

The Midwife.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

REPORT ON THE WORK FOR THE YEAR ENDED MARCH 31st, 1936.

The Report on the Work of the Central Midwives' Board, always an interesting document, is now to hand for the year ended March 31st, 1936, and contains many important and interesting features.

Changes in Personnel.

Important changes in the personnel of the Board during the period under review are that, at the end of the Board's year, Dr. J. S. Fairbairn, who had acted as Chairman for the last five years, retired from the Board. "He had been a member since 1918 and had taken an active part in the Board's deliberations throughout the period of his membership. The Board desires to place on record its high appreciation of the kindness and courtesy which he always displayed as Chairman, and its admiration of the immense efforts which he made to improve the status of midwives and midwifery in this country."

Miss E. M. Doubleday also ceased to be a member at the end of the year, after having rendered valuable service for several years.

Mrs. Florence Rebecca Mitchell and Mr. Arnold Walker, F.R.C.S., were appointed by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute to fill the vacancies thus occasioned.

Appointment of Secretary.

Mr. Leslie Farrer Brown, B.Sc.(Econ.), Barrister-at-law, was appointed Secretary of the Board, in place of the late Mr. H. G. Westley, whose death in August, 1935, was recorded in the Report for last year. Mr. Farrer Brown took up his duties in February, 1936, and under his direction the work of the Board is carried on smoothly and efficiently. During the interregnum Miss G. I. Short, as Acting Secretary, capably discharged the duties of the office.

Of the total number of those on the Roll, 56,671 have passed the Board's examination, and 2,358 trained women have been admitted in virtue of prior certification under Section 2 of the Midwives Act, 1902. The names of 1,507 midwives holding the certificate of the Central Midwives' Board for Scotland, or the Joint Nursing and Midwives' Council for Northern Ireland, or the Central Midwives' Board for the Irish Free State, and two Australian trained midwives, also appear on the English Roll under Section 10 of the Midwives Act, 1918. The trained women are consequently 60,538 in number, and the untrained 1,526, the respective percentages being 97.5 and 2.5 against 97.4 and 2.6 in the previous year.

The total number of midwives practising during 1935, according to the returns made by Local Supervising Authorities, is 16,165, of whom 15,798, or 97.7 per cent., are trained and 367, or 2.3 per cent., untrained.

Examinations.

The number of candidates entering for the examinations during the year under review was 4,155, as against 3,965 in the previous year, an increase of 190.

Of 4,110 candidates who completed their examination, 3,036 passed, the corresponding figures for the year ended March 31st, 1935, being 3,922 and 2,936.

Of the 3,036 successful candidates, 2,611, or 86 per cent., were admitted to examination on a reduced period of midwifery training by virtue of having undergone general training recognised by the Board.

The percentage of failures was 26.1, as against 25.1 in the previous year and 21.7 in 1933.

Midwife-Teachers' Examination.

The fifth Midwife-Teachers' examination, conducted under the authority of the Board, was held during the year, and for the first time Part I. of the examination consisted of both a written and an oral part.

Forty-seven candidates entered for the written part of Part I. of the examination, and of these one withdrew on account of illness and nine were rejected.

Of the 37 candidates who attended the oral examination, 15 failed to satisfy the examiners, and consequently were not permitted to proceed to Part II. of the examination. With the exception of one candidate who withdrew owing to illness, the candidates successful at Part I. of the examination, together with two candidates who were excused from sitting for that Part, since they had failed only in the teaching and demonstration part of the examination in the previous year's examination, presented themselves for Part II. of the examination; 16 were successful, and of these three were existing teachers.

MATERNITY SERVICES IN SCOTLAND.

Mr. Elliot, Secretary of State for Scotland, in moving the second reading of the Maternity Services (Scotland) Bill in the House of Commons, said that he hoped very much that the Bill would be found non-controversial. It would secure for every woman in labour in Scotland the same skill and attention that they all desired for their own people. The general nature of the proposals was that expectant mothers who desired to be confined in their own homes would be able to obtain the services of a doctor and a midwife, and, if necessary, the doctor would be able to call for the advice of an obstetrician of recognised standing. That might not be possible in some of the more remote islands, but the intention was there and would be carried out as far as was possible. The greatest importance was attached to post-natal examination to prevent conditions that might lead to ill-health in later life.

While the proposals in the Bill arose naturally out of the existing conditions in Scotland they were not necessarily the only method of efficient service. It might be desirable later, in the light of experience, to modify the present provisions. The arrangements which the local authorities would be required to make for providing these services would be subject to the approval of the Department of Health.

With regard to the remuneration of the midwives the future offered them the prospect of a better livelihood. The services provided for in the Bill were offered and not thrust on anyone. They were not compulsory, but he hoped that the fullest use would be made of them. The fees would be graded according to means and no charge would be made in the case of the necessitous. It was expected that the financial arrangements would enable the complete service to be provided at not much more than the amount paid for a midwife alone.

The maternity services would never achieve their maximum effectiveness without the fullest co-operation of the mothers themselves.

In supporting the Bill Mr. Johnston said provision should be made for "home helps" when mothers were taken to an institution for their lying-in, leaving behind, perhaps, a young family to be looked after. Motherhood was the most dangerous trade in Great Britain to-day, and they should be given guarantees that women would be adequately nourished during the period of childbirth.

The Bill was read a second time.

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