

The Midwife.

MIDWIVES (IRELAND) BILL.

In the House of Commons on Thursday, December 6th, Mr. M'Kean asked "if the Midwives (Ireland) Bill will be proceeded with in the present Session, and, if not, what the intentions of the Government with regard to it are?"

The Right Hon. H. E. Duke, K.C. (Chief Secretary for Ireland), replied: "As the Hon. Member has doubtless noticed, the Second Reading of the Bill has been blocked by Irish Members, and there is little hope of the Bill making any substantial progress unless it can be regarded as non-controversial. I am aware of objections that have been raised to some of the provisions of the Bill, but these objections are based on matters of detail, which can properly be dealt with in Committee, and I should be ready to consider any amendments that may be proposed in order to remove them."

The Irish Nurses' Association is taking a keen interest in the direct representation of midwives in Ireland, on the Governing Body set up under this Bill, and we learn that they have had a very successful meeting with the College of Physicians of Ireland on this important question.

As the Bill was originally drafted there was only to be one midwife on a Board of 13 persons, and that only as a nominee of the Privy Council, when it considered that any midwife in Ireland was sufficiently experienced for such responsibility.

With women like Miss Ramsden, Lady Superintendent of the Rotunda Hospital, Dublin, with her splendid experience as head of the great midwifery school of that famous Hospital, and many other expert midwives of long experience in Ireland there is no dearth of midwives suitable for office. The Irish Nurses' Association—we believe in conjunction with the College of Physicians of Ireland—are asking for four seats on their governing body for these professional women. We hope the Irish members will block the Bill till justice is done to the midwives of Ireland. Apparently the Local Government Board (Ireland) is the reactionary influence in connection with this Bill.

Comparing the Irish Bill with the Scottish Act, from which it is taken, it will be observed, says the *Lancet*, that the chief difference consists in the much larger powers given to the Local Government Board in Ireland. This is no doubt due to local conditions, which are in many respects quite different from those obtaining in England or Scotland. The name "Local Government Board" does not appear in the English Act at all, and in the Scottish Act it is found only in Sections 22 and 23 dealing respectively with the scale of fees to be prescribed for the payment of medical assistance in cases of emergency, and the annual report of the medical officer of every local supervising authority which is to be sent to the L.G.B.

THE MIDWIVES BILL, VICTORIA.

The *Melbourne Age* gives the following account of the second reading of the Midwives Bill in the Legislative Assembly:—

"The State Ministry nearly suffered the indignity of a defeat on a bill in the Legislative Assembly yesterday. The bill was distinctly 'vital.' It related to the registration of midwives!

"Only as the division bells were ringing was the position saved. So, seeing that the numbers were, after all, against it, and that not so many Ministerialists as it had calculated had already 'gone to the country' for the week-end, the disappointed Labour party called the division off.

"Mr. M'Leod, as Minister of Health, moved the second reading of the bill early in the morning. It provided for an annual charge of 2s. 6d. on every midwife for re-registration. Labour members took strong exception to this increase in the cost of living. Mr. Rogers complained that the tax 'couldn't be passed on.' Another member described it as 'tinpot tyranny.' Hours had been wasted in this sort of discussion. The Premier had been gradually working himself up into a state of indignation. Mr. Prendergast rose to speak, and the Premier, jumping up from his seat, said angrily, 'Oh, let's report progress! We can't sit all day over a Midwives Bill.' But Mr. Prendergast went on with his speech, and no sooner had he sat down than Mr. Sinclair rose. So did the Premier. 'Report progress!' cried the Premier. 'We can't sit all day over a little twopenny-halfpenny bill.' But Mr. Sinclair said he would not be long, and was not; and Mr. Mackey, chairman of committees, promptly put the question and declared it carried. Then Mr. Prendergast observing the two Ministers and as many Ministerialists only on the Government side of the House, and realising that as elections approach, the interest of members in their constituencies increases, called for a division. 'You haven't got your men here to go on with the business of the country,' he told Ministers, 'and you haven't got any business for them to go on with.' The Minister of Health apparently lost his nerve. Rising, as the division bells were ringing, he asked the chairman whether he would be in order in moving at this stage that progress be reported. Mr. Mackey, according to Parliamentary practice, told him that he wouldn't. But at the last moment—when the Ministry seemed lost—it raked up a majority. 'Sixteen Ministerialists out of 43,' counted Mr. Prendergast, by a feat of ready reckoning. 'They're away electioneering instead of attending to their Parliamentary duties. Call the division off!'

"So the bells stopped, the bill passed, and Ministers' sighs of relief, if inaudible, were no doubt fervent, at their escape."

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