

# The Midwife.

## LEICESTER AND LEICESTERSHIRE MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION.

A very successful meeting of the Leicester and Leicestershire Midwives' Association was held at the G.F.S. Rooms, 5, St. Martin's East, on Wednesday, October 28th. Midwives from the town and county, with others interested were present, among whom were Mrs. Bond, Mrs. Fielding Johnson, Mrs. Paget, Miss Bacon, Miss Gray, and others. Dr. Montague Williams presided. Letters of regret at being unable to attend were received from Dr. Lewis Lilley and Dr. Robinson. The absence of the latter caused much disappointment to the Health Visitors and Midwives from the county.

Dr. Williams, in his opening remarks, stated that the Association was formed in February, 1914, by Miss Walker, and that Nurse Howe, as Secretary, had done much hard work for it.

Dr. Williams proceeded to say that he was old enough to remember the midwife of twenty-five years ago, and in those days in Leicester he often came across the type of midwife so admirably portrayed by Charles Dickens. The Midwives Act of 1902, with its stringent regulations as to training, quickly altered all this, and medical men to-day rejoiced in the co-operation of a body of women of scientific minds, cultured, well-trained, a credit to their calling and a valuable public asset.

That afternoon they were going a step further in Leicester, and were about to inaugurate a Midwives' Association, (1) To elevate the dignity of the honourable calling of a midwife; (2) to look after her interests and advance her education and knowledge.

It was hoped through its agency to make the already wise midwife considerably wiser. The purpose of all good Governments was to look after the interests of the people, introduce social reforms, and eradicate evils.

One of the most crying evils to-day was the falling birthrate. It was wrong morally and socially. We were now at war with a powerful military State, and blood was being poured out like water. The wastage of war and the declining birthrate were serious problems which would have to be considered.

Another question which would have to be considered in the near future was that of infantile deaths due to ignorance and preventable diseases, and instruction given at a maternity centre by either doctors or midwives would materially help to lower the high ante-natal mortality. Concluding, Dr. Williams said: Your future usefulness in the social field to-day stands well to the fore. Try to educate yourselves to higher ideals. Co-operation is a strong force.

This Association will help you. Join it at once. It will help you to raise the dignity of your calling, and to solve the difficult social problems which face us to-day, and above all it will lighten the burden which a strenuous calling like yours compels some of you to bear, sometimes beyond your strength. I congratulate you all, and I wish you well.

Dr. Millard, the Medical Officer of Health for Leicester, said that it was difficult during the present crisis to think of anything not connected with the War, but there were some things which must be attended to whatever happened, and the occupation of a midwife was one. It was a great pleasure to him to have the opportunity of addressing so many midwives all together at this first meeting of the Leicester and Leicestershire Midwives' Association. Those of them who came from the Borough, he was, of course, well acquainted with, as they often had little tête-à-tête interviews at the Town Hall, nearly always, he was glad to say, of a most friendly and cordial description. He thoroughly approved of the formation of the Association, and had lent his support to it from the first, as he believed it would tend to promote the efficiency of midwives joining it. As the Chairman had said, the midwife of the present day was a very different person and held a very different position to what was formerly the case. He did not think that the raising of fees should be the principal object of the Association, although it was quite right that if improved service was given the remuneration should also be better than it used to be, and it was quite right to set their face against an inefficient midwife giving inferior service for a low fee.

The primary object of the Association, however, should be to encourage co-operation and good feeling between midwives; to endeavour to raise their status and improve their efficiency; at the same time, discouraging anything that told in the opposite direction.

Dr. Millard then proceeded to refer to the great moral influence for good which a midwife was capable of exerting. After quoting the example of Shiphrah and Puah, the two Hebrew midwives referred to in the first chapter of Exodus, Dr. Millard referred to the great influence of midwives in inculcating principles of temperance. It was an old but mistaken idea that women when suckling required alcoholic stimulants. That was an entire mistake. Alcohol was never required under these circumstances, and it was more often than not positively injurious. It was milk, not alcohol, that nursing mothers required to keep up their strength.

Dr. Gertrude Austen dealt with the question of the responsibility of the midwife as a teacher, and said that it was impossible for midwives to escape from teaching, because their patients had

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