

The Midwife.

A TENDER HUMAN INTEREST.

There is no branch of nursing in which nurses take more interest than maternity nursing, and that H.R.H. Princess Mary is soon to become a mother arouses tender interest upon her behalf.

HEALTH VISITORS' LEAGUE.

We quote the following interesting letter from the *Nursing Journal of India*, which we are pleased to note is again being published monthly. It is the official organ—professionally edited—of the Trained Nurses' Association of India, and has, therefore the status of the international organ for the Indian Empire, the Nurses' Association constituting an influential part of the International Council.

DEAR FELLOW MEMBERS,—I have been considering what would be a suitable motto for the Health Visitors' League, and I have come to the conclusion that a certain old adage is the best, it meets the requirements of Health Visitors better than anything else. It is this: "Prevention is better than cure."

This explains the work of a Health Visitor exactly, as her sole aim and object is prevention.

Now-a-days officials are realising that there is much to be gained by preventing diseases, it is easier to prevent an epidemic than to cope with it after it has got a good hold.

Most of the diseases from which babies and young children die are preventable, it is the Health Visitor's work to teach the mothers how to prevent serious illness. Puerperal fever is preventable, and by training dais and teaching them the rudiments of clean midwifery, this can be largely reduced.

Let us all take the motto I have suggested as our watchword and teach prevention, speak prevention, and *think* prevention all day and every day.

Mrs. Clarke writes from Calcutta as follows:—

"I was called to a case the other day in a Chamar's house. The confinement was premature, seven months only. When I got there I found a dai was in attendance and the baby had come (dead) the placenta was still inside. The dai said to me, 'Come and remove the placenta quickly.' She had her hands in already as I could see from the blood on them. I asked her who had delivered the patient. She said, 'I did.' So I told her to wait a little and the placenta would come by itself. The dai said, 'The child has been born two hours, the placenta has not come away, and the uterus is almost closed.' I then told her that the patient must be taken to hospital as only a doctor would be able to remove it. She said, 'You call yourself a midwife and you cannot take out a placenta; what use are you? You are only fit to put on

airs and make a fuss and show of washing your hands and putting them in medicine, before you touch a patient. By this time the patient is dying with the placenta inside her stomach. Get out from here, you useless thing, you cannot do it; stand there and see; I am a midwife; just see how I can remove it.'

"Then she pulled out the placenta in bits and said, 'See, bit by bit I am taking it out; it is more than you can do.'

"She then turned round to the house people and said, 'A fine kind of midwife you have brought, who cannot even take out a placenta! Don't you ever call these people again, they only make a lot of fuss with hot water and medicines. They want to show us that they are doing everything very cleanly, but all the time they are afraid themselves of getting any disease, so they keep washing their hands and putting them in medicine. It is not for you but for themselves that they do this.'

"I then tried to persuade the patient to go to hospital, but she listened to the dai and said, 'I am all right; you do not know anything.'

"After three or four days I went to see her again and found she had high fever and all symptoms of sepsis. Again I tried to get her to go to hospital, but she refused and said, 'You go away; the dai will cure me. I do not want your interference.'

"I visited her again after two days and was met with the news that she had died during the night. The dai said her time had come and the fever had killed her after all the trouble she had taken in delivering her."

This story shows the very great influence the indigenous dais have; the people listen to them, and all Health Visitors will find it one of their greatest difficulties. The only way is to make friends with the dais and try to improve their methods. We shall not be able to supersede them for many years to come.

Yours sincerely,

EDRIS GRIFFIN,

Secretary, H.V. League.

VIENNA MIDWIVES DEMONSTRATE.

The Midwives in Vienna appear to have more determination than British nurses. According to the Vienna correspondent of the *Daily Mail*, 1,300 registered midwives in that city demonstrated on Wednesday, January 10th, before the Town Hall, and took a petition to Dr. Seipel, in Parliament, demanding a State minimum subsistence allowance, old age pensions, and protection against quacks. They declared that only thirty Vienna midwives can earn an adequate income, because the birth-rate is much reduced, and most mothers are obliged, through poverty, to enter charitable institutions.

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