

civilization brought with it increased tendency to disease, and the inevitable results of the departure from the natural state. Rickets, for example, contracting the bones, defective nutrition impairing the bodily strength, made the parturient process—which, being natural, should be safe—increasingly difficult and dangerous. Fatalities of the most distressing kind compelled increased study of the subject, and once again by imperceptible degrees Midwifery became more and more the province of the medical man, and less and less that of the uneducated Midwife. This, be it remembered, brings us down to within the last two centuries, because in the time of James the Second there is the best authority for believing that comparatively few women in England were attended by "Men-Midwives." Sixty years later, indeed, a well-known writer refers to the evident fact that Doctors were only called in as a last resource in the lines—

"Such awful danger she did suffer,
The midwives sent for Dr. Cluffer."

It is only within the last eighty years that Midwifery has taken at all prominent a place in medical education. It is only within the last two decades, indeed, that it has become an integral and necessary part of every student's curriculum. Considering the stress of modern life, and the havoc which it has played with women's mental and bodily constitution, the fact can be easily explained which most Doctors concur in believing, that were it not for chloroform and improved instruments, fatalities in child-birth would be much greater now, than they were in the last generation, because women of to-day are apparently less able to bear suffering, and have seemingly more difficulty in parturition than their mothers.

Whatever be the reason, the facts are incontrovertible. Coincidentally with a vast increase of Midwifery done by men, the average death-rate has wonderfully diminished. On the other hand we hear from all parts of the kingdom, rural as well as urban, that Midwives are disappearing, being replaced on the one hand by the parish doctor or the Hospital student, and on the other by the Monthly Nurse acting under the doctor's directions. Exactly the same process of evolution, therefore, appears to be going on in the case of the Midwife, as we have just traced in the case of the "wise-woman" of old. Medicine or surgery becoming a skilled calling demanded, and has obtained, men and women of education, who would devote their lives to its study and pursuit; while the original follower of the craft

has gradually, through the centuries, become developed into the Trained Nurse of to-day. Midwifery, taking its rightful place besides its sister sciences, has, like them, compelled increasing knowledge from the workers in its domain. And so—say those whose views we have endeavoured to make clear—the Midwives of the past, as ignorant as they were generally unclean, must inevitably develop into the Obstetric Nurse of the future, while their title becomes an historical curiosity, and their place is taken by men and women who have passed through the entire curriculum of medical education.

Now these arguments, and the additional facts in support of them which we have gleaned from many sources, appear to our minds to prove that there is an increasing necessity for skilled assistance in cases of child-birth, and that there is an increasing disposition amongst the very poor to obtain the best available aid at such times rather than the haphazard help which formerly was considered quite sufficient. So far as the middle and upper classes are concerned, of course there can be no dispute upon the matter. We would go further, and say that we agree with the conclusions deduced from the historical survey of the subject which we have just reproduced and enlarged from the original arguments addressed to us.

But where we join issue with our correspondents is as to the probable disappearance of Midwives if this recent agitation had not been organised. We admit that we move nowadays with electrical rapidity, but it must be remembered that Midwives are an institution as old as the world itself, and in accordance with the universal law they will certainly therefore change but slowly. We regard the present movement for example as a sign of decay, certainly not as a sign of health, because it is entirely coming from without. It is a few amiable ladies and gentlemen, quite unconnected with Midwifery—who indeed would probably be extremely indignant if we suggested that they knew anything of the science—who are attempting to galvanise Midwives into a corporate existence. The women are not seeking it for themselves. After years of work the Midwives' Institute has only gathered into its fold about fifty Midwives—one in every three hundred, that is to say, of those estimated to be at work in Great Britain. There can be no life in a body which only moves under the influence of the galvanic current. There can be no vitality in a movement when all the motor force

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