

# The Midwife.

## MATERNAL MORTALITY.

### A JOINT COMMITTEE ON MIDWIFERY.

In connection with the problem of maternal mortality a Joint Committee on Midwifery, under the chairmanship of the Earl of Athlone, has been set up. The National Birthday Trust Fund (for the Extension of Maternity Services) are providing accommodation and secretariat at their headquarters at 57, Lower Belgrave Street, S.W.1.

Among the more important questions to be discussed at the first meeting are:—The extreme overcrowding of the midwifery profession; the payment of the midwife's fee in necessitous cases (great hardship is resulting from the non-payment of fees in distressed areas); the provision of training for midwives in the use of analgesic drugs; and the preparation of a pension scheme for midwives, to enable them to retire at a reasonable age.

The following have agreed to serve on the Committee:—

- Lord Aberdare and Lord Strathcona (House of Lords).  
 Sir Francis Fremantle, Miss Megan Lloyd-George, and Mr. Arthur Greenwood (House of Commons).  
 Dr. T. Watts Eden, Dr. J. S. Fairbairn, F.R.C.S., and Mr. L. C. Rivett, F.R.C.S. (British College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists).  
 Miss Pye, Miss Burnside, and Miss Carter (Midwives' Institute).  
 Sir William Hale-White, K.B.E., F.R.C.P., Mrs. Bruce Richmond, and Miss Wilmshurst (Queen's Institute of District Nursing).  
 Sir Julien Cahn, Mrs. Stanley Baldwin, and Lady Williams (National Birthday Trust Fund).  
 Miss E. M. Doubleday (College of Nursing).  
 Mr. R. H. P. Orde (British Hospitals Association).  
 Dr. John Buchan (Society of Medical Officers of Health).

## THE FRONTIER NURSING SERVICE.

"He shall gather the lambs with His arm and carry them in His bosom, and shall gently lead those that are with young."

### MATERNAL MORTALITY.

The *Quarterly Bulletin*, the organ of the Frontier Nursing Service, U.S.A., is eagerly awaited in the editorial office of this JOURNAL.

From the current issue the *Bulletin* wishes to remind its friends that the Frontier Nursing Service has now delivered nearly 1,800 women in childbirth and has never had an obstetric death.

Two women died from heart conditions, one eighteen days after delivery. Every supporter of the F.N.S. is entitled to a glorious thrill in a maternity record rarely equalled anywhere in the world, and excelled nowhere. Everyone who contributes to the Frontier Nursing Service is doing his part, in the name of the mother who bore him, to speed the day when all American women are given the clean, safe care in childbirth which is their due. Every contributor to this Service is also helping to wipe out the darkest blot on the honour of America—her high maternal mortality.

In a diary kept by the mother of William Cullen Bryant this entry is made for November 3rd, 1794:

November 3rd, stormy; wind north-east; churned.

\* \* \* 7 at night son born.

On the following day she "got up" and on the second day "sat up all day; made Cullen a coat and went into the kitchen." This record of a childbirth in a farming village in the Hampshire hills of Western Massachusetts nearly a century and a half ago is doubtless fairly typical of that

period. The Chicago Medical Society last week demanded disciplinary action against the editor of *The American Medical Association Journal* because of the publication of an article written by him in which it was pointed out that "in the days of midwives and buggy doctors mothers got on fairly well and in some instances better than present-day mothers."

The death rate from causes associated with child-bearing is higher in the United States than in most other countries with which comparison may reasonably be made and is only slightly lower in New York than in the country as a whole. It is higher than can be justified in view of the development of modern knowledge.

## ALL SAINTS' DISPENSARY, PANVAL.

Miss Sallie Round, the Sister-in-Charge of the All Saints' Dispensary, Panval, India, sends us a very interesting report of the work which is evidently of great value to the community.

Fifty-seven maternity cases have been admitted to All Saints' Maternity Home and Hospital during 1933. Of these:—

- 38 were Normal Cases, Mother and Baby both satisfactory.
- 2 were Abnormal Cases: 1 Mother and Baby died. 1 Mother satisfactory, baby dead.
- 4 were very serious cases: Mothers made complete recoveries. Babies born dead.
- 2 very serious cases, both Mother and Baby did well.
- 1 Baby was born in a bullock cart (relatives did not believe the mother to be pregnant). Both did well.
- 1 Baby had hare lip and cleft palate; taken to hospital, but too weak for operation, and died before a month old.
- 1 Mother died on the 17th day of generalised tuberculosis. Baby adopted by the All Saints' Sisters.
- 1 Baby died on the 7th day of Meningitis: Mother satisfactory.
- 1 Very serious case, both Mother and Baby died.
- 1 Mother died undelivered, admitted in a dying condition.
- 2 Premature Babies: 1 died a few hours after being discharged from the Hospital owing to rough handling by a Dhai; 1 Baby died 2 days after discharge through neglect. (Was in 3 weeks).
- 1 Case of Twin Girls, Mother and Babies all did well.
- 1 Serious case: Baby dead, Mother's condition continued serious, but relatives refused further treatment and took her home, where she died within a few days.
- 1 Mother and her baby son, and 1 unwanted baby have been adopted by the All Saints' Sisters.

Miss Round writes:—

"But for the generosity of the Indian Red Cross Society in gifts of bedding, clothing, toys, etc., much of the work recorded above could not have been attempted."

When all the snowy hill  
 And the bare woods are still;  
 When snipe are silent in the frozen bogs,  
 And all the garden garth is whelmed in mire  
 So, by the hearth, the laughter of the logs,  
 More fair than roses, lo, the flowers of fire!

R. L. Stevenson.

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