

The Central Midwives' Board.

A meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at 6, Suffolk Street, Pall Mall, on Thursday, June 30th, when there were present Dr. Champneys, in the chair, Miss Jane Wilson, Miss Rosalind Paget, Miss D. Oldham, Dr. Sinclair, Dr. Ward Cousins, Mr. Parker Young, and Dr. Cullingworth.

A considerable time was spent in considering the Draft Suggestions, prepared by Dr. Cullingworth, of a scheme of examinations, and eventually a portion of the scheme was referred to an adjourned meeting for further consideration.

There was considerable discussion of the first suggestion, which ran: "A list of examiners, both for London and the provinces, shall be prepared by the Central Midwives' Board from those who are willing to serve, and to act when required by the Board." Dr. Ward Cousins moved that only registered medical practitioners should be appointed as examiners, and this motion was seconded by Mr. Parker Young, who considered it would be a retrograde movement to appoint women who had held, or were holding, positions as Matrons of Lying-in Hospitals in this capacity.

Miss Wilson moved that the hands of the Board be left free in this matter. The Board required evidence of nursing knowledge of candidates for its examination, and medical men did not teach the details of nursing, while many Matrons were most competent to do so, and would be very desirable examiners indeed.

Miss Paget having seconded Miss Wilson's amendment, Dr. Cullingworth said he was with Miss Wilson on this matter. The appointment of examiners was in the hands of the Board, and it was unlikely that an unsuitable examiner would be appointed; nor did he anticipate that any but registered medical practitioners would be likely to be appointed at the present time, but most of the Board must know women who were competent to act as examiners in their own branch. Nine-tenths of the examination would be purely professional, and only registered medical practitioners would be suitable examiners, but the remainder was debatable ground—partly medical and partly nursing—and it might be very useful to have examiners acquainted with the details of nursing. He thought, therefore, the hands of the Board should be left free.

Dr. Sinclair thought, so far from the Board being left free, the present was the time to make a clear declaration of its policy.

Dr. Ward Cousins was sorry that Dr. Cullingworth spoke as he did and advocated laxity. Nursing was a wholly medical matter, and required as teachers wholly qualified men and women. How could any woman merely taught under the rules of the Board, unless she had had previous hospital training, be conversant with nursing matters? There could be no dual authority. Nursing was a medical question and demanded medical teaching.

Miss Oldham said that in hospital wards nursing was taught by the Sisters, and, in the case of lying-in patients, by midwives.

Dr. Champneys said there was much to be said on both sides. In any constitution of an examining Board at all conceivable a midwife would be subjected to a fierce amount of criticism before appointment as an examiner. At the same time, though it was his province as a medical man to give directions, a good

nurse knew a good deal more of the details of bed-making and of dressing a baby than he did. He was in favour of leaving the question open, as he thought it conceivable that a highly-trained midwife, with general training in addition, might be a valuable examiner.

Dr. Ward Cousins asked Dr. Champneys if he, as a qualified medical practitioner, would act as examiner with one who was unqualified; was he in favour of qualified and unqualified persons examining together?

Dr. Champneys replied that he knew several experienced nurse-midwives with whom he should have no objection whatever to acting in conjunction.

On being put to the vote, the amendment leaving the question open was carried by five votes to three.

After considerable discussion it was decided that the examinations—which it is proposed shall begin in May, 1905, and be conducted simultaneously in London and the provinces—should be held twice a year, or oftener if necessary. Miss Paget was strongly in favour of holding the examinations every three months, in all centres; or every six months at alternate dates in London and the provinces; so that rejected candidates might not have to wait more than three months for a second chance; but the suggestion was negatived. It was decided that the provincial centres should be Bristol, Manchester, and Newcastle-on-Tyne.

The remuneration of each examiner per candidate was fixed at 7s.

It was decided that six questions should be set at each written examination, and the time allowed for answering them should be three hours.

The correspondence having been considered, the Secretary, Mr. G. W. Duncan, presented the financial statement.

Eight hundred and twenty-nine applications for certificates were then approved and one rejected.

Miss Wilson inquired if any reason was to be given to the applicant concerned.

Miss Paget drew attention to the fact that the Press was present. She thought work involving the discussion of private affairs of applicants should be referred to the Standing Committee. Miss Wilson seconded. Dr. Champneys pointed out that business transacted by the Standing Committee must subsequently be brought up before the Board, and, personally, he had not time to transact the business twice over. The motion, on being put to the vote, was lost, it being considered that the discretion of the Press could be trusted. Miss Paget, seconded by Miss Wilson, then proposed that the Press be asked to retire; this was also lost. The Press therefore remained.

It was then agreed that the Bedford Row Lying-in Hospital, Limerick, the Salvation Army Maternity Hospital, the Bristol General Hospital, and the Eden Hospital, Calcutta, should be recognised as training-schools for midwives.

The application of a Poor Law infirmary was not accepted, though its rejection was not based on the ground on which it was opposed by one member of the Board, who said he should consistently oppose the recognition of every Union infirmary, on "social, medical, and all grounds." If these institutions were recognised as training-schools, they would endeavour to obtain as many cases as possible, and thus more children would be born with the pauper taint.

The adjourned meeting of the Board was fixed for July 14th, at 1.45, and the ordinary meeting for July 21st.

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