

Nurses, "Midwives," and "Certified Monthly Nurses."

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

There is one aspect of the "Midwives Registration" agitation which has never been clearly brought before either those of the Public who have interested themselves in favour of "Registration" or, the Medical Profession; and as it directly concerns the Status and the interests of British Trained Nurses perhaps you will permit me to call attention to it in the "NURSING RECORD."

Most people believe, that a "Midwife" is a "Nurse"—*and something more*, superior to a mere Nurse; otherwise the idea would never have been entertained for a moment, of giving the "Midwife" the honour of Registration—with the privileges and monopoly which that would confer—whilst leaving the nurse out in the cold.

That *some* "Midwives" so called, have first received a nurse's training, may be at once admitted.

What is most important to point out, and be thoroughly realized by the public and by nurses,—is the essential points of difference which exist between trained nurses and the "Midwifery" Sisterhood.

First as regards antecedents—

A young woman desirous of entering the nursing profession, must have received a fairly good general education, she must not have been previously employed—say—as a barmaid, or as mill hand. She must produce sufficient evidence of previous good conduct, next follows the interview with the Matron, when if any flaw be discovered her dismissal is prompt.

This I believe is the general rule with regard to "nursing probationers."

Now turn to "Midwives."

Women *are* admitted (I do not say in every part of England because I do not know) to the courses of "Lectures—and are granted diplomas—on Midwifery" without any reference to their previous "record."

In an important city in the North of England the procedure is as follows: Advertisements appear in the halfpenny papers announcing that "Courses of Lectures on Midwifery and Midwifery Nursing will be delivered to Midwives and Nurses." This looks like a reasonable procedure, and it has proved to be plausible, for many who ought to have inquired further have committed themselves to approval. As a matter of fact, the women who enter their names and pay the fees for these lectures need not be—when the lectures begin—either "midwives" or "nurses." It is simply a matter of money. If the woman has, say, £10 at hand she can become a "midwife" in from three to six months, and if she has only £5 she must be satisfied with the position of a "monthly nurse."

In each case, the 3 to 6 months' lecturing is termed by its apologists, "Education." Personally I am unaware of the "education" that is conferred on these "midwives" by their medical preceptors—but not long since I came across a woman who had obtained, after a 3 months' course of lectures, a "Certificate of Competency" as a monthly nurse only. She commenced business by stating that she acted as a registered practitioner in confinement cases, and her business ended, with her first case, when a "placenta previa" resulted in the death of mother and child. After the fatality she said to me that she would have done better had she ever been "inside the hospital wards" ! Her "education" as a "nurse" (save the mark) had been carried out in the lecture room !

I could say much on the "shady" sort of women who through various "back doors" up and down the country, and in the Metropolis gain entrance to the Nursing Profession; but I shall forbear, pending an effort which is being made to induce certain members of the Medical Profession to reconsider their position in this matter.

However, these women, without antecedents or any training ("education" it is called) worthy of the name, assume the position of *trained nurses*. They wear *nurses'* uniforms (one is very fetching—a blue cloak lined with crimson). They exhibit huge "Diplomas" in their windows, and on door-plates announce themselves as "Midwives by Diploma," or F.O.S., or L.O.S., (I have not myself seen the F.O.S.). Also "Certificated Monthly Nurses, St. So-and-So's Hospital" (the "Saint" goes a long way towards respectability). This, in the words of the General Medical Council, "is calculated to deceive the Public"; but it does more, it takes the bread out of the mouth of the trained nurse. Gradually the woman's sphere of operation extends: many medical men are unaware of the indecent haste with which her "education" has been completed, and as for the public—well, ask Mr. Carlyle. And so they are called to "*nurse*" in sickness and assist in surgery.

I do not say that all these "nurses" or "midwives" are bad. On the contrary, I have met some excellent, industrious and careful women amongst them; but the system is a rotten one. And what is urgently needed to remedy it—in the interests of the public (particularly the poorer classes) and the medical and nursing professions—is:—
(1) The suppression of "diplomas" to so-called "midwives."
(2) The suppression of "certificates of competency" to "midwifery" or "obstetric" nurses until they have been first trained as *nurses*. (The necessity for this is obvious, inasmuch as an apparently normal confinement may at once assume an acute medical or surgical aspect, in either of which cases a woman who has been merely lectured *at* is worse than useless.)
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