

# The Midwife.

## The Midwives' Bill.

The Midwives' (No. 2) Bill, introduced into the House of Lords by the Lord President of the Council, Earl Beauchamp, was read a second time in that House last week. It will be remembered that the Lord President asked leave, which was granted, to withdraw the Bill introduced by Viscount Wolverhampton. In the Bill now introduced the arrangement of the clauses is the same as in the former Bill, but the wording of several has been altered, to which reference will be made later.

In moving the second reading of the Bill, Lord Beauchamp pointed out that it amended the Midwives' Act of 1902. Since it was passed there had been a considerable decrease in deaths from causes likely to be obviated by the employment of competent midwives, though he did not claim that this decrease was entirely due to the Act, as various other tendencies had been at work concurring in the same result.

His Lordship explained that the first clause of the Bill altered the constitution of the Central Midwives' Board, and the second enabled that constitution to be revised if necessary.

Clause 17 dealt with the payment of medical practitioners called in on the advice of midwives. PROVISIONS OF THE PRINCIPAL ACT TO BE REPEALED.

The Bill, which is for the most part founded upon the Report of the Departmental Committee appointed to consider the working of the Midwives' Act, 1902, will have the effect of repealing several of the provisions of that Act, henceforth to be known as the Principal Act. These are:—

(1) The first portion of Section 3, which defines the constitution of the Central Midwives' Board (from the beginning of the section to the words "re-appointment for a like period").

This is necessary on account of the reconstitution of the Central Midwives' Board, which is to be increased from 9 to 13 members in order that representation may be given to the following bodies who were previously unrepresented. (1) The Local Government Board; (2) the Association of Municipal Corporations; (3) the Society of Medical Officers of Health; (4) the British Medical Association.

The member appointed by the last-mentioned Association must be a medical practitioner. No special qualification is prescribed in the case of the members appointed by the other new bodies. The qualifications of the members appointed by the Incorporated Midwives' Institute, and by the Royal British Nurses' Association, have been altered, and in the future the members appointed by these bodies must be certified midwives.

2. The next portion of the Principal Act repealed occurs in Section 5, which deals with "fees and expenses."

In case there is an adverse balance against the

Central Midwives' Board at the close of the financial year, such balance, with the approval of the Privy Council, is at present apportioned between the several counties and county boroughs "in proportion to the number of midwives who have given notice of their intention to practise in those areas respectively." That provision is now to be repealed, and the method by which the balance is to be apportioned is to be "in proportion to the population of those counties and county boroughs according to the returns of the last published census for the time being."

3. The whole of Section 9 of the Principal Act, which gives County Councils authority to delegate their powers to District Councils is to be repealed.

4. Section 10, dealing with "notification to practice," provides that a midwife shall give notice of her intention to practice to the Local Supervising Authority, "or to the body to whom, for the time being, the powers and duties of the Local Supervising Authority shall have been delegated under this Act," and that such notice shall be given within forty-eight hours after she commences to practice to the Local Supervising Authority "or delegated body." The repeal of the provisions above quoted are consequential upon the repeal of Section 9.

5. In Section 17 it is proposed to repeal the provision: "The General Medical Council shall act by the English Branch Council, which, for all purposes of this Act, shall occupy the place of the General Medical Council."

The new Bill provides that "The General Medical Council may, for the purposes of Section 3 of the Principal Act, act through their Executive Committee instead of through the English Branch Council."

The provisions of the Principal Act which will be repealed by the Lord President's Bill, are identical with those proposed to be repealed in Lord Wolverhampton's Bill.

### DIFFERENCES IN THE BILLS INTRODUCED BY VISCOUNT WOLVERHAMPTON AND EARL BEAUCHAMP.

The first difference between the two Bills occurs in the wording of *Clause 3*, which amends Section 5 of the Principal Act with respect to finance, as noted above.

The next occurs in *Clause 8*, which gave the Central Midwives' Board power to frame rules (b) "authorising the local supervising authority which takes proceedings against a midwife either before a Court of Justice or the Central Midwives' Board to suspend her from practice until the case has been decided."

The Clause now runs "takes proceedings against a midwife before a Court of Justice, or reports a case for consideration by the Central Midwives' Board," which is obviously an improvement.

In *Clause 11*, which deals with "Notification of Practice," a woman is now to be allowed seven

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