

## The Midwife.

### A Storm in a Teacup.

An extraordinary scene took place recently at a meeting of Bensham Road Wesleyan Guild, Newcastle-on-Tyne, when Mrs. Atkinson, of Newcastle, delivered an address on woman's suffrage. She argued that if women had the vote the status of women generally throughout the country would be raised; at present woman's point of view was not represented at all.

She was proceeding to illustrate her point by a reference to the Midwives' Act, when a lady in the audience entered a protest against the Midwives' Act being brought in, when so many young people were present. They were she said there to hear about votes for women, and she "strongly objected to the disgraceful talk in front of those young men who were present."

The speaker pointed out that the subject to which she had referred was of most serious importance, not only to women but to men. She claimed that she had discussed it with propriety, and that if such things could not be talked about it would be very sad for the future of the country, as they could not be put right unless they were discussed. She was proceeding to say that "the name of midwife seemed to have shocked the susceptibilities of those"—when she was prevented by interruptions from proceeding further, and was requested by the Chairman, the Rev. Benjamin Barker, to "moderate her language." Mrs. Atkinson asked the chairman to explain in what way he desired her to moderate her language, and he suggested that she should refrain from mentioning subjects which might be objectionable to any member of the audience.

Mrs. Atkinson held that her subject was not objectionable, and asked that the meeting should be invited to decide by vote whether she should continue her speech as heretofore.

On the matter being put to the vote, it was decided by 30 votes to 15 that the speaker should be allowed to proceed. Mrs. Atkinson then continued her address, and said that the Act for the Registration of Midwives would have been very different if women's ideas had been asked beforehand. She repeated that if such things could not be mentioned it was a very sad outlook for the future of the country.

It seems almost incredible that in these days, at a meeting of adults, such a scene

could have taken place, and the attitude of mind of those who objected to a reference to the Midwives' Act in a public speech is extraordinary. Every day men and women come into contact with the primary facts of life, and purity of mind and body are best conserved when these questions are discussed, and the truth concerning them taught, simply and naturally.

But in the present instance there was no suggestion of any such teaching. There was simply a reference to a law on the Statute Book dealing with a useful class of women workers, with the object of showing that if women had, by the possession of the Parliamentary vote, been able to influence legislation when the Act was passed it would have been more liberal to the class which it controls. We agree with Mrs. Atkinson that if such things, discussed with perfect propriety, cannot be mentioned in public, it is a sad outlook for the welfare of the community. The objectors made themselves supremely ridiculous.

### The Retention of Certificates.

We briefly referred last week, in reporting the proceedings of the last meeting of the Central Midwives' Board, to the application of a certified midwife for a voucher in place of her certificate, with the possession of which she had parted under an agreement with her employers.

Original certificates are the property of the person to whom they refer, and we do not consider any employer has the right to ask for or to retain them.

But if such a demand is made a nurse or midwife is most unwise if she accedes to it. She is a responsible, professional person, and should surely be capable of looking after her own interests. If she is not, she need not expect anyone else to do so. And one of the first things she should learn is to retain her original certificates in her own possession. She should, of course, produce them for inspection when required, but should not part with them on any consideration whatever. We should not have supposed this point needed emphasis, but that the case under consideration demonstrates it unmistakably, and we have often been surprised at the light-hearted way in which original certificates and testimonials are posted to us for our inspection.

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