

The Midwife.

MIDWIVES SALARIES COMMITTEE.

Viscountess Davidson, M.P., recently asked a question in the House of Commons concerning the Midwives Salaries Committee, to which the Minister of Health stated that the terms of reference of the Committee were: "To draw up agreed scales of salaries and emoluments of State-certified midwives employed in England and Wales on maternity work in hospitals or maternity homes or in the domiciliary midwifery service, of non-medical supervisors of midwives, and of pupil midwives." The Minister has requested the Committee to consult with the Nurses Salaries Committee before making recommendations in regard to overlapping matters.

The membership of the Committee is as follows:—Chairman, Lord Rushcliffe, G.B.E. County Councils Association: Mr. J. Evans, Miss K. J. Stephenson, C.B.E., Dr. W. A. Bullough. London County Council: Dr. W. Allen Daley. Queen's Institute of District Nursing: Lady Richmond, Mrs. Hurlle, Mrs. Kevill-Davies, M.B.E. Association of Municipal Corporations: Mr. Councillor Brosch, Alderman Sir George Martin, K.B.E., J.P., Mr. J. Lythgoe. British Hospitals Association: Mr. C. S. Wentworth-Stanley, Mr. G. G. Panter. College of Midwives: Mr. F. Grundy, M.D., M.R.C.S., D.P.H., Barrister-at-Law, Mr. Arnold Walker, M.A., M.B., F.R.C.S., F.R.C.O.G., Miss Coni, Miss Deane, Mrs. Ross, Mrs. F. R. Mitchell. National Association of Local Government Officers: Mr. C. A. W. Roberts, M.B.E. Association of Supervisors of Midwives: Miss M. E. Platt. Trades Union Congress: Miss J. Murphy, S.R.N., R.F.N., S.C.M. Royal College of Nursing: Miss L. Beulah, Miss M. G. Sanday, Miss M. F. Webb.

MIDWIFERY PRACTICE.

Mr. W. Brown asked the Minister of Health in the House of Commons whether he would consider allowing ex-midwives to practise, in view of the shortage of midwives in present war conditions.

Miss Florence Horsbrugh (Parliamentary Secretary to the Ministry), in a written answer, said: Under Regulation 33 of the Defence Regulations, 1939, a local supervising authority may, by order, enable a qualified midwife no longer on the roll of midwives to practise for a specified time. My information is that 32 orders are at present in force affecting 136 midwives.

THE SHORTAGE OF MIDWIVES.

The shortage of midwives is one of the most serious results of war conditions, and much publicity has been given to it recently in the Press.

As a nation, we deprecate reform until we are up against uncontrollable conditions—then we bleat about them and hope someone will suggest a remedy.

Here are a few facts: Only exceptional women have the qualities of mind and heart to serve their fellow women not only with skill but with pleasure in their hour of need. These women are born mothers, their skill is instinctive, and they love babies passionately. These are the real midwives who go about their professional work, heart and hand, and endure stress and strain for very poor pay—very little thanks from the community, and, as far as we know, have not in the past been encouraged to demand power to better their condition of service. They are governed by a Board on which, we believe, there is not one working midwife—and without power to control their professional conditions there can be little sense of responsi-

bility. In consequence, excessive drudgery, intense responsibility, comfortless lives, is a poor prospect for the Registered Nurse Midwives who qualify as such for the value of the extra knowledge and certificate attained, and not with any intention of making midwifery their profession.

It has taken the disorganisation produced by war conditions to elicit action and extract opinions from persons in power over midwives, we thus welcome the publicity given to their professional and economic conditions in the Press. Amongst expressions of opinion advanced, that of Sir Comyns Berkeley, Chairman of the Midwives Board, goes to the root of the matter, and it is to be regretted that delay in its application has contributed to the present difficulties. Had reform been accomplished sooner, the shortage of midwives would not have been so acute.

Sir Comyns Berkeley writes in *The Times*:—

"The evidence before the Central Midwives Board points to there being sufficient pupil-midwives. If all the pupil-midwives who complete their training successfully practised as midwives thereafter, the midwifery service would have all the practitioners it needed. For many years before the war not more than about 30 per cent. of the women who thought it worth while to take midwifery training felt it worth while to make the practice of midwifery their career. I fear that this state of affairs was attributable, in large measure, to the community's consistent undervaluation of the midwives' contribution to the national well-being.

"It has been suggested that the growing shortage of practising midwives should be remedied by compelling qualified persons engaged in other work to return to midwifery. I venture to suggest that a far more satisfactory and certainly more permanent solution would be to effect such an improvement in the status, remuneration and conditions of service of midwives that the requisite number of qualified persons would practise from choice. The possibility of women in childbirth being attended by midwives forced to practise against their will must be viewed with the greatest dismay by all who believe that the care of children and their mothers is one of the prime functions of the State."

Midwives have recently renamed their Institute the College of Midwives. This progressive step should enable them to organise their own professional affairs. No women's work is of greater national value.

PRIZES PRESENTED TO NURSES AT THE ROYAL INFIRMARY, EDINBURGH.

We greatly regret to have received too late for publication this month the very interesting report of the Prize-giving to Nurses at the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, on May 20th. For the first time since the beginning of the War the Lord High Commissioner, the Duke of Montrose, together with the Duchess, was welcomed by the Chairman and senior officials, and a large number of nurses received recognition for their devotion to duty and outstanding skill in various branches of their profession.

Miss Mary S. A. MacNaughton was awarded the "Affleck" Medal and the Medical Superintendent's Special Prize. Twenty-four nurses were the happy recipients of prizes, which we feel sure are a great incentive to a high standard of Nursing—it is human to appreciate recognition.

The Maternity and Midwifery Hospital attached to the Royal Infirmary, Edinburgh, is a first-class school of the greatest national importance.

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