

## The Midwife.

### Central Midwives Board.

At the meeting of the Central Midwives Board on November 2nd, 1950, it was resolved that the Board place on record its high appreciation of the services rendered by Professor F. S. Langmead, M.D., F.R.C.P., during his five years as representative of the Royal College of Physicians on the Board, and the Chairman extended a welcome to Professor A. A. Moncrieff, M.D., F.R.C.P., as the new representative of the Royal College of Physicians.

### To-day in the Gold Coast.

EARLY IN 1951 a new constitution will be introduced for the Gold Coast. This will aim at the "africanising" of Government Departments and public services. It is probable, however, that little difference in the need there for British nursing sisters will be noticed in the near future. The hospital wards are always full, and huge patient crowds of out-patients squat outside the doors.

Nurses who go out to West Africa are all highly qualified and experienced women who have competed for their appointments in searching interviews before an examining board. They must be capable of running a hospital single-handed. There will be one resident doctor at least, and a few dozen African nurses, both male and female, as well as a number of non-nursing staff. Consequently no very young nursing sisters are found in the Gold Coast. They are all about the age of thirty or over. Most of them work in the big hospitals of Accra, but some are sent to the smaller hospitals which a few of the larger towns have.

Why do they choose the Gold Coast? There are many more attractive parts of the world where their services would be eagerly welcomed. It may be that the waiting list for those applying for overseas appointments is longer for other countries, and a West African Colonial post was an alternative choice.

A nursing sister in charge of a hospital in the Gold Coast has a bungalow and various allowances which bring her salary up to a figure which sounds generous by home standards. But the newly-arrived nurse soon finds that the cost of living is three times that of the United Kingdom to-day. The salary is, however, adequate, and deservedly so, since Sister has to be at the hospital by 7.30 a.m., and she works there until 3.30 p.m. with a two-hour break for lunch. In theory she is free on Saturday afternoons and on Sundays, but she usually goes there twice during the week-end, and every night she is "on call" at her bungalow for any serious case.

All day long she is on her hot feet, organising the work of others, teaching, tactfully making peace between the various African sects, and doing most skilled jobs in the theatre and wards herself. With praiseworthy exceptions, African nurses have not yet proved themselves capable of much responsibility, and they work under the supervision of Sister and Doctor. Much care and patience is needed to make sure that an order is understood, for many of the African staff, although educated up to Standard Seven in the Primary School, have an imperfect grasp of the English language, and of course accuracy is essential in the hospital world.

After a long steamy-hot day, Sister may wish for relaxation alone in her bungalow, or for congenial company at golf, swimming or tennis. She will on many occasions be included in any social party, as European women who are single are indeed rarities in the Gold Coast, and therefore much in demand at drink-parties at the club or at private dinner parties.

Nursing sisters go to "the white man's grave" with the mission of alleviating physical suffering in a region where



A Typical Street Scene in the Gold Coast.

climate and ignorance still make dreadful disease common. Most British nurses wish to attend exclusively to African cases, and are often disappointed if they have to work in hospitals for Europeans. Some who choose the Gold Coast may have wished for a change from nursing in Britain. Opportunities for responsibility are far more frequent overseas, and in addition there is the exciting chance of seeing other parts of the world. Others may hope to add to their savings, and that was clearly possible before 1939. Quite a number of nurses marry Government officials, and some of them carry on part-time work after marriage. The number of eligible bachelors is high, and it is not untrue or unkind to say that in the past some nurses have set sail for the West Coast with this piece of information tucked in the back of their caps.

Sister in her white starched overall, white flowing cap, and white canvas shoes, is a contrast to the coal-black African nurses with their short woolly hair and bare feet. Some of these girls have had secondary education, and the very best of them may be chosen as midwives in a town hospital, or in a village maternity clinic. Here they may choose to wear native dress, consisting of a coloured handkerchief round the head, and a patterned cotton cloth wrapped round the body hanging to above the ankles. The maternity centre will have a dispensary where simple ointments and medicines are available, a babies' clinic, and a lying-in ward. Straw mats or low wooden benches are provided for the mothers, and the babies lie naked in wooden cribs covered with mosquito netting. It will be the barest and cleanest-looking building in the village, usually being made of cement with a wooden verandah.

If the people of the Gold Coast are to take a step away from the Motherland, let them not forget their debt to the British nurses who helped the daughter colony along the road.

"LESLIE APPLETON."

### British Book and Periodical Exhibitions in Austria.

A BRITISH COUNCIL EXHIBITION of scientific and technical books and periodicals will open in Vienna on January 15th. It will be shown at the Technische Hochschule (January 15th to 31st) and at the Kunstverlag Wolfrum (February 6th to 20th), and later in Graz at the Technische Hochschule.

The exhibition contains some 1,300 books and nearly

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