

greatest importance in drawing public attention to the existence of a grave laxity of the law, and to the necessity of immediate legislation on the subject. We direct the attention of the Nursing profession specially to the matter, because it will be essential for Nurses to understand both the necessity for improvement in the present Statutes upon this subject, and also the duties which may devolve upon them if legislation in this direction is brought into effect. For example, it is well known how frequently, during pregnancy, the occurrence of some infectious disease, of acute inflammation of some organ of the body, of some accident, or even of some trivial nervous shock, produces abortion. The Nurse, therefore, summoned to attend upon a woman for any of the above intercurrent affections, might find herself suddenly called upon to manage a case of premature labour, and so may have to determine, perhaps, the manner in which a still-born child should be disposed of. If the legislation which Dr. RENTOUL suggests be effected—and we do not doubt that, in due course, an Act will be passed for the Registration of Stillbirths—provided that the foetus has reached the age prescribed in the Act, it would, in many cases, be the Nurse's duty and responsibility to see that the law was not infringed, and that due notice of the birth was given to the proper official.

We are in complete accord with Dr. RENTOUL as to the importance of the various points raised in his paper, but, incidentally, it may be noted that an Act, such as he proposes, would have very far reaching effects to which he makes no allusion. It would, for example, go far to prevent practices to which it is unhappily notorious that many so-called midwives, herbalists, and others of that ilk, are addicted. Then again, if it were made essential that every still-birth should be "viewed" by a medical official, a considerable check would be placed not only upon criminal practices, and especially upon infanticide, but also upon the malpraxis of incompetent midwives.

Dr. RENTOUL also brings to light a serious

danger to the public in his exposure of the custom of burials being permitted without the production of a medical certificate as to the cause of death, because the door is thus opened to the more easy commission of murder, while considerable difficulties are placed in the way of its speedy detection.

There is one final, although indirect, effect which such legislation would produce, and which would also be most beneficial. It would, inevitably, assist in the extinction of Midwives. At present, it appears that the certificate of these women as to the cause and fact of death of their patients, and as to the fact of children being still-born, is accepted as gospel truth and legal proof of natural death by many Registrars throughout the Kingdom. Without discussing the opportunities of concealing their ignorance and, possibly, their fatal mistakes which this illegal laxity has conferred upon Midwives, it is highly satisfactory to contemplate the fact, that the proposed alterations and greater stringency in obedience to the law, would not only effectually prevent the possibility of such opportunities in future, but would almost inevitably tend to the extinction of this class of workers altogether.

Since the paper was written, and since we penned the above remarks, the Select Committee of the House of Commons, which recently held an inquiry into the present method of Death Certification, has made its Report, in which they practically adopt, and recommend legislation to enforce, the suggestions made by Dr. RENTOUL, so that in view of the fact that the medical profession will, probably, be unanimous in supporting such amendments to the present Acts, it is very probable that the next Session of Parliament will see the necessary reforms and improvements carried into effect.

In another column, our readers will find a summary of the Report of the Select Committee; and we would advise them to bestow their careful consideration upon the subject for the reasons to which we have briefly alluded.

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