

increase those evils, while it would in no measure remedy them, to place upon a Register, and so give a State licence to practise to, some 40,000 women, the vast majority of whom are totally inefficient, especially as the great argument for legislation is that the poor should be protected against these very women. It is urged, by the Incorporated Medical Practitioners' Association, which, in this, as in many other matters, voices the opinions of a considerable section of the medical profession, that a full inquiry should take place by a Select Committee of the House of Commons into the whole Nursing question, so that the facts in favour of, or against, legislation may be fairly placed before the public and be fully considered. We are cordially in agreement with this most common-sense suggestion, and we doubt not that it will commend itself to a large number of Members of Parliament. The difficulty of legislation upon so technical a matter is very great, and the present evils might easily, and probably would, be increased by any ill-considered measure. It is, moreover, with much pleasure that we learn of this additional argument for the institution of the Nursing inquiry for which we ourselves have strongly pleaded. And it is very noteworthy that the *British Medical Journal* last week, in a paragraph which we quote elsewhere, also advocates this wise and prudent course being adopted.

The Midwives Bill which has now been introduced requires careful consideration and criticism. Its first defect, in our opinion, is that it does not define the meaning of the term "midwife," but leaves it vague and undecided. According to the clause, a "midwife means a woman who undertakes to attend cases of labour in accordance with the regulations to be laid down under this Act." Those regulations are to be framed by a Board composed of eighteen persons; and as these will undoubtedly be chosen from amongst those who are in favour of the suggested legislation, it may be regarded as certain that all the rights and privileges hitherto openly claimed for midwives as independent practitioners will, under these regulations, be freely granted to them. The whole object of the Act is stated to be the protection of the poor from incompetent midwives; but, inasmuch as it is provided that the first effect of the Act shall be to legalize the practice of some forty thousand women—for the most

part ignorant and inefficient—who at present call themselves midwives at their own risk—the absurdity of this argument is self-evident. In many ways, the details proposed are most defective, especially in the machinery for carrying out the work; and we therefore hope that, before it progresses any further, the whole subject will be referred to a Select Committee of the House of Commons for most careful consideration and report.

Annotations.

THE EXTENSION OF SCHOOL INFLUENCE.

WE notice that, recently, several important positions in the nursing world have been filled by members of the London Hospital Nursing School, notably the appointment of Matrons of the Metropolitan Hospital, the Radcliffe Infirmary, Oxford, the Cumberland Infirmary, Carlisle, and the Royal Infirmary, Bristol. Such appointments are important in their influence, because they mean that the traditions of the training school are introduced by the new matron into the Institution over the nursing department of which she presides; and also that when vacancies of importance occur, such as the posts of ward sisters, or home sisters, they are not unnaturally filled, upon the suggestion of the matron, by her old friends and colleagues. This, always supposing that the qualifications of members of the staff, of which she is the head, do not demand consideration, is a natural and legitimate action. The effect of this custom is, however, to render the influence of the original training school wide and far reaching. This plan has been adopted for many years by St. Thomas's Hospital with marked success; increased scope for the energies of the most promising members of the nursing staff being thus readily available. The habit of inspiring competent nurses to apply for positions of responsibility has much to commend it. Nurses are somewhat apt to consider that if they attain to the position of ward sister in their own training school there is nothing left for them to desire. They consequently settle down for years, having seen nothing of the manners and customs of other institutions, but quite convinced, occasionally erroneously, that those of their own are perfect in every particular. So the blight of self-satisfaction, a certain hindrance to perfection, settles down upon the institution, and

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)