

unprofessional people, feeling the importance of the subject, have been attempting in the most lady-like way to softly awake public interest in the matter. As a result, the Bill, which was drafted eight years ago, has been reposing in various dusty cupboards and drawers ever since, and the adherents to the cause have been numbered by ones and twos.

When the British Nurses' Association arose its active workers not only believed in the justice of their cause, but determined that everyone else should acknowledge it also. Consequently the Association celebrated its second birthday with a roll of nearly three thousand members, while reports come of meetings all over the kingdom, from the City of London to Plymouth, and from Southampton to Aberdeen. It is a fact, therefore, that more public interest has been aroused in the Registration of Nurses in two years than has been evoked for the better regulation of Midwives in three decades. No one felt surprise, therefore, that, as was reported some months ago, great pressure was brought to bear upon the successful Association to incorporate in its own proposed work, a scheme for the Registration of Midwives. And at the request of most influential people, finally expressed by Drs. Priestley and Matthews Duncan, at the Mansion House meeting last July, the Council of the Association undertook to open a separate and distinct Register for Midwives, under the separate and distinct control of a certain number of Obstetric Physicians, and Midwives. We have the best authority for stating that it was never suggested, or proposed, much less decided, "to class Midwives and Nurses together," as is now being—therefore falsely—asserted. So far again from the Association being desirous of undertaking this new work, we understand that it was only by the greatest persuasion, and with the greatest reluctance, that its governing body finally consented to do so.

But a great good has resulted. The gentle reformers to whom we have above alluded have been galvanised into action, and pell-mell are being hurried along at a rate which to them doubtless is not a little novel, perhaps even somewhat alarming. An Institute has been formed, has been Registered at Somerset House, and its Members are told they have got a "charter." A Bill is to be introduced into the House of Commons next Session. Midwives, it was proposed, were to be placed under the control of the General Medical Council. But here, unfortunately, the first little hitch occurred. The General Medical Council promptly declined to undertake the grave responsibility. So now it would seem that Midwives are to be handed over by their would-be reformers to the Local Government Board. Does not this

mean that, together with the police and the public-houses, Midwives will in future be controlled by the County Councils? We shall watch with much interest to see what is the fate of this Bill in Parliament next Session. Most undoubtedly Midwives should, as professional workers, be placed under the control solely of professional people, and therefore we look with the gravest misgivings upon any attempt to hand them over to the control of lay authorities.

But there are other reasons which make it certain that only those engaged in the Obstetric calling can rightly estimate the reform which is necessary, or adequately carry that reform into effect. We have, within the past few months, made inquiries in different parts of the kingdom, and, without the least exaggeration, may say that we have been appalled at the reports which we have received. The amount of ignorance and of carelessness which exists amongst Midwives is well known, but we venture to think that few people have any idea of the extent and enormity of the offences against the law, which our information from all sides concurs in ascribing to these workers, by common report, if not in detailed facts. We have, for some time, clearly foreseen that it will be a Herculean task—a perfect cleansing of the Augean stables—which will devolve upon those to whom the control of Midwives in the future is confided.

Truly anxious as we are for the welfare of the British Nurses' Association, we heartily congratulate that body upon its successful initiation of the scheme of Registration it has evolved. The Association is to be even more warmly congratulated upon forcing forward on public attention the utterly grave importance of controlling, and supervising, and educating Midwives. "There is a Power that shapes our ends, rough hew them as we will"; and enormous energy has been, and is now being, expended in the hope of damaging the Association, which so far has only been a most excellent and gratuitous advertisement of it, and which in years to come—unless we misread the signs of the times—will result in vastly enhancing its power, prestige, and usefulness.

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