

though we can confidently assure our readers that, if introduced, this proceeding will represent both the beginning and the end of its career.

Midwives are defined to be women who "undertake to attend cases of natural labour without the direct supervision of a medical practitioner." What term is to be applied to women who attend cases of unnatural labour without such direct supervision, is not stated; nor does the Act, unfortunately, provide any means whereby a Midwife may know, when she commences her attendance, whether her patient will pursue a normal course or not; and of course the attempt to make such a distinction before labour actually commences is, as a rule, impossible. Her certificate of registration, however, according to the Act, will only entitle the Midwife to act in cases of natural labour, so that the presumption is that it will be illegal for her to act if the case proves to be dangerous or complicated, even if it be impossible for her to obtain medical or other skilled assistance. A more impracticable provision could hardly have been proposed.

The Bill imposes a penalty of five pounds upon any woman who, not being registered, terms herself a Midwife. But it also provides that no one shall prosecute her, if she calls herself by that title, except a County or Borough Council, and at the expense of the county rates—a provision which is quite sufficient to neutralise any possible attempt to enforce the Act, because it goes without saying that County Councils will be much disinclined to enhance the rates for such a purpose.

The Bill makes no provision for prosecuting women who act as Midwives without being registered, and in this the promoters have been prudent, because such a clause of course would never have been passed. In this connection, we feel impelled to remind our readers that this is an argument which we have frequently used, but which the Midwives' Institute especially has hitherto always derided, asserting even as lately as last autumn their intention of being satisfied with nothing short of a Bill which would prohibit practice by unregistered Midwives. But inasmuch as the Bill is only proposed on the ground that it is necessary to protect the public from dangerous, because ignorant, women, it is surely the acme of absurdity that it should content itself with forbidding them to use the title of Midwife under a penalty which no one except a County Council can recover.

Then everything in the Bill depends upon the approval or the agreement of the General Medical Council, and it is more than doubtful whether that Council will consent to take any part whatever in the execution of the Act. If it does not do so, the whole Act, if it should

pass, would immediately become null and void. The mere possibility of such an occurrence is sufficient to prove the crude and unworkable nature of the proposed legislation. But to our mind one of the greatest objections to the measure is that the Bill creates a self-elected body of twelve medical men to carry out the Act, and so control the whole profession of Midwives, while these women themselves are not accorded the slightest share in the management or control of their calling. Other professions would not for a moment admit such a proposal in their own case, and we cannot congratulate the Midwives' Institute, nor those amongst the Midwives who are such earnest advocates of legislation, upon the position which they have assumed in this matter. They declare that Midwives are independent workers, and in the same breath place them in absolute dependence upon a self-elected body of twelve medical men. The unpractical nature of the whole movement requires no further illustration, and will undoubtedly be condemned by all self-respecting trained Midwives, if, indeed, any of the latter are unwise enough to desire legislation which would place them in such a false and difficult position.

#### A MODEL SOCIETY.

WE have received the Twenty-Eighth Annual Report of the Northern Counties' Society for granting annuities to governesses and other ladies in reduced circumstances. As usual, it shows a marked and steady increase in the successful and beneficent operations of the Society, which, by the way, is not only one of the most valuable institutions of its kind in the country, and probably the most successful charity in the Northern counties, but is a remarkable instance of the manner in which women can manage an institution from a financial point of view. We believe that we are correct in stating that some twenty-five years ago this Society, which was then in a small way, was almost bankrupt. The Hon. Secretaryship was then undertaken by Mrs. Dale, of Newcastle-on-Tyne, to whose careful management and business abilities the magnificent success which has since been achieved must be largely, if not entirely, given. At the present time, the Society gives pensions varying from £20 to £30 per annum to 130 ladies, to a total amount of £2,740; while the total expenditure on management is something under £50—a proportion of benevolent, to management, expenditure which is, for so large a Society, probably unequalled in this country. The balance sheet shows how carefully the affairs are administered, because the fixed income from annual subscriptions and dividends is almost sufficient to cover the entire expenses, and nearly all the donations and legacies which are received, amounting last year to close upon £2,500, are placed in permanent investments, which now amount altogether to more than £43,000, the interest upon which is made available the following year for the foundation of new pensions. The Society, in short, is a model of economical and efficient management.

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