

The Midwife.

Midwives and the National Insurance Bill.

We are glad to observe that on the second reading of the National Insurance Bill attention was drawn to the stake which midwives and nurses have in the Bill. On the resumed debate Mr. Ramsay Macdonald, as reported by the *Times*, said first, "it really was a most extraordinary thing that up to now doctors had been paid to attend disease—the more disease the better it had been for the medical faculty, although of no profession was it truer to say that economic interests had never regulated their conduct. Not until the introduction of this Bill had there been any attempt to establish a system of social organisation which would use the doctor not merely for the purpose of attending to disease, but for eliminating it altogether." Mr. Macdonald proceeded to say "there was also a well organised body of midwives and sick nurses whose interests under the Bill ought to be very carefully considered."

The Chancellor of the Exchequer, dealing with the criticism which has been directed against the measure, said "vested interests were entitled to ask that no legitimate right of theirs should be interfered with unless Parliament were prepared to give them an equivalent. The vested interests in this case were not merely legitimate, but beneficent—friendly societies, collecting societies, doctors, nurses, midwives, and hospitals. Not merely ought Parliament to give them an equivalent, but to treat them with care, consideration, and tenderness. Under this Bill they would not merely receive an equivalent, but would be in a better position than they ever were before."

So far so good. But what is required is an explicit declaration of the position of midwives under the Bill. At present midwives attend half the confinements in England and Wales, yet in connection with the Maternity Benefit no mention is made in the Bill that the thirty shillings can be applied to the payment of midwives' fees, and Mr. Lloyd George explicitly stated on the first reading that this was to cover the expenses of doctoring and nursing. We refer our readers on this point to a letter in our correspondence columns from the officers of the Midwives' Institute, which puts the situation very plainly.

We further draw attention to the statement of the Chancellor of the Exchequer in the House of Commons last Monday. "Healing was the first charge; maintenance of the worker came afterwards. The doctor had the first charge, the first cut. The State was raising £25,000,000, and there was nothing to prevent the doctors from walking off with every penny of that money—except their own consciences and the common sense of the community."

It does not need the financial ability of a Chancellor of the Exchequer to determine if the medical

profession has the right to the whole £25,000,000, what proportion the midwives, whose vested interests are important, can claim. Further, the right of the lying-in woman to employ a midwife if she wishes should be safeguarded. Midwives should press for definite recognition of their right to employment, and payment for services rendered.

The Central Midwives Board.

At a Special Meeting of the Central Midwives' Board, held at Caxton House, S.W., on May 30th, 11 penal cases were heard, with the following results:—

STRUCK OFF THE ROLL.

Mary Abbott (No. 16563), Derbyshire. Charged with negligence in two cases. One patient died.

Ellen Leatherland (No. 9826), Nottingham. Charged with negligence. Patient died. The Medical Officer of Health for Nottingham attended and said she was incurably ignorant, impossible to teach, and typical of a large class of midwives in his district.

Fanny Lestchick (No. 19914), Leeds. Charged with negligence in two cases. One patient died. Verdict at inquest added that death was accelerated by grave neglect of midwife.

Maria Smith (No. 9833), West Riding. Neglect in complying with requirements of C.M.B. Dr. Kaye, Medical Officer for the district, attended. He said that in his neighbourhood they were fast going back to the "Gamps," and that the state of things was very serious. The doctors covered these women on the plea of "emergency," and that it was very difficult to get substantial evidence that they worked for gain. The Chairman requested him to write a letter to the Board to this effect, and promised to forward it to the Privy Council.

Ann Wathey (No. 3010). Negligence in two cases.

SEVERELY CENSURED.

Elizabeth Hannah Bardsley (No. 21114), Manchester. Neglect in complying with the Rules of the Board.

Annie Maycock (No. 8932), Derbyshire. Charged with neglect in two cases, and drunkenness. The latter charge was an isolated instance.

Louisa Millard (No. 5212), Bristol. Negligence. Patient died. This midwife thought 95 degs. Fahr. the normal temperature, and said she would send for the doctor at anything over 98 degrees.

CENSURED.

Emma Louisa Wood (No. 4170). Negligence.

CAUTIONED.

Ellen Potter (No. 20264), Sheffield. Charged with negligence. The accused was present, defended by her solicitor. Much conflicting evidence was given.

NO ACTION TAKEN.

Mary Boulard (No. 22578), London, C.M.B. examination certificate. Charged with drunkenness. Evidence showed this was not habitual, but want of work and privation had been the incentive. She had pawned her certificate.

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