

## The Midwife.

### NATIONAL TRAINING SCHOOL FOR DISTRICT MIDWIVES.

The Annual Meeting of subscribers and friends of the British Hospital for Mothers and Babies, and the Council for the Promotion of the Higher Training of Midwives, Wood Street, Woolwich, was held in the Great Hall, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Smithfield, on Wednesday, May 8th.

It was a great disappointment that Princess Christian who is President both of the British Hospital and of the Council, was unable to fulfil her intention of presiding. Her Royal Highness sent a message to the meeting expressing her regret that she was unable to be present and her interest in the objects which the meeting was convened to promote. In her absence the chair was taken by the Countess of Stamford, Vice-President of the Council for the Promotion of the Higher Training of Midwives.

The first speaker was Lieut.-Colonel Sir Richard Temple Bart., C.B., C.I.E., who explained that the object of the meeting was to inaugurate a "Million Shilling Fund" to complete the £100,000 required to build the National Training School for Midwives. He explained the dual object of the appeal and said that those present were assembled to do their best for the combined institutions. Both would look after the welfare of mothers and babies and strive for an increase of the manhood of the nation.

The work of the training school was most important. Woolwich had been selected because of the advantageous character of the neighbourhood for providing clinical material. There is the Dockyard, the Arsenal, the large respectable working class population—naval, military and civilian—to provide suitable patients.

Long before the war the hospital had been felt to be of national value and that the scope of its work must be secured. It was proposed to provide a course for pupil midwives which would secure their competence when trained. Candidates without previous training who would eventually take teaching posts would be required to take a two years' course, those contemplating working as district midwives a one year's course. With a hospital of 42 beds they hoped to turn out 30 well-trained midwives each year.

The life of mothers was a constant state of war, with the constant fear of becoming casualties. It was up to men as a tribute to the courage of women to see that proper provision was made for them in childbirth.

The birthrate in England and Wales in 1918 was 662,000, or about 13,000 a week. Every one of these 662,000 women who took the field was in the trenches for a month, *i.e.*, 55,000 at a time. Every month 257 died, and 2,200 were disabled, some temporarily, some permanently. Inadequate midwifery was one of the causes of these casualties.

But what happened to the mothers was a trifle as to what happened to the babies. Of the 662,000 babies 90,000 died that year, or 260 a day. Those were not the statistics of trench fighting, but of a severe battle. It was only because the mothers went down into the trenches singly that these conditions were not realised. Every mother at every birth went "over the top," and as in actual warfare only adequate preparation would diminish the risk. This was the clear end in view of the institutions for the support of which he pleaded. Before the war their finances were sufficient to enable them to go ahead, but the building which would then have cost £40,000 would to-day cost £100,000. That was why the object of the meeting was to inaugurate a million shilling fund. The object was to save the mothers, to save the babies, and to train women competent to save both.

Other speakers were Sir Dyce Duckworth, who wished the movement great success, and Miss Alice Gregory, the Hon. Secretary, who pleaded eloquently for better opportunities of training for midwives, and emphasised the inadequacy of three or even six months' training. She spoke with gratitude of the fact that H.R.H. Princess Christian had been one of the first to believe in the scheme for the higher education of midwives and to give it her support.

### THE PORTSMOUTH MUNICIPAL MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

The Mayor of Portsmouth (Councillor John Timpson, J.P.) recently opened Ravenscourt, Elm Grove, as a Municipal Maternity Hospital.

The staff, says a contemporary, consists of a matron, two sisters, and five probationers. In a large hut, erected in the garden, are the sleeping cubicles for the probationers, who will take their meals in the main building. It is intended only to accept as patients those women who are unable to find adequate accommodation in their own homes. A fixed fee of 30s. for a fortnight is to be charged, but the Sub-Committee of the Health Committee, which has charge of the hospital, wish it to be clearly understood that there is no intention of competing with any of the existing nursing homes, as the institution is only intended to supply a want for the poor people that has long been felt. Arrangements have been made whereby cases requiring operations may be transferred to the Royal Portsmouth Hospital at a fixed fee. Infectious cases will be transferred to the Infectious Diseases Hospital at Milton.

The authorities of the Women's Hospital, Castle Gate, Nottingham, have decided to build a new and up-to-date hospital on a desirable site acquired in Peel Street. In this connection the Duchess of Newcastle is appealing for liberal support.

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