

—the Registration of Nurses—is every whit as important to the commonweal. What Registration, whether of Midwives or of Nurses, will do, is, after the lapse of a short preliminary period, to guarantee to the public that only those women whose names appear upon the respective Registers are qualified to act in their respective capacities. That is to say, that any person, anxious to know whether the Midwife or Nurse he has engaged is, in very truth, what she has professed herself to be, must purchase or otherwise procure a copy of the Register of Midwives or Nurses as the case may be, and can from its pages at once obtain the information he requires. The Register will be obliged by law to be upon public sale, but its price can hardly be less than one shilling.

Now let us reflect upon the enormous difference which exists between the class of people who employ the services of a Midwife, and that which is attended in sickness by a Trained Nurse. The former people are the wives of labouring men, who congregate in the courts and alleys of our great towns, too poor to have a Doctor's help, and yet above the stratum who claim Hospital aid; or the wives of the same class in countless villages where medical aid cannot be easily procured or afforded. The latter class are patients of both sexes, who are in a position to pay not only their Medical man, but the two or more guineas a week for the comfort and assistance of a skilled Nurse. Therefore we ask, Which of these two classes, the very poor and ignorant, or the educated well-to-do people, are the more likely to buy and search the Register? It is perfectly plain that not one in ten thousand of the former will do so. But, on the other hand, if he had the slightest doubt, it is self-evident that the first thing an educated and rich man would do would be to purchase the Nursing Register, to see whether the name of the Nurse he had employed was therein enrolled. And how useful this simple procedure would be in protecting the public against the thousands of ignorant women who now pose and practise as Trained Nurses, it is surely unnecessary to comment on at further length. From which it follows that the Nursing Register would be more useful to more people, than one for Midwives. But further, it is to our minds as clear as noonday that the uneducated poor who usually employ Midwives will seek the services of some woman of high local repute, whether she be licensed by the State or not. Moreover, it is quite certain that Parliament will never so far depart from the principles of all previous legislation, as to lay down the hard and fast rule, that no woman shall be attended in labour except by a Registered Medical man or Midwife. The whole tendency of English law for the last half-century has been exactly in the

opposite direction. Free trade in commerce, in medicine, in religion, in disease, in everything, has been the keynote; and as students of the times, we are convinced that nothing but a cataclysmic revolution will change the progress of the tide. Consequently, if the earnest workers for legal control over Midwives are expecting Parliament to give penal powers to prevent any woman being attended, save by a licensed practitioner, they are merely dreaming the vainest of dreams. They will not get those powers this century, nor, unless the Millennium comes between, will they obtain the dispensation in the following hundred years.

But we are most anxious not to be misunderstood. We realise, perhaps, even better and more keenly than Miss Wilson can do, the horrors which accrue from the present laxity in the employment of ignorant women as Midwives. We admire and applaud her wish to see the evils abated. And in all true desire to assist her in her splendid work, we would make a suggestion.

The British Nurses' Association has risen by leaps and bounds to be a power in the land. There is not the slightest doubt that it is being managed, not only with unprecedented success, but with extreme foresight and courage. Its Committee, on its first formation, announced a programme so bold that it, we confess, quite took our breath away; but we gladly acknowledge that events have conspicuously proved the wisdom of their apparent hardihood. It is now quite evident that the Association will gain the great powers it set itself the task to acquire—legal authority to Register Nurses. What we therefore would suggest is the possibility that the Association might perhaps be persuaded to undertake the Registration of Midwives as well as of Nurses. It appears to us that it would be a simple matter for the Royal Charter, for which the Association is seeking, to confer this additional power. Then by instituting at once a class of Registered Midwives, a great moral effect would be produced. Because in time, the poor would come to know that those who possessed that title were the most trustworthy and competent. And, of course, no one could usurp the title, and accept money therefore under false pretences, without rendering herself liable to imprisonment for that offence. We see clearly how immensely valuable in time this Registration of Midwives would become, and for the sake of countless hundreds of poor women, we hope that our suggestion may be deemed worthy of consideration.

But while we wish legislation upon the subject all success, we consider we have said enough to prove that the Registration of Trained Nurses would be more, and more immediately, useful to the public at large, and to that section of the public—the educated and richer classes—who would at

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