

fraught with practical difficulties of the gravest kind. Chief amongst these would be the fact that the medical men appointed, as it is now proposed, in each locality, to supervise the midwives, would undoubtedly find it impossible to do so with justice to the public, and, at the same time, with credit to themselves. For example, if they suspended a midwife from practice, for any reason whatsoever, she would assuredly find supporters who would argue that the action taken against her was due to professional jealousy and personal motives concerning a competitor in practice. So strongly is this view held by medical men, that many of them are firmly convinced that few, if any, medical practitioners would accept so invidious a position; and that the local control of midwives would become a dead letter.

In brief, then, both expediency and justice demand that if midwives are to be controlled at all, their governing body must be largely if not entirely composed, as in the case of other professions, by representatives of the persons governed. It is quite certain that the lady who informed the Duke of Devonshire that "all the women in the country who had considered the matter were strongly in favour of the proposed legislation," made a very inaccurate statement; because, to our knowledge, there is a wide diversity of opinion even amongst midwives themselves, as to the advisability of their legal Registration—as a separate and distinct class of workers. And we have never heard of a single reasoning woman who contended that, merely because midwives were women, their profession should, therefore, be controlled solely by men—a proposition, moreover, which is a flagrant departure from the precedents observed in all previous legislation for professional workers.

We are convinced that the view adopted by various medical societies, and which we have strongly supported, should be carried out; and that, before legislation is again attempted, a complete investigation of the whole subject should be made. In fact, public opinion is clearly tending in this direction; and, inasmuch as nothing would be more advantageous for the nursing reforms which it is our special mission to advocate, than that a public inquiry should take place into the whole matter, we feel much indebted to those who are assisting so greatly to educate the public mind on the subject, and thus forcing forward some broad and useful scheme of legislation.

Annotations.

WOMEN HEALTH VISITORS.

IN spite of the recent reactionary decision to exclude women from participation in London's Local Government, they are every day securing a firmer footing in local administration. In Birmingham, a very successful experiment has been made by the City Council in employing women as health visitors, whose duty it is to visit—and re-visit where necessary—the houses of the poor, to see the children are kept in cleanliness and under proper sanitary conditions, and to prevent the spread of infectious diseases. Dr. A. Hill, the Medical Officer, in reporting recently on the result of the experiment, considers the work of these visitors will largely tend to decrease the infantile death-rate, and describing the work of the women, he says: "They have visited a great number of houses, and paid re-visits wherever it seemed desirable on account of want of cleanliness, neglect of young children, or the presence of infectious or other sickness; in almost all such cases they have found a great improvement to have taken place. They have given special attention to the cleanliness of the house, insisting on the floors being cleansed, the windows opened, and the bedrooms put in order where necessary. In cases where infants are discovered with wasting complaints, they make a point of visiting again and again at intervals to see that the sufferers are being properly fed and looked after, and show, if necessary, by actual example how this is to be done. This is highly important work, and should effect a considerable reduction in the infantile death rate. They give advice as to the best way of using whatever sleeping accommodation is available, and point out the necessity of isolating, as far as possible, all cases of communicable disease, such as consumption, measles, whooping-cough, etc. In cases of sickness they give advice on nursing and personal help to the sick person if needed. Wherever they find children of school age away from school, they inquire the reason, and, if this is inadequate, urge the parents to send the children at once. In these and in many other ways the visitors are doing a great deal to make the homes of the poorest classes more healthy and more comfortable."

It is well that the Birmingham City Council is not composed of hereditary titled legislators, or woe betide the poor within its gates!

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