

of medicine, surgery, and midwifery, compulsory for the registration of medical practitioners, and that since that date nurses had become much more efficiently trained, great numbers adding a midwifery certificate to that for general training in medical and surgical nursing—in her opinion therefore it was a retrograde step to legislate for specialists such as Midwives with a few months' training and experience. To legislate for them as independent practitioners was dangerous and wrong, as they were only qualified to attend "natural labour." They could never with safety to the lying-in-mother be "independent practitioners." In her opinion the practice of midwifery in the present day should be entirely in the hands of registered medical practitioners and certificated obstetric nurses, and this result could easily be attained through the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute, if it were governed by expert and professional persons. The present legislation would inevitably create a new and inferior order of medical practitioners.

The Bill provided for the local licensing of Midwives, a very irksome measure, placing them at the mercy of unprofessional persons who did not understand their work and who might moreover be their keen competitors. This system of issuing annual Local Licenses was placing midwives on a level with hawkers who were subject to the same control; the old demand for State Registration of Midwives was comprehensible, but the Association which for years had agitated for such legislation had entirely shifted its ground in acceding to and supporting the system of local licensing.

Mrs. WALLACE BRUCE, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Association for Promoting Compulsory Registration of Midwives, handed in a copy of the letter sent to the Matrons' Council, and remarked that the Local Licensing Bodies would not have the power to refuse a registered midwife a license, and that she would have power of appeal in professional matters to the Central Midwives' Board, on which it was provided one woman at least might have a seat—and the medical practitioners on it might also be women—the County and Borough Councils might also delegate their powers over midwives to Rural Councils on which women were eligible to sit. That in order to make it possible for the poorer classes of midwives to practise the cost of training and qualification must be kept at a minimum expense. Mrs. Bruce could not agree with Mrs. Fenwick that a new order of practitioners would be created by the Bill, the practitioners were there. The Bill would only provide for their registration and control.

Mrs. Fenwick remarked that was the point, the Bill would give legal status.

Other ladies interested in the question spoke, one remarking that it was a question for the Midwives not Nurses, and if they were satisfied with the licensing clause that was enough.

The refusal of medical men to "follow" midwives was referred to, and the opinion was expressed that the Bill would give midwives the necessary status to act as qualified practitioners, and therefore medical men could meet them in practice without reproach.

It was suggested from the Chair that it should be made quite plain in the Bill that midwives would have power of appeal from local Licensing Bodies to the Central Midwives' Board, if aggrieved, as to place arbitrary

powers in the hands of these local authorities would not be advisable.

Mrs. Fenwick was thanked for her report, and it was proposed by Miss Kingsford and seconded by Miss Finch that a sub-committee be appointed of the Hon. Officers to consider the Midwives Bill in detail, and take such action as might be desirable.

THE FORMATION OF BRANCHES.

The next subject for consideration was the advisability of authorising the formation of branches of the Matrons' Council in Scotland and Ireland and in the Colonies. It was pointed out that letters had been received from Matrons which, while approving of the work of the Matrons' Council, suggested that, owing to distance from town, it was impossible for members in the Sister Kingdoms to attend the meetings, and enquiring if it would not be advisable that branches should be formed to enable Matrons in these countries to take counsel together.

Miss McGahey, when in England, warmly advocated the formation of branches, and, if empowered, was quite prepared to take steps to organise a Branch for the Australian Commonwealth. The suggestion to form branches met with general approval, Miss Isla Stewart and Miss Huxley expressing the opinion that, while such branches should be locally self-governing, they should be required to accept the principles of the Constitution. With this proviso the Council authorised the inauguration of Branches where a desire was expressed for their formation, and unanimously approved of Miss McGahey's suggestion.

THE INTERNATIONAL NURSES' CONGRESS.

The following Resolution was then considered: "That the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland desires to convey to the Organizing Committee of the International Congress of Nurses its cordial thanks for the kindness and hospitality extended to its delegate, Miss Mollett, and to congratulate it on the complete success of the Congress, the result of which must certainly be to give a world-wide impetus to the co-operation and efficiency of Trained Nurses."

The President said there could be no two opinions about a resolution of thanks to a Committee which had received the Delegate of the Matrons' Council with such courtesy, and treated her with such kindness and hospitality. She would put the resolution from the chair. It was then carried, by acclamation, *nem. con.*

A SOCIETY FOR THE COMPULSORY REGISTRATION OF TRAINED NURSES.

Mrs. Bedford Fenwick said that she thought the time had come when definite organisation for legislative purposes should be undertaken. She would like to ask the opinion of the Matrons' Council on this subject. Was it preferable that the Matrons' Council should undertake this work or that a Society should be formed having the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)