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## Editorial.

### A NATIONAL TRAINING-SCHOOL FOR MIDWIVES.

By the invitation of the Lady Mayoress (Miss Ritchie) a meeting was held on Monday at the Mansion House in support of Miss Alice Gregory's proposed national training-school for district midwives in South-East London.

The need of training an increased number of women capable of acting as midwives is undoubted, for, under the Midwives' Act of 1902, it will become penal after April 1st, 1910, for unqualified women to act habitually and for gain in this capacity.

But as the State has penalised the employment of the untrained—a quite new precedent in legislation in this country—it is its duty to aid in the provision of efficient midwives, even if, in order to do so, it has to subsidise the training authorities. Otherwise it deprives the poor of unskilled care, and no other is so far available in many places. In our opinion, the authority which should deal with the future provision of midwifery nurses for the poor is the Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute, to which the nation looks for the care of its sick poor in their own homes, and which would at once command financial support if it undertook this work. If the State, for every £1 raised for this purpose from charitable subscriptions, contributed a similar amount, as is done in the case of the hospitals in some of our Colonies, the question could, we are convinced, be dealt with effectively.

The scheme proposed by Miss Gregory, although no doubt inspired by excellent motives, is, in our opinion, doomed to failure.

1. In the first place, to suppose that one hospital of seventy beds, admitting both general and maternity cases, will provide an effective means of training midwives for the whole country is absolutely fallacious. It would be but a drop in the ocean.

2. The scheme is to be deprecated because if carried out it would, as at present contem-

plated, maintain an inefficient standard of nursing education, for the proposal is, not only that the educated women whom it is desired to attract shall receive instruction in midwifery, but also in general and monthly nursing, prior to a six months' course in midwifery. As the whole course will last for "not less than two years," this means that the training in general and monthly nursing will extend only over eighteen months—a standard which, if adopted, leaves the trainee at the end of this time ineligible for recognition as a nurse by the State when any Registration Act is passed. We do not think that many "educated women" will be willing to give eighteen months' service as nurses to find themselves at the end of this period outside the recognised ranks of the nursing profession.

A sound method of organisation, in our view, would be to afford facilities for obtaining the certificate of the Central Midwives' Board to nurses who are already trained, and to promote the foundation of hospitals which would afford this training, not to attempt to establish a hospital which will give a smattering of nursing knowledge, a method which is fair neither to the patients nor the nursing pupils.

Another point which must not be overlooked is that midwifery amongst the poor, practised independently, can never be made sufficiently remunerative to induce the class of workers whom it is desirable to attract to take it up in large numbers. Training may be given by the national training-school as contemplated, the services of the pupils may be secured by indenturing them for a certain period in consideration of training received, but no power on earth can subsequently keep these women to a branch of work which they find impossible to make remunerative. From all points of view, therefore, it should be controlled by some central organisation. The Queen Victoria's Jubilee Institute has shown that it can deal with the district nursing problem, and that it has the public confidence. Why not with the midwife question also?

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