

Central Midwives' Board.

A meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at the offices of the Board, 6, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, S.W., on Thursday, January 26th, at 2.45 p.m. There were present Dr. Champneys (in the chair), Miss Wilson, Miss Paget, Dr. Ward Cousins, Mr. Parker Young, and Dr. Cullingworth. Amongst the correspondence considered were memorials from the Bradford and other Boards of Guardians praying the Board to reconsider their decision "not to recognise Poor Law Training Schools as such." Resolutions in support of the Bradford Memorial were also before the Board from other Boards of Guardians. Mr. Parker Young proposed that an answer be sent to the Guardians of the Bradford Union that the Central Midwives' Board has not passed any resolution re Poor Law Infirmaries "as such." Applications have been treated on their merits.

This was seconded by Dr. Ward Cousins, and carried.

Miss Wilson moved that a special meeting of the Board should be held to consider the question of the principles which should govern the approval of Poor-Law Institutions as Training-Schools. This was seconded by Dr. Cullingworth. The Chairman said that the question of the recognition of infirmaries was bound up with the question of inspection.

Miss Wilson pointed out that Poor-Law Infirmaries came under other jurisdiction than that of the Central Midwives' Board, viz., that of the Local Government Board. Also that as general training-schools they were in a different position to the Maternity Hospitals, which only admitted this one class of case.

Mr. Parker Young said he should vote against the resolution, as he considered each Poor-Law Infirmary should be considered on its merits. St. Mary's Hospital, which was a general hospital, admitted lying-in cases. [The London Hospital is now organising maternity wards.—Ed.]

Various letters from Medical Officers of Health, a Town Clerk, and the Matron and Secretary of the British Lying-in Hospital, and a County Medical Officer concerning midwives whose names appear on the Roll, or applicants for enrolment, were then read and dealt with.

The Board replied to a letter from the Secretary of the London (Royal Free Hospital) School of Medicine for Women, requesting it to recommend local supervising authorities to appoint only qualified medical practitioners as inspectors of midwives, that it regretted it was unable to accede to the request.

Applications for certificates from 1,614 midwives were considered, making the total number already enrolled 13,090. The Secretary estimated that by March 31st the total number enrolled would reach 16,000.

It was agreed on the motion of the Chairman, that matters in which the discussion of persons formed a necessary part should be considered by a Standing Committee of the whole Board, and the conclusions be reported to the Board.

Miss Wilson moved that the Board should advertise that it required the services of a registered medical woman who had acted as house surgeon or physician in a maternity hospital or home, possessing an externe department, to undertake from time to time the duties of inspector.

This was seconded by Dr. Cullingworth and carried.

The Board is to be congratulated on its decision

to obtain the services of such an officer. We could wish, however, that either the resolution had been proposed in the form in which Miss Wilson originally brought it forward when any duly qualified woman would have been eligible or that, as Mr. Parker Young desired, the Board had advertised for the services of a Registered Medical Practitioner. The words "registered medical woman" were inserted by way of compromise but compromises are seldom fortunate, a rule which holds good in the present instance. We agree with Miss Wilson that the inspection of the nursing duties performed by the midwife are an important part of an inspector's duties, and the county councils are finding that trained nurses who are registered midwives are exceptionally well qualified for this work. As we reported only last week, the Medical Officer of Health for the County of Nottingham has reported that the assistance of Miss Ross, Superintendent of the Notts Nursing Federation, and Inspector of Midwives for the county, has been "invaluable" in this connection. If, however, a medical practitioner be appointed, we do not understand why the appointment should be limited to women, who have not, by reason of their sex, an intuitive knowledge of nursing matters, while, by enforcing this limitation the number of eligible candidates for the post is materially reduced.

It was arranged that the first examination of Midwives by the Board should take place in the last week in June.

A meeting of the Standing Committee, an adjourned meeting of the Board, and a Special Meeting will be held on February 9th, and the ordinary monthly meeting of the Board on February 23rd.

The Rural Midwives' Association.

A meeting of the Rural Midwives' Association, at which Lord Edmund Talbot presided, was held last week at 50, Albemarle Street, by the kind permission of Mrs. Murray. The speakers were Mrs. Heywood Johnstone, Dr. Foote, Dr. Boxall, Sir Michael Foster, Dr. Reid, and Dr. Downes (Local Government Board). Mrs. Heywood Johnstone suggested discussion on the following points:—The authorities appointed to carry out the Act, inspectors and inspection, disinfection, the best type of midwife for rural districts, combination with nursing associations, midwives acting independently, financial aspects, further difficulties. The speaker was of opinion that the best type of midwife for rural districts was the plain country woman of much the same standing as the working man's wife. This is a point of view with which we have never been able to agree. This type of woman is not best calculated to assimilate the necessary theoretical knowledge, or to speak with the authority calculated to command confidence on important sanitary and hygienic questions. As to the impossibility, which Mrs. Heywood Johnstone states exists, of a trained midwife living upon her earnings, surely the cost of living is as great to an untrained as to a trained person. The question is largely one of organisation, and we have always held that district midwifery could be organised through the Queen's Jubilee Institute. Possibly in rural districts the post of Sanitary Inspector, or Health Lecturer, and Midwife might be combined with advantage.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)