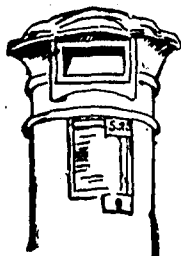


Letters to the Editor.

NOTES, QUERIES, &c.



Whilst cordially inviting communications upon all subjects for these columns, we wish it to be distinctly understood that we do not in ANY WAY hold ourselves responsible for the opinions expressed by our correspondents.

THE HELPLESS POSITION OF MIDWIVES.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—Allow me to say a few words more in regard to the unjust treatment of midwives. The general distrust of the midwife, fed by constant and continuous insinuations of parties interested in her total suppression, has culminated in draconic legislation against her. She is, it is assumed, an evil that must be done away with, or, at least, made innocuous. All the legislation and regulations passed in regard to her, unmistakably prove it. Her ill-repute has taken such deep root, that the accusations, as to her character, are taken for granted, even by persons who ought to know better. I am, therefore, sorry to see that your correspondent, "certified midwife," repeats these insinuations as a matter beyond dispute. There are no doubt black sheep, but I do most emphatically deny that midwives as a class have acted dishonourably.

It seems as if the Central Midwives' Board wished to perpetuate the belief that there have not hitherto been intelligent qualified midwives by admitting everyone presenting the flimsiest proof of having assisted at childbirth into the ranks of midwives. They have placed all women claiming to be midwives in one category, without discriminating between the trained efficient midwife and any ignorant woman who chooses to call herself such.

There is no country in Europe where the services of midwives are so little in demand as in England, owing to calumnies spread about them. On the Continent it is customary to call in midwives to attend at child birth, and the midwife has to say when a doctor is to be called in, and thus a complete harmony exist between all the parties concerned. In this country midwives have been ousted from their proper sphere of usefulness, and the confidence of the public in their capabilities is shaken. Unless midwives make a stand now, there is the possibility of their losing their practice altogether.

The faith of the public in their efficiency is already lessened, for seeing, that on the slightest occasion, they have to call in a doctor, the public will entirely lose confidence in their skill and, besides, seeing that they cannot avoid double fees, the public will dispense with the services of the least necessary person. The end will be that the midwife will go to the wall.

I hope midwives will not let things remain as they are, and will try their utmost, even at least from a sense of self-respect, to improve their position. It is

of the utmost importance to form a legally constituted body, whose duty should be to further the interests of this profession. Should a sufficient number of midwives intimate their interest in this matter, I should be pleased to call an informal gathering to discuss the steps to be taken. Address H. G., British Journal of Nursing Office, 11, Adam Street, Strand—Yours obediently,

H. G.

[We think our correspondent has mistaken the attitude of the Central Midwives' Board as to the position of untrained midwives on the Roll—The Chairman of the Board loses no opportunity of explaining that it was not by the wish of the Board that they were placed there, but as the Act stands the Board had no option. The Board has differentiated between the trained and the untrained, so far as possible, by giving the certificates of those who possess them and putting the words "in practice July, 1901," after the names of those who possess no certificate, thus showing that they were placed on the Roll during the period of grace provided for in the Act. The rules of the Central Midwives' Board lay down that a midwife should advise that a medical practitioner should be sent for under certain conditions, and it must be remembered that a midwife is only trained to attend normal cases. The trouble really is that if the patient's friends will not make themselves responsible for the fee of the doctor, the midwife is placed in an exceedingly difficult position. Attention has been drawn to this matter, and sooner or later we think it must be altered. The doctor who is summoned is entitled to his fee; but it should not be supposed that the midwife can provide it.

We are pleased to permit H. G. to make use of this Journal to consult her colleagues.—Ed.]

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—In view of the recent correspondence in your valuable paper *re* the helpless position of midwives, it may interest your readers to know that an "Association of Midwives (for Mutual Benefit and Protection)" has recently been formed in Manchester.

Fully qualified registered midwives only are admitted as members on payment of a weekly contribution. The officers and committee consist of members duly elected by the Association.

It is the object of the Association to deal with all questions affecting the profession.—We are, faithfully yours,

M. LAWSON, President.
F. EDDIE }
J. MALCOLM } Co-Secretaries.

LITTLE THINGS.

To the Editor of the "British Journal of Nursing."

DEAR MADAM,—Your article on "Little Things" interested me greatly. It is just these points which make all the difference between good and bad nursing, but attention to detail takes time, and time the expenditure of which does not always tell in to the apparent advantage of the nurse. The nurse who races round and pays scant attention to the things which do not show generally gets

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