

## Midwives' Registration Bill.

THE General Medical Council spent nearly three days in considering the Midwives' Registration Bill, which has passed the second reading in the House of Lords and has been transmitted by the President of the Privy Council to the Medical Council, asking for their observations upon it.

The Bill proposed that the term "midwife" should mean "a woman who undertakes to attend cases of natural labour without the direct supervision of a medical practitioner," and that a "Midwives' Board" be constituted under the Act.

A Committee was appointed to consider the matter and recommended that the Bill should be amended as follows:—

"That the word 'midwives' should be struck out of the title of the Bill and out of the several clauses, and that the term 'midwifery nurses' be substituted for it. N.B.—This amendment was carried on a division by a majority.

Clause 2.—That in lines 9 and 10 the words following 'natural labour' should be struck out, and that the words 'but not to discharge any other duties than those of a midwifery nurse' should follow the words 'natural labour.'

Clause 3, subclause 2.—That in line 28 the word 'registered' be substituted for 'legally qualified.'

Clause 4, line 19.—After 'surgery' add 'or midwifery, except as defined in this Act'; line 20, add 'if any such name, title, or designation is assumed, or if any certificate of death or of stillbirth be granted, the midwifery nurse, on conviction, should be subjected to a fine not exceeding .....

Clause 5.—The committee see strong objections to the wide powers given under this clause of the Bill for the registration of midwives who may represent themselves as at present engaged in *bonâ fide* practice. They consider that the conditions under which the registration of these persons should be permitted ought to be made much more stringent, or the register would be flooded with ill-educated persons. It is, in their opinion, important that certificates of character and of competency, as well as proof of occupation as a midwife, should be furnished by each candidate for registration under this clause.

Clause 6.—That the Midwives' (Midwifery Nurses) Board should have an official chairman, to be appointed either by the Lord President of the Privy Council or by the President of the Local Government Board. The committee consider that the Incorporated Midwives' Institute should appoint only one representative on the Board, and that the Obstetrical Society of London should appoint a representative.

Clause 8.—The committee consider that the fees named in this clause will not be sufficient to provide for the payment of the charges to be met by the Midwives' (Midwifery Nurses) Board. They suggest that power should be given to the Board to fix the fees.

Clause 16.—The committee ask the Council to point out to the Lord President that no similar provision exists in the Medical Acts for the prosecution of offences, and they venture to suggest that, if such provision is considered necessary, the consenting authority should be either the Registrar of the Midwives' Board or the local supervising authority referred to in Clause 12."

Some interesting points came out during the discussion by the Council concerning the provisions of the Bill.

Sir Walter Foster agreed that changes were

necessary in the midwife system, but he objected "to the registration of women whose knowledge of midwifery was picked up in the course of a few months, with instruction and attendance on a small number of cases. He would have Nursing treated in all its branches, and have properly trained medical, and surgical, and midwifery Nurses and treat them all alike."

Mr. Wheelhouse supported Sir W. Foster's view. He said "the whole science of Nursing had undergone an entire change in recent years. Nurses were now trained for all portions of their work, and why should they not have trained obstetrical Nurses? And why, if the medical and surgical Nurse was at all times to be kept in subservience to the medical man, should the obstetrical Nurse be allowed by law to take the whole of his duties upon her own shoulders and without any control from him, or anybody else, be allowed to practise the whole art of midwifery?"

In clause 6 of the Bill a proposition occurs "that six months after the passing of the Act a Midwives' Board shall be formed consisting of 12 registered medical practitioners, 3 to be appointed by the Royal College of Physicians, 3 by the Royal College of Surgeons, 3 by the Society of Apothecaries, and 3 by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute."

Sir William Turner said, "They did not know anything about the Institute, but thinking it might be an institute which had certain good qualities, although it was unknown to them, suggested that it should appoint a single representative."

Dr. Bruce chivalrously came to the rescue of the Institute, and said, "As this whole matter was a woman's matter, it should be left to the women. If a Board was to be constituted at all it should consist of women."

Sir Dyce Duckworth asked, "Can no one tell us anything about this Institute? Is it composed of women or obstetrical practitioners?"

The President said "he did not know, but he believed the Bill originated with the Institute."

The Bill certainly did not directly originate with the Institute, yet after all the hard work the Institute has done in this matter, although it is neither a large nor an influential body, justice demands that its views should be represented upon any Board formed for the Registration of Midwives.

Ultimately, however, Dr. Atthill proposed that the Midwives' Institute should be deprived of any representation on the Board, which was seconded by Mr. Brudenell-Carter, and at once agreed to.

On the third day, when the Bill again came up for discussion, the Council pointed out in its Report to the Lords, that "as the Bill has been

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