

The East-End Mothers' Home.

The annual meeting of the East-End Mothers' Home, 396, Commercial Road, E., is to be held at the Mansion House on Monday, July 11th, when the Right Hon. the Lord Mayor will preside. The meeting was originally fixed for May 11th, but was postponed owing to the death of the late King.

No one who visits the Home can fail to recognise that it is doing a splendid work amongst some of the poorest women of the East-End, not only at the actual time of the confinement but afterwards, for the Matron, Miss Anderson, lives for the Home and its patients, and keeps in touch with them and their babies through a most popular mothers' meeting and other agencies. As a training school for midwives the Home ranks high.

The Amending Bill of the Midwives' Act.

THE PAYMENT OF THE DOCTOR'S FEE.

A memorial has been sent to members of both Houses of Parliament by the National Committee for the Prevention of Destitution in opposition to Clause 17 of the Amending Bill of the Midwives' Act, introduced into the House of Lords by the Lord President of the Council. That clause would compel Boards of Guardians to pay the fee of a doctor when summoned on the advice of a midwife in an emergency. This payment is (according to the memorial) by implication parochial relief, and enables the Board to declare it a "relief on loan." The effect of the clause would be, in the view of the Committee,

(a) To make compulsorily into paupers thousands of thrifty and hard-working wage-earners' families, without any application or consent on their part; (b) to subject the unfortunate women and their households, notwithstanding their thrift and provision, compulsorily to the hated visits and investigations of the Poor Law relieving officer and to the stigma of pauperism; (c) to impose on these thousands of working-class households a new pecuniary liability (in the form of having to repay to the Board of Guardians whatever fee the Board may choose to pay the doctor), for which there is at present no statutory warrant.

Further, the clause, as the memorial points out, would greatly impede the working of the Act. The reluctance to summon a doctor in emergencies, which it has taken some trouble to overcome in midwives and patients alike, would spring up again as soon as it was realised that the presence of the doctor involved the stigma of pauperism. The arrangement in force in some of the larger towns at the present time, by which the fee is paid by the Town Council when the patient is unable to pay has worked well. If the payment is made by Boards of Guardians, this involves either visits by the relieving officer, the summoning of the father before the Board to answer questions as to his means, or the entry of the sum as parochial relief without the knowledge and consent of the recipient. It is a position in which a man or a woman who has made provision for defraying the

expenses of the midwife should not be placed. The memorial contends that the payments should be made by the municipal authority as a matter of public health, just as the fees of a doctor who is called in by the police are paid.

The Representation of Midwives on the Central Midwives' Board.

We publish the following note at the request of the Council of the Midwives' Institute:—

The Incorporated Midwives' Institute, 12, Buckingham Street, London, W.C., wishes to call the attention of all certified midwives to the Amending Bill of the Midwives' Act now before the House of Lords.

It is generally recognised that midwives, of whom there are nearly 30,000 on the Roll, are most inadequately represented on the Board that governs them.

It was through the efforts of the Midwives' Institute that any representation of midwives was secured in the Bill of 1902. In spite of much opposition the Institute obtained nomination of a representative (a medical practitioner) to the Central Midwives' Board.

After six years' experience of the working of the Act, and a very large increase in the numbers of the Midwives' Institute and its Affiliated Associations, it is evident that the time has come to claim more representation of midwives, and the Institute is now asking for two nominees, one of whom shall be a midwife.

The Midwives' Institute is in no way opposed to the principle of direct representation, if practicable; but as that would involve the election by ballot of a certified midwife by the 30,000 midwives on the Roll, it hardly seems at present to come within the range of practical politics. The Midwives' Institute therefore appeals to bodies and societies of midwives to co-operate by affiliating with the Midwives' Institute, in order to participate in the nomination and election of a representative on the Central Midwives' Board; in this way obtaining direct representation of their members.

The interests of the practising midwives will at present be best secured by such representation through associations united to one centre, and it is greatly hoped that the younger members of the profession will help to consolidate the work of the pioneers. Ultimate success depends on the solidarity of a whole profession united in a common cause—viz., the protection of the lives of mothers and their children, the improvement in the status and training of the midwife being a necessary corollary.

Instead of saying that the Midwives' Institute is now asking for two nominees on the Central Midwives' Board, one of whom shall be a midwife, would it not be more correct to say that in addition to the midwife, whom the Lord President has provided it shall appoint, the Midwives' Institute desires another nominee not a midwife, and also that the privilege which the Lord President proposes to grant to the Royal British Nurses' Association of nominating a midwife, shall be withdrawn, and the word "person" substituted for "midwife."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)