

The Midwife.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

THE DECEMBER EXAMINATION.

At the December Examination of the Central Midwives' Board, 624 candidates were examined and 471 passed the examiners. The percentage of failures was 24.5.

THE CITY OF LONDON MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

A SHORT HISTORY.

A wealth of interesting information must lie buried in the minute books of some of our older hospitals, and Mr. Ralph B. Cannings, Secretary to the City of London Maternity Hospital, City Road, E.C. 1, has done good service both to the institution and in the interest of the historical records of our hospitals, by the short history which he has published of the oldest Maternity Hospital in the kingdom.

In his Foreword he tells us that this history falls naturally within three periods—from 1750-1770, when it was lodged in London House and Shaftesbury House in Aldersgate Street; from 1770-1907, when it was in the old building in the City Road; and from 1907 (when the existing structure was erected) to the present time. The material relied on has been collated mainly from the Minute Books of the Hospital.

It was on March 30th, 1750, that ten benevolent gentlemen met together at "The Black Swan," a tavern in Bartholomew Lane, and decided "to open a Lying-in Hospital for Married Women in the City of London and parts adjacent, and also for Sick and Lame Out-patients," a decision, says Mr. Cannings, of which the City of London may justly be proud. The first President was Mr. Slingsby Bethell, an Alderman of the City of London, and the Staff included two physicians and men-midwives, a Surgeon and Accoucheur, an apothecary, and the Treasurer, Chaplain, Secretary, and the Matron (Mrs. Mary Coverley).

The founders had no intention that the office of the members of the Committee should be a sinecure, for a minute records that it was resolved that "The Committee should meet every Wednesday, and to the intent that such meetings be punctual, and the business of the Hospital not retarded, it is now resolved and agreed that all such persons who shall be wholly absent, or not present at eleven o'clock, unless sick or out of town, shall forfeit, to be put in the Poor Box, one shilling for the use of the Hospital."

On June 13th, less than three months from the first meeting the Matron and one nurse were directed to go into residence.

By April 13th, 1751, the hospital was moved to

Shaftesbury House, an imposing mansion built in the reign of Charles I after designs by Inigo Jones, where there was room for thirty patients. Soon after the removal the first Matron resigned or was dismissed, for in May, 1751, "by ballot which began at 11 o'clock and ended at one o'clock her successor, Mrs. Katherine Evans," was appointed at a salary of fifteen pounds a year.

By January, 1753, four nurses at £8 a year each, and one domestic servant at £5 10s. a year, had been appointed.

In 1768 negotiations were opened with the authorities of St. Bartholomew's Hospital, owners of the property, and in 1773 the hospital was moved to its present site at the junction of City Road and Old Street, then residential thoroughfares. Close to the hospital on the north were pleasure grounds, and a fishing pond and bathing pool, and in the rear a garden:

The Committee, we are told, took great pains to inquire into the best and most approved methods of building and equipping a hospital. The following minute records the views of a Dr. Hulme, who had undertaken to make inquiries and report to the Committee, after viewing the Westminster Hospital, then lately built (1769).

"And the Doctor declared his idea of a public hospital for lying-in women, that it should be composed of long spacious rooms, with a range of beds on castors on each side, a fire place directly in the middle, and windows at each end with sashes letting down at the top, and a ventilator fixed in each. . . . One nurse will be sufficient to superintend the patients of the whole ward. But what is chiefly to be attended to is that by this means there will be a thorough and perpetual ventilation."

The new hospital was planned to contain 42 patients, and the Staff consisted of the Matron, two salaried nurses (one for night and the other for day duty), twelve pupil midwives, and eighteen pupil nurses. The first pupil had been accepted in 1771 "to be intrusted in midwifery and to qualify as Assistant Matron."

It is curious to read that in 1791, when a question was put to the Matron as to the advisability of providing a separate room for labours, her reply was that "A separate room for labours would create dissatisfaction, experiments would be suggested or suspected, the only safe method was that of deliveries in the wards; besides that there is no room in the house." When in 1860, nearly seventy years later, the Medical Staff expressed an opinion that separate labour rooms were unnecessary, the Matron of that day (the daughter of her predecessor) expressed a contrary view.

It is interesting to note that in 1816 the Secretary reported that he had "acquainted the Humane Society with the successful practice of the Matron in restoring suspended animation to infants apparently still-born, and had since received their

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)