

### The Association for Promoting the Compulsory Registration of Midwives.

THE Annual Meeting of this Society was held on the 9th inst. at 55, Cadogan Square, by the kind permission of Mrs. Johnson Ferguson.

The Lady Balfour of Burleigh presided.

The speakers were Mr. Heywood Johnstone, M.P.; Mr. G. F. Romieu, J.P., Coroner for Surrey, and formerly President of the Coroners' Society, England and Wales; Dr. Rice, of Derby; Dr. Cullingworth; the Hon. Sec., Mrs. Rickman; and the Hon. Treasurer, Mrs. Travers.

Mr. Heywood Johnstone explained as the vital principles of the Bill the point that any person who habitually practised midwifery for gain should produce proofs of qualification for the work she undertakes, and any midwife qualifying after the passing of the Act must pass the examination of the new Central Board, or of a well-known examining body, and produce satisfactory evidence of character. Secondly, the midwife would be licensed annually from a Central Board, and, at the same time, would be under local supervision. The licence would have to be taken out in a certain area. The local authority would probably be the County Council.

Mr. Johnstone demonstrated the chaotic condition at present prevailing in the practice of midwifery in this country by stating that the Italian Government had written to the General Medical Council, asking for information concerning the laws and regulations in force in this country in relation to midwives, and the Council had been compelled to reply that at present there were none, a fact which did not speak well for our enlightenment. In conclusion, he expressed the opinion that the House of Commons was favourably disposed to the measure, but that Members of Parliament were like heavily laden barges, and needed considerable impetus before they stirred. He urged, therefore, the education of public opinion, and expressed his belief that valuable help had been given in this direction by the ventilation of the question at the Conference of the National Union of Women Workers held at Norwich last year.

Mr. Romieu said that he had attended with the deputation to the Lord President of the Privy Council, and that he came away disheartened—there was so much cold water. He also was invited to address the South Eastern Branch of the British Medical Association, and, as a layman, esteemed this an honour, but he came away with much the same feelings as from the Privy Council Office. Everyone was against him. In speaking afterwards, however, to many of his audience, he

found they were of opinion that something must be done.

Mr. Romieu asserted that, in his capacity as Coroner, he had become cognizant of evils which he hardly liked even to recollect, and certainly could not repeat in a public meeting. He said, however, that he had so hunted undesirable women—ostensibly midwives—from one corner of the county for which he was Coroner to the other, that they did not dare to practise their trade in any district of it. He maintained, however, that it was not the duty of Coroners, but of the Government to look after these things, and he thought the Government might well turn their attention to better things than they do.

As to the medical opposition to the Bill, he declared it was "nothing in the world but selfishness." Where would you find a medical man who would employ an uncertificated, untrained nurse? (we should say he is easily to be found! —ED.) Then why should the medical profession be so averse to properly trained midwives? It was because they were afraid their pecuniary interests would be touched, and was nothing but selfishness, but public opinion would be too strong for them, they would not be able to stand against it. In conclusion, Mr. Romieu affirmed that if anything was required to emphasize the need of the measure, from his own experience alone he could produce sufficient evidence to convince the most sceptical. Dr. Rice, of Derby, thought that the medical profession were apathetic rather than selfish; they were of opinion that something must be done, but they did not know what. He spoke of his experience as parish doctor of between forty and fifty midwives. Four had been trained by his predecessor, and, in a prolonged experience both as parish doctor and in private practice, he found that they did a tremendous work for good. As to the other forty—compared to most of them, Sarah Gamp was a very estimable character. It was, however, quite impossible to go into details. Dr. Cullingworth spoke of the recent action of the General Medical Council, and said that it was being educated, and beginning to see the light.

The meeting closed with the customary votes of thanks.

It is noteworthy, as year by year goes by, and brings once more the meeting of this Association, that on no one occasion has a trained midwife addressed the meeting from the point of view of the midwives themselves. This is, surely, a great omission. The day has gone by when it is possible to legislate for any class of persons without reference to their own views, and an expression of opinion at these meetings, from the point of view of an experienced and educated midwife would be both appropriate and valuable.

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