

A nurse, trained at King's College Hospital, with an honourable record of over thirty years' work behind her, much of it as a private nurse, in connection with a well known institution, and who has for years now been working as a practising midwife, has been seriously ill. At the instance of her Local Supervising Authority she has surrendered her certificate to the Central Midwives Board, a procedure usually urged by such authorities when they wish to get an incompetent "bona-fide" midwife off the Roll without citing her to appear before the Board.

The nurse in question considered that the Board might want her certificate in case it should fall into unsuitable hands in the event of her death, and being an extremely honourable woman, ill advisedly surrendered it.

The inspector of this highly qualified woman is not a midwife, yet she asserts that, had she not given up her certificate, the inspector would have been round every other week to examine the condition of her bag.

I would as soon think it necessary to examine the condition of the midwifery bag of the Chairman of the Central Midwives' Board.

No. I shall not take up work as a practising midwife, much as I enjoy working as a midwife amongst the poor.

MARGARET BREAY.

## THE UNMARRIED MOTHER AND HER CHILD.

A meeting was held at the Mansion House, on January 28th, under the presidency of the Lord Mayor, to consider the problem of the unmarried mother and her child.

The Bishop of Birmingham, in a very sympathetic speech, said they were not there to consider the chronically immoral, but the woman who, loving, had yielded herself wholly to the man she loved.

The question was at whose door the fault really lay.

Was it that of the parent? the State, Religion, low class public opinion? Judge not, he said, too harshly; circumstances often make for vice.

Mrs. A. E. Barnes, O.B.E., spoke of the difficulties that beset the unmarried mother in dealing with her child. She spoke of the almost impossibility of finding suitable foster mothers for the infants, and the desirability of keeping the mother with the child. These babies, she said, were unwanted, uncared for, pushed hither and thither, thrown off, somehow, somewhere, anywhere.

The saving of both mother and child was the foundation of reconstruction. The unmarried mother should be regarded primarily as a mother, and as a human being and treated with respect.

She complained that getting rid of the baby was "part of the routine" of rescue work.

She alluded to that "terrible old shibboleth" of "sin made easy." She asked that virtue might not be made impossible.

Dr. Saleeby said that the divorcing of mother and child was one of the worst social crimes of the day.

He instanced the cases of ophthalmia neonatorum at the Eye Hospital, Liverpool, where statistics proved that in cases where the mother was admitted with the child, the recovery took place in half the time. "Queer, is it not?" he said, "and natural." He was himself assured that the problems of adolescence must be first dealt with and that marriage should not, as now, be postponed till a decade late.

He said that the thing that was necessary was to put into operation the permissive clauses of the Child Welfare and Maternity Bill. It enables the Local Authorities to do wonders, but only a few put it into action.

If councillors raised the rates, they would be councillors no longer.

Dr. J. H. Sequeira spoke of the question in relation to syphilis, and said that it should be recognised that it was possible, with suitable treatment that the child of a syphilitic parent could be born perfectly healthy and without any taint of disease.

## AN OPEN VERDICT.

A terrible tragedy occurred last week at a nursing home for unmarried mothers in Derby, and was the subject of an inquest, at which the jury returned an open verdict and expressed the opinion that there had been neglect in not having some person in charge of the room in which the tragedy occurred.

The facts stated at the inquest were that a room in the home contained thirteen infants who were left unattended while the nurses went down to their supper, and that the grate was unguarded. What happened during that time will probably never be known, but the nurses returned to find the room in flames. It is assumed that a spark from the unguarded grate fell upon the drapery of the nearest cot, only four feet away. The rest was all too easy, and the nurses returned to find one six months' old baby dead in its cot, and another child of the same age so seriously burnt that it died within a few hours.

The nurses who gave evidence at the inquest admitted that, although the babies could not leave their cots, it was not safe to allow them to remain alone.

It should be a universal rule, admitting of no exception, that wards containing helpless persons, whether infants, sick, or infirm should never be left alone, night or day. Tragedies happen with appalling rapidity.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)