

The Midwife.

The Midwife Question.

The scarcity of midwives is causing anxiety to people who are interested in the welfare of the poor women who require their services, and now that 1910 has come, when the period of grace allowed by the 1902 Midwives' Act expires, many "handy" women are forced by law to cease their work, and the shortage of properly trained midwives will be acutely felt.

Apparently, Germany is suffering from a like difficulty, for a *Fraülein von Schmied* (herself a trained midwife) has made the somewhat startling proposal that all women over 18 years of age shall be compelled to undergo a year's training in midwifery, just as men are compelled to do their military service. She also suggests that the organisation shall be conducted on military lines, and thinks "the result would be a great advance in hygiene and morality."

To most of us it would seem extremely undesirable that any girl of 18 should be present with a woman at the time of childbirth; and that any woman should be compelled against her will to be so present, would, one would suppose, be absolutely disastrous to everyone concerned, for if she were not conscientious, she would shirk the disagreeable part of her work, with the result of discomfort, and even danger, to both mother and child.

There is, fortunately, a much more obvious and simple solution to the difficulty than that suggested by *Fraülein von Schmied*, and that is to make it worth while, from a remunerative point of view, for women to take up midwifery as a profession, and also to make it less expensive for them to train as midwives.

At present the cost of training in midwifery is considerable, and the advantages, when the training has been obtained, not very obvious, as the following advertisements will testify:—

(1) British Lying-in Hospital.—Course, four months (C.M.B. exam.). 28 guineas.

(2) Clapham Maternity Hospital.—Three months. 23 guineas.

(3) Dundee Maternity Hospital.—Fees (three months tuition and practice, board, lodging, and washing), £15 15s.

(4) Home for Mothers and Babies, Woolwich.—Vacancy for gentlewoman with general training. Midwifery, six months, C.M.B. exam., £20. If undertaking district midwifery, £12.

It is noteworthy that at Woolwich it is only gentlewomen who are trained nurses that are

required; which means practically that an educated woman, after undergoing three years' training in a general hospital or infirmary, can, by sacrificing six months of her time and paying £20 (or, if she undertakes district midwifery, £12), be trained as a midwife. When she has sacrificed this time and money, the question is, "What advantage is she likely to receive?" for it is hardly reasonable to expect her to take up the work from purely philanthropic motives, any more than it would be reasonable to expect a doctor or teacher to do so.

Here are some interesting advertisements bearing on the subject:—

(1) Wanted, District Nurse for small country town; C.M.B. £60.

(2) Required, a Cottage Nurse for country district; fully qualified midwife and general training; good cyclist. Inclusive salary, £55.

In the following two advertisements no midwifery qualification is demanded:—

(1) Wanted, fully trained District Nurse. Salary, £75 per annum.

(2) Wanted, Lady Nurse, fully certificated, with district experience. Salary, £90, inclusive.

Another advertisement worth considering is the following:—

"Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute for Nurses.—Required, etc., etc. Preference will be given to candidates who hold the C.M.B. certificate."

In this latter case it is decidedly an advantage to hold the C.M.B. certificate, for not only do the nurses who hold it have the preference, but, as a rule, the Q.V.J.I. give a rather higher salary to such nurses.

This is, of course, a commonsense way of inducing nurses to qualify as midwives. But all nurses cannot be Queen's Nurses, and most other societies do not in any way encourage their nurses to qualify as midwives; indeed, so much is this the case, that many nurses who have already obtained their C.M.B. very carefully avoid all midwifery or maternity work, and for this the reasons are sufficiently obvious.

First, by undertaking midwifery, the nurse receives (in many cases) no higher remuneration.

Second, her responsibilities are greatly increased, and her night rest constantly disturbed or entirely lost.

Third, her social status is not improved.

Some time ago I received a letter from a midwife, who is working in a remote district in the West of Ireland, and receives a salary of (I believe) £36 a year. I think she is supposed to

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