

disastrous to their interests, and that under the licensing laws proposed they will be in a far worse position than they are at present, for they will be deprived of all personal liberty and be placed under penal restrictions. In our opinion, those who advocated Registration for Midwives should, if they believed in the principle, have maintained it: as it is, they have sacrificed the interests which they undertook to guard.

But the question as to whether *any* legislation for midwives is desirable is one which presents itself, and must be faced. We have always maintained that such legislation is undesirable, for the reason that the evolution of the sciences of medicine and of nursing has progressed so far that the qualified medical practitioner, and the thoroughly trained nurse cover the whole ground, and there is no longer any room for the semi educated specialist. The medical profession is, in our opinion, perfectly justified, and indeed is acting in accordance with the best interests of the public when it objects, as the large proportion of it consistently has objected, to legal status being bestowed upon an "inferior order of practitioners," for such the three months trained midwives would inevitably become.

The public must realise that if legal status is granted to midwives, a dangerous precedent is established, namely that the State recognition of specialists is desirable. To this the medical profession in its own case has successfully objected, laying down the principle that general education must in every case be the foundation of special practice if this is to be of value. The same principle holds good in nursing. As medical men and women must be qualified in medicine, surgery, and obstetrics, before they are permitted to practise any of the three branches, so nurses should be educated in the duties of nursing medical, surgical, and obstetric cases before they are allowed to practise their profession independently for gain. When they have proved their qualifications in all these branches, they should certainly receive State recognition and legal status, but to give this to any one of the three branches without reference to the others, is prejudicial to the interests both of the public and of the nursing profession.

The true inwardness of the situation is this, that medical bodies strenuously denying to thoroughly trained nurses any form of legal status, are, in conjunction with the Association for the Compulsory Registration of Midwives,

compromising the situation instead of adopting the bold and statesmanlike policy, of bringing before Parliament the necessity of protecting the interests of the sick by the Registration of thoroughly trained nurses. Expediency has impelled them to tinker at this vital question. Sooner or later this great reform must be effected, and it is not well that the public should realize that medical bodies are responsible for the persistent obstruction to the interests of the sick and of trained nurses.

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### Annotations.

#### A DANGER AHEAD.

THE munificence of the British Public may always be relied upon in times of national need and crisis, and the present is no exception to this rule. All the various funds for the help of our soldiers, and of their wives and families, have been most liberally supported, and there is little fear that either Tommy Atkins or those dependent upon him will be allowed to want. But, there is another danger, which may be easily overlooked, namely, that our public charities, notably the hospitals, may suffer. There is only a certain amount of money in the country available for charitable purposes, and any large demand upon it in one direction, is apt to affect others prejudicially. We hope, therefore, that the generously disposed will bear in mind that the needs of our hospitals are none the less, because those of our soldiers are greater than usual, and that while writing cheques for the benefit of the sick and wounded, or the widows and orphans, they will deal with no niggard hand with the hospitals, which must be able to count on at least their present income if their efficiency is not to be imperilled.

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#### THE NOTIFICATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASES.

THE Local Government Board issued a circular recently drawing the attention of local authorities to the effect which the Infectious Disease Notification Extension Act, 1899, will have in extending the operation of the Act of 1889. The Board points out that where an inmate of any building used for human habitation is suffering from an infectious disease to which the Act applies the following provisions shall have effect:—(a) The head of the family to which the patient belongs, and, in his default, the nearest relatives present, or the person in charge of or in attendance on the patient, and in default of any such person the occupier of the

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