

The Midwife.

PRACTISING MIDWIVES.

The suggestion that women shall be compelled to undertake to practice midwifery for a definite period as a condition of receiving the certificate of the Central Midwives Board would, if carried into effect, be most unfair, and in the case of a profession of men would not be tolerated for one moment. Imagine the result if the General Medical Council issued a ukase that no medical student would be registered by that Council until he had put in an extra year of midwifery work after he had had the required number of cases and passed the required examination. After the manner of medical students the Houses of Parliament would be bombarded, and the reigning President of the G.M.C. would, in all probability, be burnt in effigy in Trafalgar Square.

District midwifery is unpopular for two reasons. (1) It is usually associated with patronage from lay persons which the best qualified and most self-respecting women resent, and (2) it is run on the cheap, the salaries offered in the past, in relation to the responsibility and strenuousness of the work have been, as a rule, disgracefully inadequate.

If midwives are to be required to practice as such then posts must be guaranteed to them at adequate salaries under professional supervision. To attempt to drive them into a branch of work in which the conditions of service are unpopular, and the pay below the poverty line, as a condition of obtaining a certificate which they prize, would be indefensible. The empty ranks of district midwives can never be satisfactorily filled by this method.

There is, however, a method which merits the serious consideration of the Minister of Health in his considered policy of consolidating the various health services and giving them a common direction and a common purpose instead of simply blindly increasing them.

There are many trained nurses who desire to qualify as certified midwives, but are not able to afford the required fees. At the instance of the Ministry of Health the Board of Education are giving grants to women to train as midwives. If it were provided that preference were given to trained nurses in awarding these grants, and that a condition of receiving them was an undertaking to practice midwifery for a definite period, the benefit would be threefold.

1. The grant need not be so large as that given to an untrained woman, because to conform to the Midwives' Act three months' training suffices for a nurse holding a certificate from a general hospital of not less than 100 beds, whereas it is six months in the case of a woman without previous training.

2. The standard of the nurse when trained would be higher and, therefore, the quality of her

work would be higher than that of the woman who only specialises for six months, and is apt to drift back to unscientific methods after leaving her midwifery training school.

3. The trained nurse who is also a certified midwife would be competent to give nursing care, as well as to act as a midwife in rural areas, and would thus be a much more valuable unit than the one whose knowledge is limited to the practice of midwifery.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

PENAL CASES.

A Special Meeting of the Central Midwives Board was held at Queen Anne's Gate Buildings, Westminster, on June 23rd, for the hearing of charges alleged against eight certified midwives with the following results:—

Struck off the Roll and Certificates Cancelled.—Midwives Harriet Boddice (No. 2605), Dinah Fairbrother (No. 18439), Annie Taylor (No. 16932).

Sentence Postponed (report of the Local Supervising Authority to be asked for in three and six months' time).—Midwives Ellen Marshall (No. 20,242), Lillian Emily Teagle (No. 12291).

Cautioned.—Midwife Betsy Richardson (report of L.S.A. in three and six months' time).

Of the other cases one was adjourned, and in one no action was taken.

GUARDIANSHIP OF INFANTS BILL, 1920.

This Bill, "To amend the Law relating to the Guardianship and Custody of Infants," presented in the House of Commons by Colonel Greig, M.P. proposes that the mother is made joint guardian with the father, and has equal authority, rights, and responsibility with regard to the child in every case.

THE MIDWIVES' ACT COMMITTEE, L.C.C.

The Midwives Act Committee of the London County Council have nominated Mr. H. de R. Walker, a member of the Committee to fill the vacancy consequent upon the resignation of Her Grace the Duchess of Marlborough.

REGISTRATION OF MIDWIVES IN BHOPAL.

It is interesting to know that under the enlightened rule of the Begum of Bhopal, the registration of midwives is in force in that State, and further that if any woman acts as a midwife without holding the necessary certificate she is fined. The Begum, or Nawab, of Bhopal, is one of the native rulers in India, who, within the boundaries of her own State is entitled to a salute of 21 guns.

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