

The Midwife.

LYING-IN AND NURSING HOMES.

PROPOSED LEGISLATION.

As we stated last week in our editorial article the London County Council considered at its meeting on October 21st two separate propositions, each intimately affecting the work of trained nurses in the County of London. For the sake of continuity we deal with both in this section of the paper, although only the first affects midwives.

1. A proposition for the licensing of lying-in homes.

2. A proposition for the control of nursing homes and establishments where massage, manucure, or electric treatment is carried on in London.

THE LICENSING OF LYING-IN HOMES.

Proposals as to the licensing of lying-in homes were formulated by the Midwives Act Committee, which presented a report stating that in connection with the consideration of matters arising under the Midwives Act, 1902, they had been impressed with the necessity, both from the sanitary and from the moral point of view, for some measure of public control being exercised over lying-in homes. Moreover, they stated that representations have been made to them that, as the result of the passing of the National Insurance Act, 1911, unmarried women who formerly obtained admittance to Poor Law institutions for their confinement now in many cases receive maternity benefit under the Act, and enter lying-in homes, at which in some instances they are subjected to immoral influences.

They state that there is still in force an Act of George III which requires certain lying-in institutions to be licensed by the justices in Quarter Sessions. That this Act is practically obsolete and that it may be found necessary to repeal or amend it.

In the event of the Council obtaining the powers now sought, the Committee estimate that the additional cost involved in the first instance will be small, and that the appointment of one female inspector at a salary of about £100 a year will probably be sufficient.

RECOMMENDATIONS.

The recommendations of the Midwives Act Committee adopted by the Council were:—

That legislation be promoted in the Session of Parliament of 1914 to confer upon the Council powers in respect of the regulation of lying-in homes or institutions; that such legislation do provide that:—

(1) No premises other than those specified in (2) shall be used for the reception of women for confinement and lying-in, unless such premises

and the person or persons in charge thereof are licensed by the Council.

(2) No licence shall be required in respect of Poor Law institutions, hospitals, or other institutions which are for the time being approved by the Central Midwives Board; recognised hospitals to be defined by schedule or otherwise; a private residence in which the occupier receives a relative about to be confined; or any other premises specially exempted from time to time by the Council.

(3) The Council's officers shall have right of entry into premises which are, or are suspected of being, used for the reception of maternity patients.

(4) Licences shall be renewable annually.

(5) The Council shall have power to refuse to grant or renew a licence, or summarily to withdraw a licence if the premises are not suitable, or suitably equipped for the reception of women about to be confined, or if application for a licence or its renewal is made by any one who is in the opinion of the Council not a fit and proper person.

(6) A charge not exceeding 5s. may be made for the grant or renewal of a licence.

(7) That the Act of 13 George III, cap 82, under which certain lying-in institutions are required to be licensed by the justices in Quarter Sessions shall, if necessary, be repealed or amended, and that the costs and expenses of promoting the proposed legislation be defrayed out of the county fund.

In addition to these recommendations of the Midwives Act Committee the Council added a clause providing for an appeal to a police court magistrate in case of the refusal of a licence by the Council.

POINTS TO BE NOTED.

Many important points arise in connection with this proposed legislation.

(1) In the first place we are glad to note that the professional character of institutions approved by the Central Midwives Board is recognised. It is true that this Board only recognises institutions for training purposes, but all lying-in homes of any size provide opportunity for instruction, and we strongly recommend all certified midwives in charge of lying-in homes to apply for approval from the Central Midwives Board under Rule C1 (2) and in this way their professional standing as certified midwives and trainers of midwifery pupils will be emphasised.

(2) There is no such possibility for the trained nurse, however highly qualified, for there is no Register of Trained Nurses to which she can point as evidence of her professional standing. Only two lines of action appear to be open to her—
(a) To take out an annual licence; or, (b) to refuse to receive any maternity case, in which event

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