

The Midwives Bill.

On Friday, in last week, the Midwives' Bill, as amended by the Standing Committee on Law, was considered by the House of Commons and ordered for a third reading, so that there is every probability that the Bill may become law this Session. Some additions and amendments were made to the Bill in the course of the debate. On the motion of Mr. T. P. O'Connor, a new Clause was inserted which ran as follows:—

"Where a person whose name is entered on the roll of midwives has, either before or after the passing of this Act, and either before or after her name is so entered on the roll, been convicted, either in his Majesty's dominions or elsewhere, of an offence which, if committed in England, would be a felony or misdemeanour, or been guilty of any disgraceful conduct in her practice as a midwife, that person shall be liable to have her name erased from the roll. The Midwives Board shall cause inquiry to be made into the case of a person alleged to be liable to have her name erased under this section, and, on proof of such conviction or of such disgraceful conduct, shall cause the name of such person to be erased from the roll."

A new Clause, moved by Mr. Galloway, relative to the inspection of premises in which any woman receives or proposes to receive, as a midwife, a pregnant or lying-in woman, and to the punishment of persons who receive such patients after a given date, if uncertified under the Act was lost.

Another Clause, which was lost on a division was proposed by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, and provided that midwives should take out licenses issued by the local authorities. Captain Norton opposed the amendment on the ground that midwives would have to take out licenses in half a dozen districts, and Mr. Heywood Johnstone pointed out that provision was already made that women who proposed to practice must "give notice," which met the requirements of the case, and he believed that the requiring of licenses would cause difficulties.

An amendment which was agreed to, after the adoption of a modification by which the Clause would not become operative until after January 1st, 1903, was moved by Mr. Ambrose (Mayo, W.), and ran as follows:—

"From and after the first day of January, 1903, no woman shall habitually and for gain attend women in childbirth, or shall be entitled to take or use the name or title of midwife (either alone or in combination with any other word or words), or any name, title addition, or description implying that she is certified under this Act, or is a person specially qualified to practise midwifery, or is recognised by law as a midwife unless she be certified under this Act."

As a consequential amendment, sub-section 6, which provided that no woman should be entitled after January 1st, 1903, to recover any fee or

charge for attendance as a midwife, unless she was certified under the Act, was omitted.

An amendment on Clause 3 (Constitution and duties of the Central Midwives' Board), moved by Mr. T. P. O'Connor, was agreed to, which provided that, amongst the authorities constituting the Board, there should be included:—

"One person to be appointed by the Royal British Nurses' Association."

It will thus be seen the Royal British Nurses' Association has been put on an equality on the Midwives' Board, as to representation and control, with the Midwives' Institute, an arrangement which is eminently unjust, considering that the latter institution has borne all the burden and heat of the day in the struggle for the registration of midwives, but, as we know, legislation in this country is merely a matter of social influence.

Sir James Crichton Browne and his medical colleagues who manage the R.B.N.A. have repudiated, with an assumption of magnificent indignation the statement made by this journal, and supported by the official organ of the British Medical Association, that the nurses have been deprived of their just influence and control in their own Association by the medical men who govern it. These gentlemen have now an opportunity of proving that their indignation is genuine, by supporting the just claim of the Royal British Nurses' Association, to be represented by a nurse and not a medical man on the Midwives' Board. As arrangements have been made for ample medical representation on the Midwives' Board, there is absolutely no excuse whatever for the nurses' interests being represented, as they usually are, by a medical man.

We shall watch with interest the action taken by the R.B.N.A. in this important matter. Personally, we have no hope that the nurse members of the Association will be consulted at all.

A Terrible Blaze.

On Tuesday last a terrible fire took place at St. Luke's Hospital, Chicago, an unlicensed institution for the cure of inebriates and opium fiends. There were seventy patients in the building at the time, and the fact was revealed that eight of them were chained in bed, while thirty wore straight jackets. Thirteen patients lost their lives, and forty were badly injured. The attendants fled, panic stricken, on the outbreak of the fire. An exciting scene occurred when twenty-eight patients appeared at a fifth floor window, and frantically tore at a heavy wire screen and iron bars, till at last the solid bars yielded. Several of the officials have been arrested.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)