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Editorial.

LEGISLATION FOR NURSES.

On Monday last, the House of Commons agreed with the Amendments made by the House of Lords in the Midwives' Bill, and the measure only therefore awaits the Royal Assent to become law. A troublesome and long-continued controversy is therefore ended; and the present affords a good opportunity to consider the lessons of this new legislation so far as nurses are affected.

Incidentally, the immense significance of the recognition given to the nursing profession by this Bill deserves to be emphasised. Parliament has not only, for the first time, recognised the nursing profession, but has definitely expressed the opinion that representatives of two leading nursing bodies in this country are fit and proper persons to be entrusted with the control of midwives—that is to say, of independent practitioners of the most important branch of medicine. As we have previously said, we cannot understand the logic of the position; but it is now an accomplished fact. The salient fact for nurses to note and remember is that Parliament has given their profession this definite recognition and status.

There are three valuable and instructive lessons to be learnt by nurses from this Midwives' legislation. In the first place, it proves the immense value of enlisting public sympathy on the side of professional reform. For many years, medical men and midwives agitated for Parliamentary action, but without success. During the last seven years, the sympathy of lay persons has been secured; and, in consequence, every year the movement has become stronger, until at last Parliament has consented to pass a Bill, not only giving midwives the desired position as independent practitioners, but also adopting on their behalf principles in legislation which have been, for generations, strenuously refused to other pro-

fessions. We have already taken a leaf out of the midwives' book by forming a Society for the State Registration of Trained Nurses; and the support which that Society has already received from the public, and the interest which it has already aroused in the question, afford grounds for confidence that its work will be eminently useful and successful.

In the second place, the Midwives' Bill places the control of the midwives of the future in the hands of a small Board, chiefly of men, appointed by medical and nursing bodies. Unless the President of the Privy Council appoints a midwife, there appears to be no possibility of the midwives being represented at all on the governing body of their profession. This is a matter on which we feel strongly, and in which we consider that midwives have been most unjustly treated. In their anxiety to get some sort of an Act, the advocates of the midwives appear to have completely overlooked a matter of elementary justice to midwives themselves. It cuts at the whole root of the idea of elevating midwives that they should be thus excluded from the control and management of their own affairs. Indeed, it is not an unfair argument that if they are, as a body, so hopelessly ignorant and incapable as to be required to be placed by Parliament under the control of medical men and nurses, they cannot be fitted individually to be entrusted, as they now will be, with the lives and health of their fellow-women.

We consider that the nursing profession should determine, once for all, that when legislation for nurses is proposed it must be on the basis of justice and fair play; and that the governing body of our profession, whilst it naturally must contain representatives of the Privy Council and of the medical profession, must be chiefly composed of representatives chosen by the registered nurses themselves. There must be no error or mistake about this point. Trained nurses are too well educated

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