

The Midwife.

MIDWIFERY IN 1911.

The work of the Central Midwives Board is bearing fruit in the better organization of midwives, in maintaining a single portal examination for the entrance of midwives to their professional Roll, and in the exercise of disciplinary control whereby midwives judged unsafe to be entrusted with the powers devolving upon them, or who have proved unworthy of trust, or been convicted of criminal offences, are removed from the Roll.

The weak points of the present system are :

- (1) The shortness of the training required. In the case of a trained nurse three months is fully short, and in that of a person previously untrained it is unquestionably inadequate.
- (2) The exclusion of the representatives of midwives from seats on their governing body, an unjust condition which should certainly be rectified, although the Midwives Board appear to regard propositions for the inclusion of at least one working midwife on the Board with very lukewarm interest.

The Revision of the Rules has been under consideration by the Board some time, and the revised rules have been sanctioned by the Privy Council and promulgated during the past year.

During the year Miss Amy Hughes has been appointed President of the Midwives Institute, in succession to Miss Jane Wilson, and affiliation has taken place between the Union of Midwives (President, Mrs. Robinson) and the National Association of Midwives (President, Mrs. Margaret Lawson).

The incomes to be made by certified midwives continue to be most inadequate and precarious, and in most country districts the duties must be undertaken either in conjunction with those of a trained nurse or by a woman following another occupation, or supported by her husband, who desires to augment her income by taking occasional cases.

The National Insurance Bill affected Midwives vitally, for in the Bill as originally drafted they were not mentioned, which meant that no provision was made authorising their employment and payment by Local Health Committees and Approved Societies. This has now been rectified, and free choice is to be given to mothers as to whether they are attended by medical practitioners or midwives. A Deputation from the National Association of Midwives was received by the Attorney-General on behalf of the Chancellor of the

Exchequer, which strongly urged the above point, also that midwives should be adequately represented on Health Committees and the Advisory Committee which it was proposed to set up under the Act.

How the Maternity Benefit Allowance will affect the admissions to Lying-in Hospitals, and consequently the material for clinical training remains to be seen.

The Certified Midwives Total Abstinence League is doing good work in endeavouring to enlist the services of certified midwives in the cause of temperance, for the foundations of drinking habits are often laid at a first confinement on the thoughtless or ignorant advice of an injudicious midwife.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

A meeting of the Central Midwives Board was held at Caxton House, Westminster, S.W., on Thursday, December 21st, Sir Francis Champneys presiding.

In connection with the minutes of the meeting of November 23rd, Mr. Parker Young questioned their accuracy in one particular, and desired an alteration. The majority of the Board, however, voted for the confirmation of the minutes as they stood.

CORRESPONDENCE.

A letter from the Local Government Board was received transmitting an extract from the annual report for the year 1910 of the medical officer of health for the borough of Launceston.

The extract was as follows :—

In April of last year the Midwives Act came into force.* By Section 1, Sub-Section 2 of this Act, "No woman shall habitually or for gain attend women in child-birth otherwise than under the direction of a qualified medical practitioner, unless she hold the qualifying certificate of the Central Midwives Board, and any woman so acting without being qualified is liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding £10." This section, however, does not apply to anyone rendering assistance in cases of emergency. The object of passing this Act is to endeavour to reduce the mortality of women dying in child-birth, and to protect the lives of newly-born infants, by preventing mothers placing their lives in the hands of untrained and unskilful nurses. Before the passing of this Act, there were in this town a number of women acting in the capacity of midwives, but since the Act came into force not one of these

* The Midwives Act came into force on April 1st, 1903.—Ed.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)