

# The Midwife.

## THE NOTIFICATION OF BIRTHS (EXTENSION) ACT.

By the Notification of Birth (Extension) Act, which became law on July 29th, the principal Act is extended to Areas in which it has not been adopted, and further provision is made in connection therewith for the care of mothers and young children, and it is the duty of the local authority to bring the provisions of the principal Act to the attention of all medical practitioners and midwives practising in the area.

Section 2 of the Extension Act is as follows:—

### ARRANGEMENTS FOR ATTENDING TO MOTHERS AND YOUNG CHILDREN.

(1) Any local authority within the meaning of the principal Act (whether a sanitary authority, or not) may, for the purpose of the care of expectant mothers, nursing mothers, and young children, exercise any powers which a sanitary authority has under the Public Health Acts, 1875 to 1907, or the Public Health (London) Act, 1891, as the case requires.

(2) Any expenses incurred in the exercise of these powers, shall be defrayed in the same manner as expenses of the local authority are defrayed under the principal Act.

Any such powers may be exercised in such manner as the authority direct by a committee or committees, which shall include women and may comprise, if it is thought fit, persons who are not members of the authority. Any such committee may be empowered by the authority by which it is appointed to incur expenses up to a limit for the time being fixed by the authority, and, if so empowered, shall report any expenditure by them to the authority in such manner and at such times as the authority may direct. A committee appointed for the purposes of this section shall hold office for such period not exceeding three years as the authority by which it is appointed may determine.

The Act, with certain exceptions, applies to Scotland and Ireland.

The fact that the provisions of the Notification of Births Act are now compulsory instead of permissive should aid in bringing the less progressive local authorities into line with those who are already enforcing its provisions. Midwives and nurses should make a point of acquainting themselves with the provisions.

The Act may be obtained through any bookseller or from Wyman & Sons, Ltd., 28, Abingdon Street, S.W., and midwives can do much to make its provisions known to, and understood by, those amongst whom they work. Where the Act has already been enforced it has been found to have a marked effect for good, and there is every reason to welcome its extension.

## DEMAND FOR A MIDWIVES BILL FOR SCOTLAND.

A movement, which is receiving influential backing, is being made in Edinburgh (says the *British Medical Journal*) to memorialise the Secretary of State for Scotland (the Right Hon. T. McKinnon Wood) for the introduction, as a Government measure, of a Midwives Bill for Scotland. But for the war and a small amount of opposition the private bills of 1914 would doubtless by this time have been an Act in full operation, for all the questions of any real difficulty had been overcome both in the House of Lords and in the Commons. The reasons which call for this piece of legislation, even in war time have already been stated at the various conferences which have recently been held in Scotland in connection with the Maternity Hospitals and the Approved Societies under the Insurance Act; but another reason has come to the front during the past few months to reinforce those which have been named. Scotland has sent her full share of medical men into active military service; and when they have been drawn from country districts the pressure of work upon those left behind has been increased to a degree which is likely in the winter to threaten a complete breakdown; if, however, the remaining practitioners can be helped in their midwifery work by the employment of trained maternity nurses, certified as midwives and on the Roll of a Midwives Act for Scotland, not a little of the congestion in country places may be relieved. These nurses will, it is true, be in large measure the same persons as the ones now practising in Scotland or being trained in her institutions; but, through the passing of such a bill as has been indicated, they will be no longer acting without control and supervision. As an instance of the pressing necessity for some such legislation may be named the application received a week or two ago by the Edinburgh Royal Maternity Hospital to supply a trained midwifery nurse for one of the Shetland Islands, in which several confinements were pending and in which no medical practitioner was available. We understand that the memorial to Mr. McKinnon Wood has the support of the Presidents of the Royal Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons of Edinburgh, of Sir Halliday Croom, Dr. Haig Ferguson, and others.

It is an anomaly that registration of midwives should be enforced in England and Wales and not in Scotland and Ireland, as midwives practising in various parts of the United Kingdom frequently move from one to the other. One inconvenience resulting from this partial legislation is that, as the Central Midwives Board has no jurisdiction in Scotland and Ireland, it cannot hold examinations in those countries.

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