

Central Midwives' Board.

A meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at the offices, 6 Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, on Thursday, December 22nd, at 2.45 p.m. There were present:—Dr. Champneys (in the chair), Miss Paget, Mr. Parker Young, Dr. Cullingworth, and Mr. Fordham, D.L., J.P., who took his seat for the first time as the representative of the Association of County Councils, in succession to the late Mr. Heywood Johnstone. The Secretary, Mr. G. W. Duncan, reported that he had made inquiries as to the procedure of the General Medical Council with regard to holding meetings *in camera* when the business referred to penal cases. The procedure was that all meetings were open both to the Press and the public, but the Council exercised its discretion freely as to taking part of the proceedings *in camera*. This referred chiefly to financial matters. Only one penal case had been heard *in camera*, but it was usual to ask the Press to retire after the evidence had been taken while the Council was considering its decision.

The correspondence was then considered, the first letter being one from the Clerk of the Privy Council who wrote in reference to the scheme for examinations submitted by the Board:—

"I am directed by the Lords of the Council to state that, in their opinion, it should be provided in the Scheme of Examinations of the Central Midwives' Board that all examiners should be qualified medical practitioners, and accordingly to suggest the addition of the following words at the beginning of Section 2 (2) (Examiners): 'All examiners shall be men or women who are duly qualified medical practitioners.'

"It might be further suggested that there be added to these words a proviso permitting the examiners when they see fit, with the consent of the Board, to employ for certain parts of the examinations properly qualified women who are not medical practitioners, and providing for their remuneration out of the sums payable to the examiners for the conduct of examinations."

Mr. Parker Young embodied the recommendation of the Board in a Resolution which was seconded by Dr. Cullingworth, who, it will be remembered, at the meeting of the Board in July, when the scheme of examinations was considered, supported Miss Wilson's resolution that the hands of the Board should be left free in this matter. Presumably, therefore, he thinks it desirable to bow to the opinion of the higher powers.

The Resolution was carried.

We are at one with the Privy Council in their opinion that every candidate for the certificate of the Central Midwives' Board should be examined in theoretical knowledge by a qualified medical practitioner, but equally, prominence in the examination must be given to the practical side of her work if this is to be made much of in the training-schools. Here the most competent examiner would undoubtedly be a midwife. As each candidate is to be examined by two examiners a simple method seems to be that a medical practitioner and a midwife should examine each one.

After considering a letter from Dr. W. R. Dakin, Chairman of the Board for the Examination of Midwives,

of the London Obstetrical Society, it was decided that the examinations of the Board should be held three instead of four times a year, the first one being in June next.

It was decided to reply to Mrs. Wallace Bruce, who wrote asking the Board to formulate conditions on compliance with which it would be prepared to approve an institution for the purpose of training pupil midwives under the Board's rules that "the Board does not at present see its way to formulate the conditions referred to in Mrs. Wallace Bruce's letter."

The same answer substantially was given to Dr. Florence Fleetwood-Taylor.

In reply to a letter from the solicitors of a midwife, Thursday, January 19th, was fixed for hearing the case. It was arranged that in addition to the Chairman's notes, a shorthand report should be taken of the proceedings, as it was pointed out by Mr. Fordham that in the event of an appeal, the shorthand report of the proceedings of the Board would be required.

Several letters reporting alleged misconduct on the part of midwives were considered. In the case of a midwife who had been attending a case of puerperal fever, and was notified by the local authority that she was to refrain from attending others, but who, nevertheless, visited and examined a patient in labour, it was decided to reprimand her, and to intimate that, in the event of another occurrence of the same nature, the Board would take serious cognizance of it.

A letter from the Medical Officer of Health for Lancashire (Dr. Sergeant) asked for advice as to the course to be taken by the Local Supervising Authority on receipt of notification by a midwife of still-birth or death under Rule E. 18.

It was carried *nem. con.* that the Local Supervising Authority should be recommended to investigate the circumstances if necessary. Personally we are of opinion that it is the duty of this authority to immediately acquaint the Coroner for the district with the facts. It is his duty, and he alone has the power to decide whether an inquest shall be held.

Applications for certificates were then considered and approved, bringing the total number enrolled up to 11,476. The application of a midwife, who was reported by the Medical Officer of Health to have had five cases of puerperal fever, and three deaths from this cause, in her practice in two years, and who had been severely reprimanded by the local Coroner for her conduct on one of the various occasions when she appeared in his Court, was refused.

Applications for approval as institutions for the training of midwives under Section C of the Rules were sanctioned in the cases of the Louise Margaret Hospital, Aldershot, and the King's Norton Union Infirmary, three were refused, and one was postponed for the definition of the term "Gamp," applied to a class of persons apparently working under the sanction of the institution.

On the motion of the Chairman the certificates of the Dundee Maternity Hospital and of the Aberdeen Maternity Hospital were accepted as approved qualifications under Section 2 of the Midwives' Act, a former resolution of the Board being rescinded with this object.

Other business was adjourned to a future meeting. The meeting then terminated.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)