

3. It appears to me that any Bill which endeavours to legislate for midwives as "independent practitioners" is doomed to failure. I do not think sufficient stress has been, so far, laid on the point that midwives are not, and never can be "independent" until they are recognised as competent to deal with any emergency which may arise in the course of a labour. This they are not qualified for by the training they receive, nor is it likely that they ever will be. How then can they possibly be regarded as independent practitioners? For myself, writing as a trained nurse who holds the diploma of the London Obstetrical Society, and having for some time had charge of a Maternity Home, I can only say that nothing would induce me to attend a lying-in case unless I knew what medical practitioner was willing to come to my assistance if required.

I write in no spirit of depreciation of the work of midwives, but it is becoming increasingly plain that the midwife, as such, must give place to the trained obstetric nurse who will "follow the doctor," a position which seems more in accordance with the fitness of things than to expect the doctor to "follow the midwife."

I am, dear Madam,
Yours faithfully,
MARGARET BREAY.

A DANGEROUS POSITION.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I am glad to see the Matrons' Council is going to point out the danger of placing midwives at the mercy of County Councils composed of men who know nothing of their work, and on which moreover, local medical men will sit. Nothing more convincing of our danger has been given to the public than the mediæval attitude of the honorary staff at the Macclesfield Infirmary towards their woman house-surgeon. Here is an influential medical woman, with all her colleagues' at her back, and yet gauge the injustice of the situation—what would happen to us poor midwives who have no professional support? Anyway, I and I know others who will refuse to place ourselves in so dangerous a position, as that proposed by the Local Licensing Scheme of Mr. Heywood Johnstone's Bill. I wonder if there is any room for us in the wide world where we may have fair play. I doubt it.

Yours truly,
A MANCHESTER MIDWIFE.

A COMMON-SENSE VIEW.

To the Editor of the "Nursing Record."

DEAR MADAM,—I notice that you suggest in your issue of last week that every nurse should know how to wash and dress a healthy baby before she is allowed to care for a sick one.

I entirely agree with your view, and was pleased to see it expressed in so influential a journal as the NURSING RECORD, but I would go even further. I should like every girl, before she leaves school, to have instruction in this subject, which surely is of supreme importance to every woman, and to be examined in it. If she knew that she would have to wash and dress a baby before an audience qualified to judge of her competency, this would be a stimulus to her to learn to do it well. In the National Schools

parents would, I feel sure, be only too pleased to allow the baby of the family to be brought by an older child for the practical demonstrations; and for the instruction of other girls the crèches which are to be found in many towns might be utilized. They might even be partially supported by the fees paid by pupils for this valuable tuition. I hope the day will come when it will be considered a disgrace to a woman to marry without having any knowledge of the practical duties which will devolve upon her as a mother. The suffering, disease, and death caused to little children by the culpable ignorance of those who should be their natural protectors is terrible to contemplate. Those who do not know how to take care of children do not deserve to have them. At least that appears to me to be the common sense view of the question.

Yours faithfully,
MATER FAMILIAS.

Last Words for 1901.

Standing on the threshold of another year, and looking back over the year that is past, it appears to us chiefly noteworthy for the awakening which has taken place in a marked degree amongst nurses, not in this country alone, but in various parts of the world, with regard to their professional responsibility, and to the realisation of the extent of their influence on the national life.

When we consider the different grades of nurses in a hospital, we see how far reaching is the influence of each. To the heads of training-schools belongs not only the organization of the educational course of their pupils, upon which their subsequent professional efficiency so largely depends, and the metamorphosis of immature and raw material into the highly finished, expert and forceful worker, but it is also their part to place before their pupils whose minds are in a receptive and plastic condition, the wider interests in which they should take a share, to show them that they cannot dissociate their special branch of work from the work of the world at large without detriment to both; in short, it depends upon our Superintendents of Nursing to-day whether the future heads of training schools shall be women of cramped and illiberal minds, or women who are many-sided and large hearted, capable of discharging well the great responsibilities entrusted to them, and of dealing wisely with the diverse characters which come under their direction. Again, how wide is the influence of ward sisters. Upon them depends the practical teaching of probationers, and the tone of the ward. The patients lying in their beds keenly observe, and silently sum up, the head of the ward, who, as she passes up and down, fulfilling her daily duties, sets in motion rings of influence of the extent of which she is wholly unconscious.

Then there are the staff nurses. How much they can do to make or mar the happiness of patients and probationers alike. They, too, play

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