

The Midwife.

Midwifery in 1909.

During the past year the Departmental Committee of the Privy Council, appointed to consider the working of the Midwives' Act, presented its report. The fact that not one midwife was appointed to assist in its deliberations naturally detracted from the value of the Committee's report.

The importance of the maintenance of a standard of education is emphasised by the fact that efforts were made to induce the Committee to believe that even the somewhat elementary examination of the Central Midwives' Board is too difficult for the candidates. Considering the great responsibilities which rest in the hands of midwives when they have gained the Board's certificate, it is difficult to understand how anyone with an appreciation of the value of human life can desire to lower the present standard. It must be remembered that the Board has officially informed the Privy Council that its standard has always been *strictly limited to such knowledge as would be dangerous for a midwife to lack.*

The recommendation that the Incorporated Midwives' Institute should in future be represented by a certified midwife instead of a registered medical practitioner, met with general approval, but not, strange to say, the approval of the Midwives' Institute, whose views were brought forward by their representative, Dr. Stanley Atkinson, at a meeting of the Central Midwives' Board on October 28th. They claimed that the Midwives' Institute should have two representatives on the Central Midwives' Board, to be chosen "without restriction," so that in this event it would be unnecessary for either representative to be a midwife or medical practitioner. Moreover, it is not apparent why the 600-700 members of the Midwives' Institute should have two representatives on the Board and the rest of the midwives on the Roll, now not far short of 30,000, none at all. Even if, as is suggested, the members of the Midwives' Institute are the "aristocracy of midwifery," it is rather out of date to claim voting power on this ground.

Mrs. Lawson, President of the National Association of Midwives, in a memorandum submitted to the Departmental Committee on its behalf, urged "that any amendment of the Act should recognise the claim of midwives for *direct representation* on the Central Midwives'

Board." The claim is a just one, involving the question as to whether midwives are to continue to be pariahs in their profession, or whether they are to be allowed a voice in its government.

At a meeting of the Central Midwives' Board on November 25th, Mr. Parker Young, who moved a resolution proposing the direct representation of the medical profession on the Central Midwives' Board, on the suggestion of Miss Paget added a rider as to the direct representation of midwives, but, as this was questioned on grounds of procedure, he informed Miss Paget of his willingness to support her if she would move a resolution at the next meeting on the lines of the rider. This, however, Miss Paget did not do.

It has been announced that a meeting will be held in London early in the year to discuss the question.

We have devoted considerable space to this question of direct representation, because it is vital to the welfare of midwives, and consequently of midwifery, and their status cannot be considered satisfactory until midwives are accorded this elementary right.

MIDWIVES' DEFENCE ASSOCIATION.

The Midwives' Defence Association has now ceased to exist as an independent body, and its work is merged in that of the Midwives' Institute. In our view a Defence Union, to be successful in any profession, must stand outside all other societies, as is the case with the medical defence societies, and be broad enough to include all reputable members. All associations of midwives should unquestionably urge upon their members the imperative need of making provision for their defence in case of need.

ORGANISATIONS OF MIDWIVES.

A hopeful sign is that midwives are beginning to realise more the advantages of co-operation. Besides the Midwives' Institute there is also the National Association of Midwives, Manchester, of which the Secretary is Mrs. Malcolm; the Northumberland and Durham Midwives' Association, Newcastle-on-Tyne, Secretary, Miss Renaud; the Liverpool and District Trained Midwives' Association, Secretary, Miss H. Wood. A Certified Midwives' Total Abstinence League has also been formed, in connection with the Women's Total Abstinence Union, Secretary, Miss Francis; and it is proposed to form a "Union of British Midwives" early this year.

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