

The German Midwives' Union.

It is interesting to note how the problems with which midwives are confronted are much the same in Germany as in this country, and a short time ago the 4th General Meeting of German Midwives, held in Berlin, passed a resolution asking that a deputation from the German Midwives' Union should wait upon the Government with the object of furthering the passage of a Bill to render the united development of midwifery possible.

THE PETITION

Regarding the selection, training, and supplementary instruction, and guaranteed payment of Midwives in the German Empire, was framed with the object of settling three definite and important questions.

The first proposal concerns the selection and training of midwives, the second their supplementary instruction, and the third the guaranteeing of fees.

It is substantially as follows:—

1. Selection and Training.

Midwifery probationers shall be subject to a careful scrutiny respecting their qualifications as regards private life, education, and any previous certificates which they may possess, in order to determine if they are suitable and likely to profit by the training, *which shall last for a period of at least a year*, in order that time may be devoted to a thorough study of infection, disinfection, and thorough instruction in the care of infants.

2. Concerning Supplementary Instruction.

As in midwifery, as in all other branches of medical science, progress is constantly being made, the 4th General Meeting considers it advisable that at intervals of five years a course of lectures and instruction, lasting eight days, shall (as in Hesse) be held in connection with all midwifery training schools, and that the costs incurred for travelling expenses, board, and lodging, or educational purposes, shall be defrayed from the municipal or parochial funds, the cost to be estimated at 3 marks (about 2s. 11d.) per day.

Midwives are no more able to defray the cost of these courses of instruction than they are to bear the expense of carrying out the obligatory rules regarding disinfection, or of the time of enforced idleness caused by an outbreak of an infectious illness in a family where their services are in requisition. Therefore, the Union begs that this clause may receive particular attention.

Such a course of lectures is considered to cost a midwife on an average 100 marks (£4 17s. 6d.). In accordance with this the town of Nürnberg, for instance, pays each registered midwife an extra fee of 100 marks, and the Midwives' Union also pays each of its members 100 marks, because the Union finds by experience that 200 marks are really necessary. Thus it will easily be seen that there are many midwives who could not bear these expenses without getting into debt.

In cases where disinfection is followed by an obligatory quarantine, caused by attendance on puerperal fever or other infectious illness, the midwife should receive a sum down of 50 marks for the following expenses incurred, viz., 2 to 4 marks for personal and instrumental disinfection, about 4 marks for disinfecting her room, 2 marks or more for disinfectant material, travelling expenses to the district doctor, and the public disinfecting institution. This, together with the costs incurred by a quarantine of eight days, during which nothing can be earned, reckoning that the midwife generally earns from 5.40 marks per day, amounts to 50 marks (£2 8s. 9d.).

3. Concerning the Guaranteeing of Fees.

The conditions under which a German midwife is appointed contain the clause that the midwife is bound at all times to "attend every case." This clause secures aid for the patients, mother and child, but provides no certainty that the midwife will receive her fee. There should be attached to this condition another clause stating "that every midwife is entitled to an adequate fee for her services in case of pauper confinements, the fee to be paid by the relieving officer."

The 4th General Meeting of the Midwives' Union decided that 16 marks for a confinement and eight visits, is the lowest adequate fee. This fee is paid in the Bavarian Palatinate. A fee of 10 marks for the confinement and eight visits is considered by the Union only permissible in such districts where hitherto the fees have been much lower still. The Union utterly condemns the desire of many German towns and country parishes that midwives shall give their services gratuitously in case of pauper confinements, and that a midwife shall enter into a one-sided contract with them. In most cases, as matters are at present, the contracts between a parish and a midwife secure the rights to the former and the duties to the latter. Therefore, no contract should be considered as permissible which requires a midwife to engage herself for a period of three, five, or even ten years, without a definitely settled income or the right of giving notice.

The midwife should be assured of an annual income of 1,200 marks (£57). This averages 75 cases per 16 marks.

The General Meeting ruled that all midwives should be compelled to become members of the State Invalid Fund, in order to provide for them in case of inability to work.

The Petition was signed by the German Midwives' Association.

T. V. FRAU OLGA LEBAUER, Secretary.

DEPUTATION TO THE LORD PRESIDENT OF THE COUNCIL

The Lord President of the Council, the Earl of Crewe, will receive at the Privy Council Office, at 5 o'clock, on Friday, March 22nd, a deputation from the Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives, on the subject of the exemption of midwives working in Poor Law institutions from conformity to the regulations of the Central Midwives' Board.

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