

The Midwife.

THE QUEEN'S INSTITUTE OF DISTRICT NURSING.

The Midwifery Branch of the Work.

The thirty-eighth Annual Report of the Queen's Institute of District Nursing to the Patron, Her Majesty the Queen, to which we referred in our last issue, gives some interesting details in regard to the midwifery branch of the work.

Since 1889, when the Provisional Committee had to report that women after their confinement were habitually left uncared for and neglected, much has been done for the midwifery branch of the work. In 1904, soon after the passing of the Midwives Act, a Supplemental Charter was granted to the Queen's Institute making it lawful for the Council to apply its income for the training and supply of women to act as Midwives.

The Queen's Institute is keenly interested in any endeavour to improve the midwifery and maternity service, and is prepared to co-operate whole-heartedly. It views, however, with serious misgivings certain tendencies which seem likely to interfere with the training, status and conditions of service of midwives. The work is hard and the responsibility is great and it is important that the right type of woman should be attracted to the service. The proposals to withdraw from midwives any share in determining the conditions of training and entry to their own profession and in maintaining their own professional standards will lower the status and discourage better educated women from becoming midwives, and thus be detrimental to the service.

The Council has agreed to give a certain number of scholarships to Queen's Nurses to enable them to take the course of training for the Health Visitor's certificate. It is important that there should be Queen's Nurses holding this additional qualification who will be available for posts where Public Health Work is undertaken, especially in connection with County Nursing Associations.

It has been decided that nurses who hold the Health Visitor's certificate shall be eligible to apply for enrolment as Queen's Nurses after four months' district training instead of the full six months. A special arrangement has also been made under which suitable State Registered nurses found by County Nursing Associations will be given district training at a cost of £10 to the County Association, or district and midwifery training at a cost of £15 to the County Nursing Association. These nurses would be under agreement to the County Nursing Association to work in the county after the completion of their training.

A PICTURESQUE CEREMONY.

A very picturesque ceremony took place at the Dorchester recently at the Queen Charlotte's Birthday Ball in aid of Queen Charlotte's Maternity Hospital.

The Birthday Cake, which was cut by Lady Patricia Ramsay, a great-great-grand-daughter of Queen Charlotte, was illuminated by 187 candles, and drawn in by 44 maids of honour, all *debutantes* who are being presented this summer, each of whom later received from Lady Patricia Ramsay a small replica of the original Queen Charlotte Coronation Medal of 1761. The procession of *debutantes* was led by Lady George Cholmondeley as *dame d'honneur*, and the Hon. Bronwen Scott-Ellis as maid-in-waiting.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD FOR SCOTLAND.

At the recent examinations of the Central Midwives Board for Scotland, held simultaneously in Edinburgh,

Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen, out of 168 candidates who presented themselves for the examination 154 passed. Of the successful candidates, 70 were trained at the Royal Maternity Hospital, Glasgow; 22 at the Royal Maternity Hospital, Edinburgh; 4 at the Maternity Hospital, Aberdeen; 11 at the Royal Infirmary, Dundee; 20 at the Elsie Inglis Hospital, Edinburgh; and the others at various recognised institutions.

COW WITCHCRAFT.

"It was the middle of the Masika," writes a nurse in *Central Africa* (the Journal of the Universities Mission to Central Africa), "when it not only rains all day, but it rains in sheets and torrents, and the mountain paths are running streams, but all the same five men appeared at the nurse's house and begged her to go back with them to help a woman who was in sore need. The Shambala mountains have paths as steep as the side of a house, but with two men pulling her in front and three men pushing behind, they at last managed to get the nurse to the house.

"No Shambala man is allowed inside the door where a child has been born, so the nurse called out 'Hodi' and walked into the outer room, which was full of women. She at once felt that she was in a hostile atmosphere; however, she gave the usual greetings and said something to make them laugh, and then asked for the patient; but no one said a word or even motioned to the room, for all these women were African midwives, who had been called one after another to help the patient and each one in turn had been conquered. By African custom not a single midwife is allowed to leave the house, in case they should do counter magic and spoil their rivals' chance; so there they sat, foiled and disgusted and knowing full well that only the successful midwife would get the fee. The Mission nurse, with the help of a lamp, found her patient lying on the mud floor in the inner part of the house, with three women looking helplessly at her. In a few minutes the patient was out of danger.

"Then came the slippery return journey. At one place in the road she noticed a big patch of thick, sticky blood, and she asked who had been hurt. The men grunted in disgust, 'No one, it is cow witchcraft' and they refused to say any more.

"The next day the nurse asked the teacher what 'cow witchcraft' meant. He looked sharply at her and said, 'What do you know about that, it is *very bad* witchcraft,' and he said no more. Later on one of the women told her that there had been the most dreadful quarrel in the village to which she had gone. The husband and a few people in the village believed that the Mission nurse could help them and others were furious at the idea of her being asked, so the doubters had evidently put their most powerful magic in her homeward way. But African witchcraft has no power over European missionaries because in most cases the fear in the heart of the bewitched man is what really kills him and 'Fear not little flock' is as strong a protection to the Christian now as it has been all down the ages."

Canon Woodward relates that two women were recently sent by the sister-in-charge of the "Birth House" at Magila, East Africa, in answer to a night call from several miles away. The people told them they must not go as there were lions about. Their reply was that the lions had their business, and they—the women—had theirs, and no lions should hinder them. They went and returned safely.

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