

The Midwife.

THE INTERNATIONAL MIDWIVES' UNION.

THE SIXTH CONGRESS.

The Sixth Congress of the International Midwives' Union, an interesting and important organisation which has its Headquarters at 57, Pieternieuwstraat, Ghent, Belgium, has been in session at the Midwives' Institute, 57, Lower Belgrave Street, S.W., from May 26th-May 29th, and has been attended by over 300 delegates from 15 countries, including Great Britain.

Famous obstetricians in this and from foreign countries also took an active part in the proceedings, the subject for consideration being the Training and Education of Midwives.

Reception by His Majesty's Government.

The proceedings were inaugurated by a Reception on the evening of Friday, May 25th, by His Majesty's Government at Lancaster House, St. James; the function was honoured by the presence of Her Royal Highness the Duchess of York. In the unavoidable absence of the Minister of Health, the guests were received by Lord and Lady Gage.

Amongst those invited were His Excellency the Belgian Ambassador and Baroness de Cartier de Marchienne, His Excellency the Italian Ambassador and Donna Antonietta Grandi, His Excellency the Soviet Ambassador and Madame Maisky, the Netherland Minister and Madame Marees van Swinderen, the Bulgarian Minister and Madame Hadji-Mischeff, Mademoiselle Margaret Hadji-Mischeff and Mademoiselle Theodora Hadji-Mischeff, the Yugoslav Minister, the Latvian Minister and Madame Zarine, and the Roumanian Chargé d'Affaires, a number of distinguished guests, including Miss Rosalind Paget, Founder and Hon. Treasurer, the Incorporated Midwives' Institute, Miss Edith M. Pye, President, the Incorporated Midwives' Institute, the majority of the foreign delegates, a large number of the Matrons of General and Municipal Hospitals in London and of Maternity Hospitals. It was an auspicious prelude to the Congress, and an honourable recognition of an important class of public servants.

The Opening Session.

The meetings of the Congress were held at the Headquarters of the Midwives' Institute, 57, Lower Belgrave Street, S.W. Miss Edith M. Pye, S.R.N., Chevalier de la Légion d'Honneur, President of the Congress, was in the Chair, and gave the Presidential Address at the opening session on May 26th. Miss Pye pointed out that the profession of midwifery is a very important, perhaps one of the most important branches of Social Service, since the influence of the midwife upon the mother in her most impressionable state, and upon the infant who is starting upon his journey through life, can hardly be over-estimated. But it is a profession which needs accurate scientific knowledge, because of the conditions of civilisation, which have removed childbirth from the sphere of an act as simple as other bodily functions and have made it an occasion for the exercise of the highest and most intelligent care.

All European countries now have a system of registration, and it is interesting to note that Indian social workers are now demanding registration and control of workers in India, and that the Chinese Government has set up two Schools of Midwifery. The United States of America, where maternal mortality is high, has ignored almost

entirely the midwife problem and is only now beginning to realise that it demands its urgent attention.

Miss Pye reminded the Congress that at the last Congress at Ghent, a majority approved of a three years' training for midwives. This time the members of the Congress must go further and say what type of studies they considered would produce the best midwife. There are, she said, two main types of training now in vogue, that of a prolonged course to produce midwives only, of which Holland with three years of study and France with two, are excellent examples. In both these countries the technical training is of a very high order. In England, the present tendency is to take a general nursing training of three years and to take a six months' intensive course of midwifery after that, although midwives are still given a certificate and allowed to practise after one year's training in midwifery only. In Norway and Belgium also it is said to be usual to find midwives who have had general nursing training.

If midwifery, and especially rural midwifery, is taken up after a nursing training the midwives are qualified to render much fuller service in the districts in which they work; whereas the training given to midwives as such under the other system, which does not include general training, does not fit them so well for general health work in rural areas.

Miss Pye concluded an admirable survey, which must have entailed much intensive study, by placing before the Congress a number of questions on which she considered the opinion of its members would be of value at a time when so many countries are considering the whole status of the midwife in its relation to the problem of maternal mortality.

General Situation as to Training and Education of Midwives.

Mme. Roger, President of the National Union of Midwives of France and the French Colonies, said that, although in France the number of midwives did not exceed between 10,000 and 10,500, there was still a surplus. It was absolutely necessary to stem the ever-increasing flow of prospective candidates. There were in France 42 authorised schools for midwives. The French midwives were unanimously opposed to the principle of supervision or control, which they considered would undermine their prestige.

Frau Rauschenbach (Germany) said that midwives themselves were fully aware of the deficiencies in their training, and had for a long time persistently demanded that those deficiencies should be remedied by extending the period of training and by perfecting and expanding the course of study. The midwife should be guaranteed an income in accordance with the responsible position she held.

Mrs. Mitchell, deputy chairman of the Midwives' Institute, supported the limitation of the number of pupils trained, and the improvement of the financial position of midwives in this country.

Conditions of Admission and Limitation of Number of Pupils.

At the evening session, Mme. Rembaut, of Belgium, discussed the conditions of Admission and Limitation of the Number of Pupils, and said that each hospital with a gynaecological department endeavoured to open a school of midwifery in order to have gratuitous aid available. It was an absolutely wrong principle.

Length of Training and Curriculum.

The length of training and curriculum was discussed on the evening of May 27th, when Miss Erup (Sweden) opened

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