

The Midwife.

Self Help.

We published in our last issue a letter from Mrs. Wallace Bruce, Chairman of the Executive Committee of the Association for Promoting the Training and Supply of Midwives, in relation to our comment on their annual report, which mentioned that the Association had memorialised the Privy Council respecting the payment of medical practitioners when summoned by midwives in an emergency to a lying-in case, in connection with a Midwives' Act Amendment Bill, no such step being reported in connection with midwives summoned by patients in similar circumstances.

We agree that the fees of medical practitioners called in on the advice of midwives should be guaranteed to them, but it is rather like flogging a dead horse to urge this point. No one doubts that whenever an Amending Bill to the Midwives' Act is passed due provision for the payment of such fees will be made. The point round which controversy is likely to rage is as to what authority shall be responsible for their payment. Both the Amending Bill introduced by the late Lord Wolverhampton into the House of Lords in March, 1910, and that introduced by Lord Beauchamp in July of the same year, expressly made provision for the payment of such fees, and in view of the justice of the claim, and the fact that it is backed by the British Medical Association, representing over 21,000 medical practitioners, who, possessing the Parliamentary Franchise, can bring strong pressure to bear upon Members of Parliament, as well as by the Central Midwives' Board, he would be a bold person who endeavoured to have that clause removed. Medical practitioners can with confidence be left to safeguard their own interests.

But what of the interests of the Midwives? Midwives also are summoned to lying-in cases in emergency. Is the patient who during the past nine months has made no provision to be attended in her confinement likely to pay up when the emergency is over? We all know of such cases where a woman deliberately calculates on the urgency of her need at the time of labour to obtain assistance and subsequently evade payment.

If the midwife does not meet the call, she is decried as inhuman, though indeed it is seldom that midwives fail to respond to such calls, ill as they can afford to do so.

The lesson to the public—if an Amending Bill provides that the medical practitioners called in in emergency to lying-in cases shall be assured of adequate remuneration, while no provision is made for the payment of midwives similarly summoned—must inevitably be that while the fee of the medical practitioner must be paid, that of the midwife is of no importance, and may be evaded.

Is it wonderful that the right kind of applicants for training as midwives are hard to find, when their position is so insecure, their pay so miserable?

The Treasurer of the above Association reminded the annual meeting that until midwives were better paid the right stamp of women would not come forward to train as midwives.

The importance of obtaining the right kind is urgent, for it must be remembered that the temptations to illicit practice are enormous. While midwives engaged in lawful practice may, *if fortunate*, obtain 10s. 6d. for attending a confinement case at the time of labour, and ten days subsequently, £10 10s. will be urged upon a midwife to help a woman "out of her trouble."

As a midwife who would not for a moment accede to such a proposition once admitted, "When the rent is due, and there is nothing to pay it with, it is a great temptation." What of midwives who are less honourable?

Should not societies which assume charge of the interests of midwives endeavour by all means in their power to improve their financial position? An exceptional opportunity occurs just now in connection with the passing of an Amending Bill to the Midwives' Act.

Midwives, however, are learning that the old adage is true: "Heaven helps those who help themselves." It is a lesson they should put into practice with all speed.

Words of Wisdom from Babylond.

The sun shone yesterday, and everyone said it was quite a spring day, whatever that may mean. I arrived on this planet last summer, so have not seen a spring yet. If it is all like yesterday I think I shall like it. We went to Hyde Park to see if the flowers were coming up. We saw some, and we also saw some ladies who had come out in such a hurry that they had forgotten to put their frocks on.

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