

## The Midwife.

### The Departmental Committee on the Midwives' Act.

It is a strange oversight which has led to the appointment of a Departmental Committee to enquire into the working of the Midwives' Act, including the training and supply of midwives, without the inclusion of one midwife in the members of that Committee, and indeed with only one woman upon it at all to inquire into this question which so vitally affects women.

The teaching of midwives in the theory of their work devolves upon the medical profession, but the duty of training them in its practical side in the wards and at the bedside of the patients is in the hands of midwives, and their advice on any committee charged with enquiring into the training of midwives is of supreme importance to its efficiency. The value of midwives in the body politic does not rest on the fact that they are, in a very limited degree, inferior practitioners, but that they can skilfully perform duties necessary for the comfort of the mother and child during the lying-in period, and the Departmental Committee has no member who can give it expert advice as to the practical side of the training of midwives. Midwives are themselves to blame to some extent for this oversight, for they allowed legislation to be enacted in regard to their profession without organising effectively enough to secure one direct representative on the Board which controls them, and it is therefore not altogether surprising that their claims to representation on the present occasion should have been overlooked, but it is not in the public interest that they should be silent in regard to this omission. Now, if ever, is a time when the Midwives' Defence Association, if it is to prove its right to its title, and the Midwives' Institute, to which it is affiliated, and with which it is now proposed that the Association should be incorporated, should take strong and forceful action, and we hope that a meeting may be summoned to consider the matter.

The question of the right of midwives to direct representation on their Governing Body is one which might with advantage be brought before the Committee. We hope this may be done.

Any midwives who desire to communicate with the Committee should address their communications to the Secretary, Midwives' Act Committee, Privy Council Office, Whitehall.

### Midwives' Defence Association.

We are informed that it is proposed to recommend to the Annual Meeting of the Midwives' Defence Association, to be held at 12, Buckingham Street, Strand, on January 18th, that the Association should be incorporated with the Midwives' Institute, or, more accurately, that the Midwives' Defence Association shall "cease to exist as an independent body," and that "its work shall be merged in that of the Midwives' Institute."

It is just twelve months ago since we wrote in our review of the year, concerning the Midwives' Defence Association: "Its eventual success must depend upon the lines on which it is organised by the Council. It must be catholic enough to include all midwives, and stand outside all other societies, having its own independent organisation if it is to attain the object of attracting to itself certified midwives of diverse views and interests." For this reason we deplore the recommendation of the Council. The success of the Medical Defence Union has been due to its independent position, and we do not believe that any of its members would desire to see it merged even in so important a Society as the British Medical Association. Midwives, however, must gain their own experience.

We have pleasure in publishing the subjoined letter, which Miss Brey has addressed to the Hon. Secretary of the Defence Branch of the Midwives' Institute in response to one informing her of "the proposed change in the Midwives' Defence Association, by which its work will be taken over by the Midwives' Institute." Under this change it will be necessary for a midwife, desiring to subscribe for the benefit of 'protection and defence' to become a member of the Midwives' Institute." The announcement seems a little premature, as the members of the Association will have no opportunity of discussing the question until the Annual Meeting on the 18th, but we presume, the Council considers it a foregone conclusion that its recommendation will be accepted.

TO THE HON. SECRETARY, MIDWIVES' DEFENCE ASSOCIATION.

DEAR MADAM,—I beg to acknowledge your letter informing me of the proposed change in the Midwives' Defence Association, by which its work will be taken over by the Midwives' Institute, a course which I realised to be inevitable when the Council

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