

The Midwife.

THE TRAINING OF MIDWIVES.*

(Concluded from page 208.)

Dr. Janet M. Campbell ends her Report on the Training of Midwives with the following conclusions:—

CONCLUSIONS.

As already implied, the fundamental reason for desiring a longer training for midwives and their more general employment to the exclusion of unqualified women is because the better standard of midwifery and maternity nursing which would result could not fail to help to reduce the unduly high incidence of maternity mortality and morbidity due to childbirth. Unless we are content to leave matters much as they are and merely to hope for the slow and gradual improvement which will no doubt take place in time in relation to the general improvement of public health, energetic action in various directions is needed. The problem of maternal mortality is an extremely complex one. It cannot be solved by any one means, but rather by correlated action in several directions, medical, nursing, and social. An essential factor is more competent professional attendance for women before, during, and after childbirth than exists at present, and this can only be obtained by the better education of the medical student and the pupil midwife. The suggestions in regard to midwifery training and practice may be summarised briefly as follows:—

(1) There should be an extension of the training for unqualified women from six months to twelve, and for trained nurses from four months to six. The examination for the certificate of the Central Midwives Board should be taken at the end of this period.

(2) The curriculum should be revised and reconstructed, though not necessarily enlarged, in order that the education may be organised on a broader basis and in such a way as (a) to include clinical and theoretical instruction in the management of labour, both in maternity wards and on the "district," and (b) to provide that adequate attention is devoted to such matters as maternity nursing, ante-natal care, breast feeding, the care of the new-born infant, the nursing of puerperal fever, ophthalmia neonatorum, &c.

(3) Midwifery training schools, whether under the Poor Law or otherwise, should be graded in accordance with the facilities they are able to offer for a complete or partial training. The smaller training institutions should be affiliated for teaching purposes with institutions able to offer complementary facilities, so that midwifery pupils, wherever they decide to train, may be sure of

receiving reasonably uniform instruction in all branches of the curriculum.

(4) Careful consideration should be given to the establishment of a "teacher's" certificate in midwifery for midwives desiring to occupy responsible educational positions. The certificate should not aim at extending the proper functions of the midwife, but would ensure that those midwives who possessed it had actually practised as midwives for a specified period, that they had not only received suitable instruction in the theory and practice of their profession but understood the relation of midwifery to the Public Health Service and the social circumstances of the patients, and that they were themselves competent to teach students.

(5) In order to raise the standard of maternity nursing and encourage midwives to undertake this work it is suggested that all monthly nurses and handy-women practising maternity nursing for gain should be registered by the Local Supervising Authority, and thus be brought within the supervision of the Inspector of Midwives.

As long as the employment of midwives is an essential and integral part of the midwifery service of the country, it is the duty of the State and of Local Authorities to ensure as far as possible that a midwife is a competent and safe practitioner, and in view of this responsibility it is suggested that she should receive such official encouragement and financial help as may be necessary to enable her to follow her profession under conditions of reasonable comfort and security.

JANET M. CAMPBELL.

THE SOURCE OF A RACE.

Sir George Newman, Chief Medical Officer of the Ministry of Health, in his Annual Report for 1922, submitted to the Minister of Health on the state of the Public Health, writes:—

"The health of mothers and children is quite fundamental. It lies at the basis of all public health, and of all true national well-being. It is concerned with origins, with the source of a race. To 'save' money over the health of motherhood or infancy is to lose it. The adequate provision for midwifery and maternity nursing and treatment, for dealing effectually with measles, for supplying wholesome milk for children, for supervising and caring for the health of school children, as well as those not yet old enough to attend school—all this is essential if we desire to rear a healthy people. The Industrial Revolution did no worse damage than to mothers and children; of all its evils this was the most far-reaching and irretrievable. Here again we must not lose our way by following 'wandering fires,' or be penny wise and pound foolish. Personal hygiene, associated with a sanitary environment, is the only way out, and wise investment will return a hundredfold of interest."

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