

## The Midwife.

### The Midwives' Act, 1910.

When the Midwives Act became law on July 31st, 1902, its full coming into operation was delayed, under the provisions of the Act, until April 1st, 1910. Henceforth no woman may, habitually and for gain, attend women in childbirth otherwise than under the direction of a qualified medical practitioner, unless certified under the Act. This for the first time brings the practice of all unqualified and ignorant women under supervision, as the untrained women who were admitted to the Roll of Midwives at the passing of the Act, on the ground that they had been in *bonâ fide* practice for at least one year at the time, are already known to the Local Supervising Authorities and subject to inspection. Probably in another fifteen years the majority of midwives on the Roll will be those who have gained admission to it after training and examination. We may therefore hope that poor women in their confinements will receive better attention than heretofore, and that, in consequence, both the maternal and infantile death-rate will decrease, and the general level of the health of the community be raised.

The full coming into operation of the Act is marked by the introduction of an Amending Bill into Parliament by the Lord President of the Council, founded, for the most part, on the Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to consider the working of the Midwives Act, 1902, but departing from the recommendations of that Committee in one or two details. The Board is to be enlarged by the addition of four members appointed by (1) the Local Government Board, (2) the Association of Municipal Corporations, (3) the Society of Medical Officers of Health, and (4) the British Medical Association, an addition which will be welcome no doubt to the overworked Board, which is at present too small to admit of the formation of different sub-committees to deal in the first instance with the mass of work which comes before it. We regret that there should be no provision amongst the new members for one or more direct representatives of the midwives on the Roll.

But the most important point in the Bill from the midwives point of view is that for the first time provision is made that two of the members of the Board must be certified midwives—*i.e.*, the nominees of the Incorporated Midwives' Institute and of the Royal British Nurses' Association. It will be remembered

that when the Act was passed in 1902, it contained no provision that certified midwives should have any seats upon it, either through direct representation or as the nominees of societies. When the Departmental Committee recently issued its Report, this contained a recommendation, which gave general satisfaction, that the person appointed by the Midwives' Institute should be a certified midwife. To the surprise of everyone, the Midwives Institute objected, and succeeded in securing a recommendation from the Central Midwives' Board that it should have two representatives on the Board, to be chosen without restriction. It is now demonstrated that the Lord President considers this Association of Midwives should be represented by a certified midwife, an opinion which is shared by most midwives; but it is regrettable that such representation should not have been claimed by the Midwives' Institute on their behalf.

The Departmental Committee recommended that the representation of the Royal British Nurses' Association should be discontinued. The Bill introduced by Lord Wolverhampton retains this representation, but provides that the person appointed must in future be a certified midwife, an obviously just provision, as the claim of the Association to representation rests on the fact that it includes certified midwives amongst its members, and at present its representative on the Central Midwives' Board has no such qualification.

We look forward with pleasure to seeing the representatives of these two Societies take their seats on their Governing Body on the ground that they are certified midwives.

A new provision is that every certified midwife must annually notify to the Central Midwives Board her name and address, and pay a fee of one shilling. Failure to comply with this requirement entails the penalty of removal from the Roll. The Bill empowers the Central Midwives' Board to suspend a midwife, as a disciplinary measure, to defray the expenses of a midwife required to appear before it; to supply gratis all forms and books which certified midwives are required to use. The Board is also empowered to prohibit a midwife, removed from the Roll, from attending women in childbirth in any other capacity. Failure to surrender her certificate, on removal, will render a midwife liable to a fine of five pounds.

Provision is also made for reciprocal treatment of midwives certified in other parts of his Majesty's dominions.

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