

The Midwife.

Direct Representation for Midwives.

We hear that *The Midwives' Record and Maternity Nurse* has changed editors—anyway the July number opens with a very enlightened article, entitled "Representation or 'Benevolent' Despotism," in which direct representation for midwives on the Central Midwives' Board is claimed. In this demand the midwives have the entire sympathy of this Journal. Indeed, so far the *BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING* has been the only organ in the press to advocate this just demand.

The *Midwives' Record* pertinently asks: "What would a trade union of manual workers say to a proposal that their union should be administered by their employers? Such a proposition would be greeted with those varieties of facetious derision in which vulgar and untutored minds often indulge at the expense of their superiors. Yet, will it be seriously alleged that what is not 'good enough' for the labouring classes should amply satisfy a large and necessary body of women, who have consecrated their lives to a calling than which there is none more important to the present and future health of the body social?"

The article concludes with the words: "The present constitution of the Central Midwives' Board is archaic in the highest degree, and sooner or later must yield to a really representative system."

The Midwives' Act does not provide for any direct representation of midwives by members of that profession, and in consequence only one lady who is a (non-practising) midwife, has been placed upon the Board. She, moreover, is the representative of the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute for Nurses, which has power to appoint "a person," so that it is only by favour that a midwife has a seat on the Central Midwives' Board at all.

Midwives' Defence Association.

The decision to affiliate the Midwives' Defence Association to the Incorporated Midwives' Institute makes the position of the Central Midwives' Board a curious one. While judicial duties are imposed on the Board by Act of Parliament, two of its nine members hold high office in a society actively concerned in the defence of midwives, and a third takes his seat as the appointed representative of that Society.

Alcohol in Relation to Motherhood.

Mrs. Kelynack, M.B., Ch.B., in an address delivered at the Sixteenth Annual Congress of the Kent County Temperance Federation at Chatham, and published in the *British Journal of Inebriety*, spoke, in part, as follows:—

DRINK AND THE INFANT.

The human infant is absolutely the most helpless of all newly-born creatures. The first year of life is one of complete dependence, and an enormous number of babies fall victims during that period to the effects of neglect and ignorance on the part of their natural guardians. It is easy to quote figures regarding infantile mortality, but far from easy to realise their full significance.

In 1904 the number of deaths of children under one year was 137,392; and taking the last five years for which statistics are available, 970,749 died under five years of age. Although the general death-rate has decreased, the infant mortality has remained practically stationary. During the first week of life, when the infant is struggling to adapt itself to its new circumstances and environment, the mortality is so high that it is estimated that were it to continue at the same figure for forty-two weeks, every child born alive would have succumbed during that period.

Bad housing, poverty, and the cruel struggle for mere existence among the poorer classes, all help to keep up this annual sacrifice of human life, but we shall not be far wrong if we say that parental, and especially maternal, alcoholism, with its associated evils, is greatly, if not chiefly, responsible. It is impossible for the half-starved, drink-sodden woman to do justice to herself or her infant either before or after its birth.

For the first few years a healthy and well-governed home should afford the proper training-ground for the developing life. In the alcohol-free home the requisites of suitable and sufficient food, clothing, warmth, air, and light are usually conspicuous by their absence. A great deal of this is due to ignorance and carelessness on the part of the mother, engendered and maintained by her alcoholic habits; but we should remember that the question is largely an economic one.

The condition of the working classes, especially in the towns—and 70 per cent. are urban dwellers—is at its best fraught with difficulty for the upbringing of healthy children. Even a steady worker, when aided by a sober, industrious wife, feels the keen stress of life, and finds it well nigh impossible to provide for sickness or premature death. But when the all too scanty wage is expended in drink by the husband it inevitably means loss for the children and deprivation for the mother. The indulgence in alcohol is not only of no benefit to the man, but often causes serious impairment of his wage-earning powers. It has been estimated that on an average each working-class family spends 6s. a week on drink. If this amount were spent in

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