about one-third of those who presented themselves intended to practise as rural midwives, which was a very satisfactory proportion. He suggested to benevolent people that instead of always endowing beds or cots in hospitals, they should endow a midwife for some rural district, the remoter the better.

Mrs. C. Hobhouse said that the older members of

the Society would remember that at first they aimed at supplying women trained in midwifery only, but of late years the demand that they should also have general training had enormously increased. This training was, of course, desirable, amongst other reasons because in some districts they might have weeks of enforced idleness owing to the scarcity of cases. The additional training brought with it very considerable increase in expense so that in future they would have to raise the fee to subscribers from £12 12s. to £14 14s.

Dr. Downes pointed out the importance of working in harmony with the local medical men. He warmly advocated the necessity of giving midwives general training as nurses also, and said that in Holland they were required to hold a two years' certificate of general training, and were only obliged to have effected ten deliveries. He wished that Poor Law Guardians would see the necessity for making more provision for the nursing of their out-door sick poor. In the rural districts, where suitably trained nurses were provided, if they were to pay in proportion to the services rendered it would solve a great difficulty.

Mrs. Arthur Holland said that the Surrey County Council had provided courses of lectures to midwives, the lecturer being Dr. Mary Roocke. The Local Committee had also purchased several books to lend to midwives.

Dr. Sydney Stephenson said that the real reason of his presence that afternoon was that he should speak about ophthalmia.

From a quarter to a third of the blindness in this country was due to that disease; 99 out of every 100 cases could be prevented. He came to speak very willingly, for he was sure that if the public once understood what was the cause of this terrible affliction, it would insist that it should be prevented. He had little doubt that in time notification of this disease would be compulsory. He considered that any trouble in this respect would be well rewarded if they could save one single child from the eternal night of blinded sight.

Dr. Fegan dwelt on the absolute necessity of cleanliness, not comparative, but actual. He said that in a large poor district he had made up his mind to purge the Roll, and he had done it successfully. There were large numbers of medical men and forty midwives, and he had got rid of 19 undesirables. Their one object must be to insure immunity during parturition for mother and child. He would ask Dr. Downes to represent to the Local Government Board the desirability of the payment of the full fee, £1 1s., to medical practitioners, called in by midwives to attend cases with which they are unable to deal, as at present medical practitioners often received no fee at all. He was glad to know of the extended time of grace for registration, and had caused it to be widely known.

Mr. Fremantle, in commenting on Dr. Stephenson's remarks on ophthalmia, quoted a comment of the late King on the subject: "If preventible, why not prevented?"

With the usual votes of thanks, the meeting then terminated.

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