

# The Midwife.

## MIDWIFERY IN 1912.

The work of the Central Midwives' Board in examining and registering midwives has proceeded as heretofore. The gradual elimination of midwives not holding any qualification of training from the Roll is being accomplished (1) by the removal by the Board of ignorant or criminal midwives after due investigation; (2) by the voluntary resignation of others who feel unable to comply with the rules of the Board; and (3) by death. During the past year 364 midwives have been removed for these reasons.

Nothing has proved more effectively that women are willing to pay for their training and to submit themselves to an examination in order to obtain a qualification granted by the State than the history of the Central Midwives' Board's examination, which takes place every two months; that in October this year was the largest yet held, 668 candidates entering their names. No less than 2,268 midwives have been registered in 1912, and 37,395 since the Act came into force.

One effect of the Midwives Act is to give to midwives in the public estimation a position which is not accorded to the trained nurse, and there is a danger of work which belongs to the nurse passing into the hands of the certified midwife. Already County Nursing Associations recognize and inspect, as village nurses, certified midwives with a few months' experience in general nursing, and there is a further risk of midwives being employed as nurses to care for the insured sick, and also as School Nurses in connection with the medical inspection of school children. No stronger argument could be brought forward in support of the urgency of the demand for the State Registration of Nurses.

Certified midwives will do well to claim full recognition for the legal status they possess under the Midwives Act, and, financially and otherwise, to strengthen the honourable position they now enjoy as midwives; and to decline to be employed as nurses unless fully trained as such, or to be utilized to do the cheap philanthropy of other people.

The Central Midwives' Board has now sold out its last security, representing funds invested from the registration fees received on the passing of the Act, and any excess of

expenditure over income will now have to be paid by the County Councils. This proves that the £1 rs. registration fee is not sufficient to meet the expenses of administration and examinations, and that a higher registration fee should be required.

The introduction of a Preliminary Course for pupils at Queen Charlotte's Hospital, and of Post-Graduate Lectures at the Midwives' Institute, proves that the minimum three months' training is not found to be sufficient by those in touch with the practical work and needs of midwives.

The Midwives' Institute, the Union of Midwives, and the National Association of Midwives are the principal Societies of certified midwives, and all have been actively engaged during the past year in promoting their interests.

The National Insurance Commissioners have placed one midwife on each Insurance Committee appointed under the Act, and midwives have also seats on the Advisory Committees. This is entirely the result of the legal status they enjoy under the Midwives Act.

A Midwives Bill for Scotland was introduced in April last into the House of Commons by Mr. G. N. Barnes, M.P. for Glasgow (Blackfriars), but no progress has been made with it.

In both Queensland and Western Australia midwives are now registered under State authority. In both these States midwives who are not trained nurses are required to have twelve months' training, whereas midwives registered by the Central Midwives' Board are allowed to practise. This brings up the question of equitable conditions of reciprocity, as it is certainly unfair that Australian midwives with twelve months' training should be undercut by midwives with only three months' training from overseas.

If midwifery is ever to become a well-remunerated profession for women, its educational standard must be raised considerably. As evidence of the feeling amongst midwives, and those responsible for their training, that a higher standard is necessary, it is interesting to note that, in reply to an enquiry by the Central Midwives' Board, the authorities of the Home for Mothers and Babies at Woolwich intimate that, as their term of training is for twelve months, the lectures would not be suitable for ordinary candidates.

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