

outside his door upon which was inscribed, "Midwifery taught here for five shillings."

While the result of this protracted warfare between the rival sexes left the advantage with the men midwives, there still existed a covert antagonism to the pursuit of the practice by men. The nineteenth century opened with these smouldering instincts in reserve. It was soon after this that a titled medical man, who deserves to be nameless, declared contemptuously that midwifery was an unfit occupation for gentlemen of academic education. The degraded state of professional feeling at this time was such that the Royal College of Physicians considered a Licentiate practising midwifery to be unworthy of a Fellowship, while a Member of the College of Surgeons was deemed ineligible to be on the list of the Council, or Court of Examiners if he practised as an accoucheur. The Apothecaries Company, who had long been urged to institute an examination in midwifery, declined the attempt. This is a matter of history. In a profession which recognises no other superiority than that due to personal merit, inequality in the sister branches happily has been wafted away by the spirit of progress which has since spread among us.

Were we to recount the greatest advances of the century we should unhesitatingly ascribe chiefly the gain derived from two epoch-making events. One is the knowledge of septic infection promulgated by Semmelweis. His fervent and disinterested perseverance has earned for him the gratitude and the praise of posterity; it has been the foundation of our aseptic and antiseptic advances under the profound additions of Pasteur and Lister. The other was the introduction of chloroform—a triumph of far-reaching and infinite benefit, one which has shed a lustre on the name of Simpson, which ranks him in an indelible position among the foremost benefactors of the human race.

While male practitioners have obtained the professional position and privileges due to them and rightly claim equality with their brethren in other branches of the healing art, the midwives have not been so fortunate; they have not been able to obtain State recognition of their services or to redeem themselves from the pressure of circumstances which for hundreds of years has oppressed them. That their claims cannot continue to be ignored in a more enlightened age I am firmly convinced. We may still look forward with hope and with confidence to the time when midwives will be duly trained, licensed, registered, and submitted to proper legal

supervision and control. In the interests of suffering humanity, in the cause of the poor, and in the wisdom of a broad philanthropy, we cannot, and we ought not to withhold opportunities of improving their knowledge. In strict justice they must be allowed the chance to become competent and worthy representatives of a calling which is indicated not only by a large demand, but is necessitated by the very conditions of the lower classes both in our large towns and country districts.

Under our Poor-law system provision is made for cases of confinement. An order can be obtained from the relieving officer for the services of the district medical officer, or for admission into the Union infirmary; under special conditions it is allowed that such orders shall be available for other resident practitioners at a certain rate of payment. The attendance in all these cases is that of qualified medical practitioners. These wise regulations are often passed over, and recourse had to various voluntary agencies, which can always be found. Maternity hospitals, maternity clubs, provident dispensaries, charitable societies, all provide for help at the time of childbirth and subsequent recovery. As an illustration of the manner in which this work is done in the majority of cases our own lying-in charity affords an example. Briefly, the town is divided into districts, in each of which there is a resident midwife, and in each an honorary medical officer, whose services are called when any emergencies render it necessary. A code of rules is issued for their guidance. The charity conducts a valuable and useful work among the poor, the midwives working amicably with the medical staff. Surely it is not too much to expect that any endeavour to raise the intelligence of these midwives, to promote the understanding of their art, must tend to the saving of life of mothers and infants; and, what is of vast importance also, enable them to recognise those conditions which made for future disease, disability, and suffering among their patients.

Why should we as a nation be so much behind in the State recognition of this work? Other countries, with due regard to the value of life, and the maintenance of health among the poor, have formulated prudent and judicious laws for the regulation of midwives. We have yet to learn that damage has accrued to the profession in those countries, or that the work has been other than of inestimable value among its recipients.

I have shown that midwives have existed since the beginning of the world; that they will con-

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