will deal with the whole question after the inquiry is concluded. To the institute falls in large measure the honour of carrying forward the Midwives Act against an immense weight—first of public apathy and next of professional opposition. The work was done mainly for the public good and has already proved, and will yearly prove, of increasing value not only in saving life but in decreasing the low standard of maternal health and infant mortality; half of the births in England and Wales, we should remember, are not attended by a medical man.

If midwives were public-spirited enough to work thus in the past it seems only just that their opinion should, through one member of their calling, be used on a committee which will possibly have some effect on their work in the future. Out of 26,000 women on the Midwives Roll some one woman could well have been chosen to deliberate with the lay, medical, and secretarial element already so well represented on this committee. We are all united in wishing that a wise revision of the Act should take place; this is inevitable, as it was never considered a by any means perfect measure. It is not, however, a hopeful sign that no midwife has been asked to join in the deliberations of the first Departmental Committee.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

J. WILSON,

President, Midwives Institute.

12, Buckingham-street, W.C., Dec. 22nd, 1908.

MENTAL OBSERVATION WARDS IN GLASGOW PARISH HOSPITAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As convener of the district hospitals committee of the Glasgow parish council I beg to call the attention of medical practitioners to a misconception which seems to prevail regarding the purpose of the observation wards and the class of patients for whom they are provided. The impression seems to exist that these wards are open to private patients. Recently, a practitioner in a coast town sent a patient to the certifying physician in lunacy of Glasgow parish council requesting him to take the patient into his *probationary home*, and the wife of another patient stated that she understood her husband had been removed to a *private mental hospital*, whereas he had been admitted into Duke-street Parish Hospital. The first case proved rather unfortunate for the ratepayers of Glasgow parish, inasmuch as the patient had to be removed to the asylum, and as he had no settlement elsewhere in Scotland he will have to be maintained indefinitely at the expense of the rates. It should be clearly understood that only pauper patients are entitled to be admitted into Duke-street Hospital and only after application has been made to the inspector of poor of Glasgow parish.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Glasgow, Dec. 15th, 1908.

JAMES ERSKINE, M.B. Glasg.

EPSOM COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I earnestly ask your assistance in this appeal on behalf of the Royal Medical Foundation of Epsom College. This foundation provides annuities of £30 each for 50 aged members, or widows of members, of our profession, and gives a first-class education, together with clothing and maintenance, to 50 orphans and sons of impecunious and disabled medical men. Altogether a sum of £7000 a year is required for these urgent and deserving objects. It is impossible to maintain the full number of pensioners and foundation scholars unless this amount is forthcoming, and the Council are experiencing a period of extreme anxiety lest want of sufficient funds should compel them to make a reduction in one or other or both of these classes of recipients. Such a regrettable course will not be taken unless it becomes an absolute necessity, and it can be avoided if all who feel an interest in the welfare of the foundation will assist the Council in doing their best to avoid it. Indeed, did the financial position of the foundation permit, we should be only too glad to increase, rather than diminish, the total number both of pensioners and foundation scholars. The applicants very far exceed the number we are able to help, and the members of the standing committee appointed by the Council to investigate the application papers will bear me out in saying that many cases of the most heart-rending

nature and in which immediate aid is sorely needed have to stand over for a year or two and some fail altogether to get elected.

The College has by two or three years just passed its jubilee, and the sickle and the car of time have mowed down and carried away many of the staunchest friends of the institution who became attached to it in its days of infancy and earliest youth. Their empty places we wish to fill up by new and younger subscribers. If the more fortunate members of the profession would give according to their means; if those who are blessed with health and practice, but withal have only a narrow margin to devote to works of charity or benevolence, would subscribe a guinea or even half a guinea yearly; and if both classes would take such opportunities as they have of pleading the cause of this unique medical foundation with their well-to-do relatives and friends, the efforts of the Council would be safeguarded, and they would be able securely to alleviate the misery and woe and to make provision for the wants of those who are forced to plead for help to their more prosperous and more successful *confrères*.

The names of 39,827 persons are contained in the present Medical Register. There are under 2200 medical practitioners who are annual subscribers to this great medical foundation. Is the assistance of only *one-eighteenth* of the profession a measure of the financial capacity of the profession to meet the indigent needs existing within its own fold? or is it a measure of that loving kindness which tells us to do unto others that which we would desire should be done unto us? I am quite sure that it is neither the one nor the other, and that the smallness of the proportion of the profession who subscribe to the foundation fund of Epsom College is entirely due to the lack of thought, or to the need of being reminded.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

HENRY MORRIS,

Dec. 18th, 1908.

Hon. Treasurer.

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

House-flies and Disease.

At a meeting of the National Union of Public Health Authorities held in London on Nov. 27th Dr. Armstrong read a paper on House-flies and Disease, and the Duty of Sanitary Authorities in Relation Thereto. The objects of the paper were to establish the fact that although the nuisance of flies is fully recognised, the danger from them is not realised by the general public; secondly, to discuss the most practicable means of preventing the multiplication and development of flies; and thirdly, to show the responsibility of sanitary authorities in this respect and how to meet it. In discussing the danger from flies Dr. Armstrong enumerates 18 diseases as being carried by flies, and completes his list with ringworm, eczema, and other skin diseases, and any other infectious or bacterial disease. Admitting that the danger is not fully realised, this statement is an instance of a dangerous generalisation on a few known facts. Dr. Armstrong believes that the authenticity of the list will not be questioned by anyone conversant with the subject. Perhaps those conversant with the subject will not be prepared to deny, in the present state of our knowledge, that whooping-cough, for instance, or measles, both of which are included in Dr. Armstrong's list, may perhaps be conveyed by flies, but they would prefer to await the production of evidence before admitting them to the list of diseases transmitted by flies. Dr. Armstrong also states that the organism of infantile diarrhoea is believed to be a staphylococcus. This appears to be the belief of the writer of a paper from which Dr. Armstrong quotes and not a general belief. Mention is made that "of the five varieties of flies, the two commonest are the domestic and the blue bottle." Mr. A. E. Shipley, whose paper is mentioned in the appended bibliography, says: "At present some forty thousand species of diptera are known." In concluding his paper Dr. Armstrong makes the following unqualified statements: "Flies mean filth and filth is a nuisance which sanitary authorities must cause to be abated. Wherever flies congregate the inspector of nuisances should promptly see to the removal of the dirt attracting them and the cleansing and disinfecting of the place."

Dec. 21st.