

The Midwife.

The Midwives' Registration Act in New Zealand.

The report of Miss H. Maclean, Deputy Registrar of Nurses and Midwives, and Assistant Inspector of Hospitals in New Zealand, and a member of the Matrons' Council of Great Britain and Ireland, on the Administration of the Midwives' Registration Act (1904) in that Colony, is a most interesting document. It is incorporated in that of the Inspector-General of Hospitals, presented by the Minister in Charge of the Hospitals and Charitable Aid Department, to the Governor, and by his Excellency's command to both Houses of the General Assembly.

Miss Maclean states that "during the past year there have been two examinations of nurses trained under the Midwives' Act, 1904, in the State Maternity Hospitals, the Medical School Maternity Hospital, Dunedin, the Alexandra Home, Wellington, and the Linwood Refuge, Christchurch. Twenty-nine candidates entered for examination, and twenty-five passed and are now on the Register as trained midwives.

There was also an examination of a very elementary character for those women practising as midwives, but without training, who had hitherto neglected to register. Sixty-four entered and fifty-six passed, and are now on the register in the list of untrained women. This should have been the last examination of the kind, ample opportunity now having been given for registration of all women who had been practising the required length of time; but a petition on behalf of one woman who had failed to satisfy the examiner was brought before Parliament, and it was arranged that those who failed at the June examination should be given another chance. This was done, with the result that the candidates were passed and are now registered.

On the 31st March, 1908, there were on the Midwives' Register, 1,004 midwives. Of these 149 are trained and certificated, 43 from the State maternity training schools and institutions recognised as maternity schools in conjunction with lectures at the St. Helen's Hospitals. During the last two years 56 trained and certificated midwives from England and the Australian States have also been registered in New Zealand.

With the growth of the State Maternity

Hospitals, the Medical School Maternity Home at Dunedin, and the Christchurch St. Helen's Hospital, a large number of midwifery nurses should be added to the Register each year, the present average, with the number of pupils that can now be trained during twelve months in each year, being 35. This, with the addition of nurses coming into the Dominion from elsewhere, should gradually, and in an effectual manner, meet the demand for properly trained women.

A very important feature of the training of the midwives at the State Maternity Hospitals is the stress laid on the necessity of every possible means being used to induce mothers to nurse their infants. That efforts conscientiously and carefully made are attended with success is indicated by the fact that the number of mothers unable to nurse, among the patients confined at St. Helen's, Wellington, or attended by the nurses, in one year, is only $2\frac{1}{2}$ per cent., and in each case these women were incapacitated from performing their natural functions by disease. There have been instances in all those hospitals where patients confined of their fifth and sixth child, and previously unable to nurse, by the proper treatment, have been enabled to do so. This strongly emphasises the fact that practical and theoretical training must be combined and the practical training must be carried out under the close and constant supervision of a well-trained Matron, rather than under a doctor, however efficient, whose time and opportunity for superintending is necessarily limited. It has been suggested that untrained registered midwives should be allowed to attend the course of lectures at the State Maternity Schools, in order to gain more knowledge of their work. This course was tried when the schools were first established, but although a few women availed themselves of the opportunity, it was not found desirable to go on with it. The course of lectures being delivered in conjunction with study and practical work, under the supervision of doctor and matron in the hospitals, was not adapted either to the requirements or the understanding, of the, for the greater part, uneducated women who were otherwise eligible." Miss Maclean considers that a more practicable and at the same time more valuable means of instruction for those midwives would be by a system of individual inspection, supervision, and lectures to these women alone.

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