

neglect to carry out these duties ; and if they do so, the whole usefulness of the Bill, so far as it is intended to be a protection to the public, fails of its object.

The sole penalty enforced by the Bill is to prevent a woman who is not on the Register calling herself a "midwife." There is nothing in the Bill to prevent her acting as a midwife, so long as she calls herself by any other name. We cannot, therefore, comprehend how the measure can, in the slightest degree, prevent or even diminish the existing evils. But, by giving a State recognition to women who are entirely ignorant, as this Bill would do, it is easy to realize that the measure would be a source of very real danger to the public, by deceiving them as to the qualifications of these women, and by shielding the latter from the results of their ignorance or malpractice.

We are, therefore, forced to the conclusion that Parliament would cause the gravest injury to the poor, while it would in no way lessen the existing evils, if it sanctioned the present Bill. With regard to the demand for midwives' legislation we observe that it is stated, in the Memorandum attached to the Bill, that it is "calculated that about 450,000 cases of childbirth are attended by midwives in England and Wales annually." We have reason to believe that this figure is greatly exaggerated, and we consider that some proof should be given concerning the "calculation" in question, seeing that it is used so prominently as an argument for the need of legislation. There is evidently a growing feeling that a Select Committee should be appointed to inquire into the whole Nursing question, with special reference to the necessity and form of legislation. The Midwives' Registration Committee, who sat in 1892 and 1893, received the evidence chiefly of those who were in favour of the measure ; and before anything further is done, it would be, not only just, but wise to obtain the evidence of that very large section of the medical profession which is strongly opposed to such legislation.

The Nursing question is not only inextricably connected with that of midwives—seeing that very many of the certificated midwives at the present day are also thoroughly trained nurses, and that the number of nurses who undertake maternity work will probably increase each year—but the relations of trained nurses to the public and to the medical profession also require to be placed, as speedily as possible,

upon a proper basis. The scandals in connection with Nursing, both in Poor Law Infirmaries, and in private houses, are very grave, are most detrimental to every interest concerned, and are undoubtedly increasing. The chaotic condition of Nursing education is most unjust to nurses, and is fraught with serious consequences to the public ; whilst the total want of professional control over trained nurses is the fruitful source of trouble even now, and must in the future tend to become even more harmful. On every ground, therefore, we earnestly hope that Members of Parliament will realize the great importance of this subject, and that, instead of sanctioning such hasty and ill considered legislation, as that proposed in the present Midwives Bill, they will support the appointment of a Select Committee of the House of Commons to inquire into the whole Nursing question. The *British Medical Journal*, as the organ of the largest Medical Association in this country, has lately expressed its strong opinion that this would be the proper course to pursue ; and, as our readers know, the Incorporated Medical Practitioners' Association has taken active measures to advocate the institution of such an inquiry.

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### Annotations.

#### HOSPITAL PRAYERS.

THE question of the duty or otherwise of enforcing the attendance of unwilling nurses at prayers has recently been brought before us. A probationer at the Carlisle Infirmary, who belongs to the Roman Church—notwithstanding the fact that she entered upon her duties with a full knowledge that she would be required to attend prayers, and who stated to the matron, previously to her acceptance, that she "had obtained the permission of Father Buckley to accept the position of probationary nurse to the hospital, and be subject, as all their other nurses and servants were, to the ordinary rules of the house"—is, apparently, now posing somewhat as a martyr, because she is required to conform to the rules which she promised to obey! This attitude we must confess does not command our sympathy; at the same time, neither does the statement of Colonel Irwin, the chairman of the committee, that the prayers were "as much a matter of roll call, as anything else," commend itself to us, though we are afraid that the

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