

The Midwife.

QUEEN CHARLOTTE'S MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

The Annual Report of Queen Charlotte's Hospital for 1937, of which Her Majesty the Queen and Her Majesty Queen Mary are the Patrons, is, as usual, a very live document and full of interest. As reported in previous years, the demand for In-patient treatment continued to exceed largely the accommodation available, while the volume of work in all departments—Ante-natal, Post-natal, and Training School—continued at a high level.

The Midwives Act, 1936, came into operation during 1937. The Committee record with much pleasure the measure of co-operation that has been secured with the Local Authorities whose areas they serve and that the arrangements made have hitherto operated smoothly.

The work on the first part of the new Hospital, of which the construction was begun last year, is now practically completed. It has, however, been found possible to arrange for an advance on a building mortgage of sufficient funds, which, added to the proceeds of the Marylebone Road site, will enable this wing to be extended and provide accommodation for the Nursing Staff, thus making it possible to transfer the present Hospital to Goldhawk Road in one self-contained unit.

The western wing having throughout been designed as an integral part of a complete scheme, work will be commenced forthwith.

Midwifery Training School.

The Report of the Midwifery Training School records that 135 Pupil Midwives sat for the Central Midwives Board Examinations, of whom two failed. The percentage of failures was thus 1.5 per cent., as compared with 28.7 per cent. over the whole country—a result highly creditable to all concerned with the instruction of the pupils, and which should be noted by those contemplating taking Midwifery training.

Under the new Rules of the Central Midwives Board, the Hospital has been approved by the Board in respect of the First Period of training for pupil-midwives, and is associated with the Queen Charlotte's District Association, which has been approved in respect of the Second Period of training.

District Out-Patients.

During the year 1,192 patients were delivered in their own homes by the Hospital midwives. One patient died, the rate per 1,000 being thus .84.

Isolation Block and Bernhard Baron Memorial Research Laboratories.

The Committee record with great pleasure that the value of this side of their work has been recognised by a munificent donation of £6,000 by the Pilgrim Trust, for which they express themselves as deeply and sincerely indebted. This donation is of the greatest value, since the grant from the Rockefeller Trust, which was payable over a period of seven years, will come to an end in June this year. This timely grant will enable the work to be continued for three further years.

Anæsthesia for Patients.

The Anæsthetic Service, which for some years has enabled any patient in the Main Hospital and "Invermead" to receive an analgesic during labour, has been continued and is being used as far as practicable in all districts. A form of portable apparatus, for which the Hospital is indebted to one of its Honorary Surgeons, has been thoroughly tested, with very satisfactory results. The National Birthday

Trust Fund have very generously given to the Hospital three of these machines. Their use could be greatly extended if cars could be provided in all districts for the use of the midwives. The cost of this service has risen considerably in the past two years, and must rise further. The Committee would be very grateful for contributions to the Anæsthetic Fund to reduce the deficit under this head.

MIDWIVES AND MAGIC AT THE RECENT MEETING OF THE BRITISH ASSOCIATION.

Mr. L. F. Newman presented a paper written by himself and Miss B. Newman on beliefs and customs concerning motherhood still surviving in England, to the Anthropological Section.

The speaker said that throughout the Eastern Counties there was a belief that a nurse or midwife had certain powers which enabled her, in an emergency, to arrive in time for the birth of a child without having recourse to the ordinary means of transport.

He told a story of how a young husband went at night to fetch the midwife, who was in bed. She told him to go home, and that she would be with his wife in time for the birth.

He returned by the shortest route. When he reached home he found the midwife at her post. When he asked how she had travelled, she replied that the broomstick was still the best method of transport.

There was also a series of widely held beliefs about folk medicine. To reduce minor troubles of motherhood raspberry tea, made from dried raspberry leaves, was universal in the Eastern counties, including North-East London.

Many midwives attending outpatients still place the placenta on the fire immediately they have examined it, as the most hygienic method of disposing of it; but how many know that in Scotland, as related by Miss Isabel Macdonald in "The Fairy Tradition in the Highlands," the custom is of long standing, and was practised originally so that the fairies might not have opportunity to contact the blood and thereby gain power over mother or child?

CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD.

The August Examinations.

At the examination of the Central Midwives Board in August, there was a total of 1,132 candidates. Of these 850 were first entries and 282 re-entries; 627 first entries and 172 re-entries were successful in passing the examination. The percentage of failures was first entries 26.2, re-entries 39.0. The percentage of failures of all candidates was 29.4.

Longer Training for Midwives.

Rules of the Central Midwives Board embodying important changes in the training of midwives have received the approval of the Minister of Health and the new arrangements will come into force progressively this autumn.

The length of training will be extended from six months to one year in the case of trained nurses and from one year to two years in all other cases, and divide the training into two parts, a first period of six or eighteen months, according to whether the pupils are or are not trained nurses, and a second period of six months for all pupils. Only on completion of the second part can the examination for the certificate of the Central Midwives Board be taken.

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