

SCOTTISH MIDWIVES BILL.

The Midwives (Scotland) Bill, though in many respects following the wording of the English Bill, contains several important additions and differences.

Constitution and Duties of the Central Midwives Board of Scotland.—A great defect of the English Bill is that no provision is made for the representation of midwives on their governing body. While direct representation of midwives is not yet proposed it is a noteworthy improvement in the present Bill that of the three persons to be appointed by the Lord President of the Council two are to be certified midwives practising in Scotland. The Board is to consist of eleven members, three appointed by the Lord President, one by the Association of County Councils for Scotland, one by the Convention of Royal Burghs of Scotland, one by the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, one by the Society of Medical Officers of Health.

The registered medical practitioners are to be appointed by the following bodies:—One by the Universities of Edinburgh and St. Andrews conjointly, one by the Universities of Glasgow and Aberdeen conjointly, one by the Royal College of Physicians of Edinburgh, the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, and the Faculty of Physicians and Surgeons of Glasgow conjointly, one by the British Medical Association.

Payment of Members.—Provision is made for the payment of reasonable travelling expenses to members of the Board in respect of their attendance at meetings.

Future Revision.—Provision is also made for increasing or diminishing the number of persons appointed by any body or person, or abolishing the power of appointment by any body or person, or conferring on any body or person a power of appointment of one or more persons, or altering the term of office or qualifications of any members.

Duties and Powers of the Board.—It is expressly provided that the examinations shall, so far as possible, be of a practical character; that the Board shall define the emergencies in which a midwife shall call in a medical practitioner to her assistance; that one of the examiners shall be a medical woman, and none shall be members of the Board.

Provisions as to Suspension.—The English Board has no power to suspend a midwife as a disciplinary measure. Provision is made in the Scottish Bill authorising the Board to suspend a midwife from practice for such period as the Board think fit in lieu of striking her name off the Roll, and to suspend from practice until the case has been decided, and (in case of an appeal) until the appeal has been decided, any midwife accused before the Board of disobeying rules or regulations or of other misconduct.

A local supervising authority taking proceedings against a midwife either before a Court of Justice or the Board is also authorised to suspend her from practice till the case has been decided.

When a midwife has been so suspended from practice, and the case is decided in her favour, or if she is suspended to prevent the spread of infection, power is given to the Board, or the Local Supervising Authority by whom she was suspended, if they think fit, to pay her such reasonable compensation for loss of practice as may seem just.

Expenses of Midwives.—Provision is made that the Board may, if they think fit, pay all or any part of the expenses incurred by any midwife who may be required to appear before them in her own defence. This is a most just provision. It will be remembered that at the last Penal Board of the Central Midwives' Board, a letter was read from a midwife who had been cited, saying that she thanked God that she had had a rush of cases which would enable her to appear before the Board; but many midwives are quite unable to do so, while the legal talent subsidised by the Board is intent on obtaining a conviction.

Book and forms required to be used by certified midwives are also to be supplied gratis, with duly stamped envelope.

Offences by Midwives.—Power is given to the Board, in addition to removing the name of a midwife from the Roll, to prohibit her from attending women in childbirth in any other capacity, subject to the like appeal as their decision to remove her from the Roll.

Return of Certificate.—A woman whose name is removed from the Roll is to be required to surrender her certificate to the Board within fourteen days. If she fails, she is liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding £5. The English Board has no power to enforce the return of the certificate, if the midwife refuses to surrender it.

Reciprocal Treatment of Midwives.—Provision is made for the reciprocal treatment of midwives in other parts of His Majesty's Dominions where an Act or ordinance for the certification and registration of midwives under a public authority is in force, and which admits to its register midwives certified under this Act on reciprocal terms.

Appeal.—The Court of Appeal in Scotland from decisions of the Midwives' Board is to be the High Court of Justiciary.

Fees and Expenses.—Should there be any balance against the Board when the accounts are made up—and the experience of the English Board goes to prove that the working of the Act cannot be made self-supporting on the £1 is. fee provided for—the balance is to be apportioned between the local supervising authorities, in proportion to the populations of their districts as ascertained at the last preceding census.

Powers of Entry.—It is provided that, for the purpose of exercising the powers of supervision over midwives conferred on local supervising authorities, any officer appointed by such authority for the purpose may, at all reasonable times enter any premises which he has reason to believe to be a lying-in home conducted for profit within the area of the authority in which he has reason to believe

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