

The Midwife.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

THE MONTHLY MEETING.

The Monthly Meeting of the Central Midwives' Board was held at Caxton House, Westminster, on Thursday, June 17th, Sir Francis Champneys presiding.

REPORT OF STANDING COMMITTEE.

In reply to a letter from the Hon Secretary of the Midwives' Institute, as to the decision of the High Court, in the case of a midwife *v* the Central Midwives' Board, it was agreed that the Hon. Secretary of the Midwives' Institute be informed that the decision of the High Court, although reversing the decision of the Central Midwives' Board to remove the name of the midwife from the Roll, confirms the Board in their position as the authority which determines what is and what is not misconduct in a midwife, and decides that misconduct is not to be limited to misconduct in a professional sense; the Board has held that conduct which before enrolment would render it impossible to certify that a candidate was "of good moral character," renders her, after enrolment, liable to be removed for misconduct, and there is no likelihood that the Board will depart from this position.

New rules to effect the necessary alterations as to the length of training were approved, and it was agreed to forward them to the Privy Council for their sanction.

Midwives Amy L. M. Edge (No. 28,616) and Annie Brownlie Edington (No. 28,617) were approved to undertake the practical training of midwives.

WAR BABIES.

It will be remembered that in view of the reports circulated as to the large increase of illegitimate births expected owing to the presence of troops in camps and billets throughout the country, a committee of ladies, convened by Mrs. Creighton, was appointed to investigate the subject and to report to a larger committee, of which the Archbishop of York was Chairman. On Wednesday, June 16th, at the Church House, Mrs. Creighton presented the report of the Special Committee of Investigation to the larger Committee, the Archbishop of York presiding. The Committee agreed to the following unanimous Report:—

"Having received and considered the report of the committee appointed to investigate the alleged probability of a large increase in the number of illegitimate births during the War, we cordially accept and endorse its conclusion, that the rumours which have been circulated have been proved beyond doubt to have no foundation in fact. Special inquiries were made in sixty-two towns

and districts through branches of the National Union of Women Workers, the Women's Patrol Committee in large military centres, and other agencies possessed of special local knowledge, and by a skilled lady investigator. In no case has any confirmation been obtained of the rumours which have been circulated. The returns of other independent inquiries, including those instituted by the Local Government Board, were seen, and these returns entirely confirm the conclusions of the committee.

"Reports of a specially sensational character were particularly investigated. It was said, for example, that the Local Government Board were making large additions to the lying-in wards of infirmaries. It was found that not a single new bed had been ordered. It was said that in a well-known maternity hospital preparations were being made to add fifteen new wards, and that fifty beds had been placed at the disposal of the person giving the information. It was found that the additions being made to the hospital were begun in 1913, and that it had received no more illegitimate cases than usual.

"It was said that in one place the lying-in ward of the infirmary was full, and that the opening of a new ward was contemplated. It was found that there was not a single case in the ward, and that no new ward was proposed. It was said that in another place 500 cases were known, and that 200 had already been received into homes. It was found that there were not more than three cases. These are illustrations of the credibility to be attached to the statements which have been so widely made.

"We do not overlook the fact that the excitement caused by the presence of large numbers of soldiers has often led to undesirable conduct. Nor do we forget the extent and gravity of the moral problem involved in the annual statistics of illegitimate births. But no evidence so far available justifies the belief that the conditions of war have resulted in any exceptional increase.

"The subject is one which during the coming months must be carefully watched. But we trust that it will be considered with sobriety and with a proper sense of responsibility; and that in view of the facts which have been ascertained the irresponsible and sensational discussion of it will now cease.

"We consider that as the problem has not been proved to be of any serious dimensions it is unnecessary to discuss exceptional measures. We agree with the Committee of Investigation that the existing agencies are amply sufficient to deal with the cases of such girls as may need any special help. Instead of recommending new agencies or exceptional measures, we endorse the appeal of the committee that the existing agencies should be strengthened by more general and adequate support."