

she is not one of us." We have dealt with this case in detail because it is, unfortunately, by no means unique. It suffices to point the important moral that all trained Nurses, for their own protection, should be registered, and that the public should always consult the Register before engaging a Nurse.

## Proposed Registration and Inspection of Still-born Children.

BY ROBERT R. RENTOUL, M.D.

(Continued from page 80.)

IF there were no private undertakers in this country, and if we had the system of burial by the municipal authorities—as exists in Germany and in France—and where a child can be buried for about threepence, this objection would be met. (Those interested in this system of Burial, should refer to the Blue Book, No. C. 842, 1873—"Third Report of the Commissioners on Friendly Societies," and the evidence given by Mr. J. A. Crowe.) The above quotations show there is an urgent demand for legislation requiring registration of still-births.

I have before stated that one of the chief causes of criminal still-birth is illegitimacy. The following figures show the number of illegitimate births registered—exclusive of still-births.

Country.	Population.	Year.	Total Births.	Illegitimate Births.
England ...	29,015,413	1889	885,944	40,627
Scotland ...	4,033,180	1891	125,965	9,537
Ireland ...	4,688,426	1890	105,254	2,827

In Ireland, there are about 26.8 illegitimate births to every 1,000 births registered; in England, 46 per 1,000; and in Scotland, 75 per 1,000. It is said that a large proportion of the illegitimate births which occur in England are those whose parents belong to Wales, Scotland and Ireland. This is a strong reason why the nationality of parents should be stated in the Birth Certificate, so that all debate may be settled upon this point. A perusal of the 40th Annual Report of the English Registrar-General shows that the vast number of illegitimate children are born in workhouses.

It is thought by some that the state of our law relating to capital punishment is an incentive to carelessness towards infant life. In this country the plea of pregnancy can be put up as a bar to execution, but only if the mother had "quickened." Consequently, as "quickening" generally occurs about the fourth or fifth month—if it occurs at all

—people are led to suppose that "life" begins only then. Such a supposition is false. Our law should, in this respect, be made the same as in France, where the plea of *pregnancy*—not of quickening—is a sufficient bar to execution. What right have we to murder a child in the womb, when its mother is executed? None whatever. Even the infant in the womb should share the protection of the law. Again, the fiendish state exists, in our laws, that if a child while being born—*i.e.*, before being completely born—receives an injury given with criminal intent, and which kills the child before full birth—such an action can not be brought under the charge of infanticide or murder. This is also another example where the child in the womb does not obtain legal protection. It would be much better if the suggestion which the Harvean Society offered to the Select Committee which took evidence, in 1871, on the "Protection of Infant Life," were adopted; and that for the purpose of conviction, *complete* birth be not required, but proof only that the child was living during birth, and that it had died from violence inflicted during or after birth. Further, I do not think that the 24 and 25 Vict., c. 100, 1861, relating to the "Concealment of Birth;" or the Scottish Act of 49 Geo. III., c. 14, 1809, relating to the "Concealment of Pregnancy," lessens the value of the request for Registration of still-births.

What is a still-born child? In *legal* language, a live-born child is one which has been completely born outside of its mother, and which, after complete birth, shows some sign of life. Legally, a child in its mother's womb, not being *rerum natura*, is not considered a person who can be killed within the description of murder. Legally, a "still-born" child is therefore one which, after "complete birth," does not show some sign of life. The terms "complete birth" and "sign of life" must be clearly defined. "Complete birth" means the child being entirely outside its mother; while "sign of life" means any vital movement of the child after complete birth. Legally, if the child showed a sign of life *before* or *during* complete birth, it would not prove, in the eye of the law, that the child had been live-born. This being so, many qualified to express an opinion will say—the law is wrong. Nevertheless, it is so. It will follow, therefore, that only those present at the birth can say if the child was still-born. It is a question of fact, or of observation—not of science. An *eye-witness* is the only person who can speak authoritatively.

(To be continued.)

**Unsweetened Condensed Milk. First Swiss Brand.**—The perfect food for infants and invalids. This is pure Alpine Cows' Milk condensed to one-third its bulk and conserved without the aid of sugar or any other preservative. Ask for the First Swiss Brand. Wholesale Offices, 17 and 18, St. Dunstan's Hill, London.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)