

The Midwife.

The Central Midwives' Board.

The next Examination of the Central Midwives' Board will be held on October 25th. The eagerness with which trained nurses pay and study for this additional professional qualification is ample proof of how much they would appreciate a Central Examination and legal status in their own profession. Let us hope they intend this winter to work hard for Registration after examination by State authority.

Lessons of the Harlesden Case.

The report of the "Harlesden Home Maternity Case" in your issue of the 18th ult. is instructive from many points of view, but chief amongst its lessons is that for the need of more business-like methods on the part of all concerned.

To begin with the Central Midwives' Board—for since we midwives have no direct representation on our governing body the only course open to us if we wish to draw attention to defects in its regulations, is friendly criticism in the press—I may point out that it publishes in the Roll of Midwives no list of Certified Midwives recognised by it as teachers of practical midwifery, and competent to certify that pupils have personally delivered the requisite number of cases. The list of medical practitioners who are approved as teachers of midwifery by the Board is printed in full in the Roll, and if a similar course were adopted in regard to the midwives trusted by the Board to provide it with the above returns, candidates for the C.M.B. Examination would then have no difficulty in ascertaining whether a given midwife were competent to sign the necessary documents. The trouble partly arises from the apparent unwillingness of the Central Midwives' Board to give to midwives the recognition to which they are entitled as *teachers*. It is well known that in most instances the teaching given by medical practitioners to pupil midwives is mainly theoretical, and that the pupils attend cases, and receive their practical instruction in connection therewith from *certified midwives*, a medical practitioner only being called in, in the event of abnormality, say in seven per cent. of the cases. It follows that a large share of the work of preparing pupil midwives falls on certified midwives, and without their help only a very limited number of

candidates could be prepared for the C.M.B. Examination. Further that as the Board requires a certificate from the person under whose supervision the pupil has attended the cases, that it must recognise certificates given by certified midwives. But it has always, it appears to me, accorded this recognition in rather a grudging spirit. A list of certified midwives recognised as "Teachers of Practical Midwifery, whose Certificates of Candidates' Attendance on Cases, will be accepted by the Central Midwives' Board" would give them a definite status, if printed in the Roll, and their position would be clear to prospective candidates. But the Board has never taken this course. Instead, it adopts the clumsy method of "approving" midwives "for the purpose of signing Forms III. and IV.," which conveys little or nothing to the average candidate. Then the "approval" of a midwife for twelve months only, does not make for the smooth working of the Midwives' Act, especially, if when such approval terminates in March, and a midwife is not informed that approval for the ensuing year is refused until the end of the following June. How is it possible for a Maternity Home to undertake to prepare pupils for the C.M.B. examination in July under such conditions?

Apparently, the Board adopts this plan in order that if a midwife proves incompetent approval can be withdrawn at the end of twelve months, but, a more desirable method in my view would be for the Board to require evidence of capacity to teach pupils—a very different thing from ability to perform the duties of a practical midwife—and then recognise the midwife as a teacher of practical midwifery for a period of three or five years, so that continuity of training in the smaller institutions which are not recognised as "Training Schools" may be secured. I should be glad if the Board required all midwives seeking its approval as teachers to give instruction to a class of pupils in the presence of examiners appointed by it, as is now required by the Nursing Board of Queen Alexandra's Imperial Military Nursing Service, before a Sister can be promoted to the position of Matron.

I have already exceeded the limits of a letter, and can only allude in the briefest way to other points.

The evidence of the defendant that she had "tried five times to pass the C.M.B. Examination, and knew her business thoroughly"

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