

The Midwife.

THE TRAINING OF MIDWIVES.

A valuable series of Reports on Public Health and Medical Subjects is being issued by the Ministry of Health, No. 21, just issued, being an exhaustive Report on the Training of Midwives, by Dr. Janet M. Campbell, M.D., M.S., Senior Medical Officer for Maternity and Child Welfare, Ministry of Health. It is published by His Majesty's Stationery Office, Imperial House, Kingsway, London, W.C.2, price 1s. 3d. net, and should be studied by all interested in the subject of midwifery, whether trainers and teachers of midwives, practising midwives, Local Supervising Authorities, or those concerned in their provision.

Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, in a Prefatory Note to the Minister of Health, writes:—

"As more than 50 per cent. of the cases of childbirth occurring in England and Wales are attended solely by midwives, their contribution to the community and to the national health is obvious. But their value depends upon their adequate training, experience, and skill, which must keep pace with growing knowledge and with the requirements of modern midwifery practice. From a public health point of view we not only need more practising midwives, but a higher average of competency if we are to secure an increased degree of safety and efficient treatment for child-bearing women. Miss Campbell's Report discusses the whole position and the present needs, and includes relative comparisons with the conditions of training in other European countries. Miss Campbell recommends that the period of training should be lengthened, that the curriculum should be revised and reconstructed, and that the training schools should be suitably graded. The institution of a Teacher's Certificate is recommended, and also the registration of monthly nurses and unqualified attendants who assist in the nursing of maternity patients. I concur in these recommendations."

In her introduction Dr. Janet Campbell writes:

"Much attention has been directed of late to the question of *maternal mortality* associated with childbirth, and the almost stationary character of the maternal mortality rate suggests the inference that the midwifery service of the country is not as efficient as it should be."

She gives a table showing the maternal mortality for the ten years 1897-1906, the average being the death of one mother to 228 births. In the year 1907 there was the death of one mother to 261 births, and in 1922 there was the death of one mother to 263 births.

Dr. Campbell points out that "during the present century the general death rate has steadily declined, and the standard of sanitation and general and personal hygiene of the country as a

whole has been raised. It is, therefore, disappointing and surprising to observe that the improved training of midwives and the wider knowledge and application of methods of surgical cleanliness have not had more effect in reducing the maternal mortality and associated morbidity. This suggests that both doctor and midwife are still imperfectly educated in obstetrics." The training of the medical student has been reported on in "Notes on the Arrangements for Teaching Obstetrics and Gynæcology in the Medical Schools," Report No. 15. In the present Report Dr. Campbell considers the training of the pupil midwife and its effectiveness in equipping her for her subsequent work.

Discussing the administration of the Midwives Act, Dr. Campbell points out that it came into operation on April 1st, 1903, and was placed in the hands of the Central Midwives Board. In the first place the period of training required was three months. In June, 1916, this period was extended to six months in the case of untrained women, and to four months (or in some cases three months) for certain trained nurses.

"In 1919 the Board of Education obtained the approval of the Treasury to make some contribution towards the cost of training midwives. It was decided that with certain exceptions grants-in-aid should be limited to midwives intending to practise midwifery, that a grant of £20 should be paid to training institutions approved by the Board for each pupil midwife who expressed a *bona-fide* intention to practise, and that the training school should be expected correspondingly to reduce the fees paid by the pupil midwives concerned. . . . In the year ending March, 1923, grants amounting approximately to £13,600 were paid in respect of 670 pupil midwives."

Dr. Campbell makes some interesting extracts from a Report by Dr. Jane H. Turnbull, one of the Medical Officers to the Board of Health, who, during the last three and a half years, has visited 71 midwifery training schools, 54 on behalf of the Board of Education and 17 by direction of the Ministry of Health on behalf of the Central Midwives Board. We regret that space does not permit of our referring to these extracts in detail at the present time.

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE TRAINING PERIOD.

"It has long been recognised that even the extended period of six months is altogether insufficient for the satisfactory education of a student of midwifery, and indeed a number of training schools encourage, or even require, their pupils to remain for a rather longer time. The practice of midwifery is an exacting calling, involving as it does direct personal responsibility for the safety of the lives of two persons, mother and child, a responsibility which can be compared only to that exercised by the medical practitioner.

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