

paratively ignorant, while Midwifery has been elevated into an exact Science. Medical education during the last fifty years has made immense strides in the direction of obstetric knowledge, and it is indisputable that together with that increased skill, the mortality of child-birth in this country has fallen to a rate so low that it has never previously been equalled. The evil results which follow parturition nowadays may chiefly be said to be due either to ignorance, carelessness, or dirt. To eliminate the first cause, it is needful that the attendants upon women in labour should be trained workers. In other words, by preference, they should be male or female medical practitioners; failing, however, to obtain such qualified assistance, poor women should be attended by thoroughly trained Obstetric Nurses, acting under the direction and control of medical practitioners.

By Obstetric Nurses, we mean women who have passed through a full course of Nursing education, and have thereafter acquired experience in the obstetric wards or out-patient departments of a Special or a Lying-in Hospital. Such women are passing into practice in ever increasing numbers, and to our great satisfaction we learn that they are everywhere replacing the ignorant and incompetent Midwife. There are a few doctors who have failed to realise or understand this great movement, and who vainly argue that it is impossible that thoroughly trained Nurses should take the place of Midwives; because, say they, the Midwife only has three or four weeks' education, which in time and money costs her little; and she can therefore well afford to work for payments so small that a medical man could not, and a trained Nurse would not, accept them. This reasoning is most fallacious, and can only be founded upon a complete lack of acquaintance with existing facts. There are hundreds, and we believe there soon will be thousands, of thoroughly trained Nurses, who are, at the present moment, working as Midwives, and who are actually taking as their remuneration the small, and, let us admit, the inadequate, fees which arm-chair theorists tell us it is impossible that they should accept. We would venture to remind such gentlemen of the wise advice of the American humourist that no one should venture to prophesy until he knows.

With regard even to medical men, we are assured, on most excellent authority, that

there are numbers of young medical practitioners who, in the early days of their work, would be content to take fees for Midwifery cases, which certainly are totally inadequate, but which, on the one hand, are as much as the poor could afford to pay, and, on the other, would, in the gross, amount to no inconsiderable income. The whole of the pecuniary question of Midwifery work has been obscured—we cannot but think—by want of knowledge. We have always held that the trained Obstetric Nurse would be of immense service to the public, and of even greater benefit to the medical profession, because she would work under their direction and control, and would save them an immense amount of wasted time and trouble. She would, for example, watch a lingering case, and send at once for further assistance whenever it was necessary. It happens too frequently with the ignorant Midwife that she postpones so doing until it is too late, either because she is unaware when danger is impending, or because she is indifferent to the consequences so long as she can maintain her reputation as a practitioner, independent of medical control—in either case, the results being disastrous to the patient. We cordially sympathise with those medical men who strenuously object to Midwifery legislation, and agree with them that to legalise an ignorant and incompetent woman as a Midwifery practitioner, would merely be to set a premium and a State seal upon inefficiency; to expose the public to even greater dangers in the future than they have incurred in the past; to degrade the whole practice of Midwifery; and practically to annihilate the good effects of all the Medical Acts.

Lectures on Elementary Physiology in relation to Medical Nursing.

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LECTURE III.—THE DIGESTIVE ORGANS.

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THE point, therefore, while it seems to be small and unimportant, is often of the greatest practical moment; and it must be remembered that, in many of these patients, feeding by the œsophagus tube is only

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