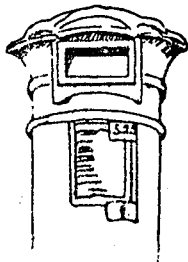


possibly profitable, for the readers of the NURSING RECORD to peruse.

The book under our consideration to-day will very likely be more pleasant than exactly profitable; but after all, bright and amusing gossip, well-organised and well-written, is not very common, and, therefore, will be proportionately enjoyed.

A. M. G.



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 MIDWIFE QUESTION.

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—(i.) It is impossible to come to any other conclusion than that Miss Wilson confirms my view of the labours of the Select Committee on this question. I gave a definite instance to show that the Committee were biased, and she does not attempt to contradict it.

(ii.) Miss Wilson's reference to Dr. Norman Walker's Paper tends to show that the foreign system does not work well; it makes no difference whether the fault is on the side of the doctors or the midwives, they are both part of the system. As to the point raised by her about the frequency of abnormal pelvis in Germany and round Milan, I have the honour to point out that even if the facts stated are correct—supposing the midwife system is the best possible—there ought not to be a death-rate of 2·7 per 1,000 from puerperal fever alone in Prussian towns, where the population cannot be described as being sparse, and the doctors as being few in number. Miss Wilson apparently thinks that puerperal fever is in some occult way dependent upon food, housing, and general hygiene. This is a thought, and certainly not a fact founded upon observation.

If she were to assert that puerperal fevers were in the main due to want of skilled care from the advent to the close of labour I should agree with her; but I certainly believe that it is safer for a woman in an ordinary labour to have an attendant who has no pretentious certificate and does nothing at all, than to have an attendant who muddles about in a pretentious sort of way, whether she has a certificate or not. This belief is founded upon observation. I note that Miss Wilson does not deal with the question of laceration of the perinæum. It appears to me that this is one of the most important facts brought out in Dr. Walker's Paper. Abroad, the State midwife does not send for a surgeon to attend the repair; a condition is therefore present frequently which is suitable for the production of traumatic sepsis. I have no sort of doubt that these are the conditions, rather than osteomalachia and rickets, which are the causes of the excess of puerperal fever.

(iii.) Whether my experience has been unfortunate or not, foreign experience does not point in the direction of the State midwife seeking the aid of a surgeon for the repair of the perinæum. It is certainly contrary to probability that women, who are competing for practice, will be likely to call attention to the fact that they are not so competent as doctors, until they are pushed into a corner. It is very well for the Midwives' Institute to chalk up humanity in its own interest; but I will ask Miss Wilson

to refer to *Nursing Notes*, November 1st, 1894, page 153, where it is stated that in some places 90 per cent. of the women of this country, and in others 50 per cent., are attended by uncertificated women, and to state the reasons why this is so when the London Obstetrical Society alone has over 1,000 Midwives on its books.

It appears to me that there is some room for a little practical philanthropy here on the part of the certificated midwives, and that if some of the energy bestowed upon the attempt to obtain an Act of Parliament, to which there are grave objections, were utilised for dealing with the conditions in such places as mentioned in *Nursing Notes*, matters might be advanced a little.

The fact is, midwives do not wish or intend to practise among the very poor, unless they are supported by charitable efforts; they wish to practise among the richer members of the community, and I do not blame them. The question then arises, whether it is desirable for the State to encourage the practice of Midwifery in this country by half-educated and partly-trained women. It is quite certain that midwives will not attend the very poor in this country any more than they do in Austria (*vide* Dr. Walker's Paper), and it is this class for whom it is loudly asserted that they are "the people for whom we are trying to obtain legislation." If midwives desire to work amongst this class, *Nursing Notes* (Nov. 1st, 1894) points out fields now open, and there is nothing to prevent their entrance.—Your obedient servant,

Hatfield.

LOVELL DRAGE, M.D.

BRINKBURN.

DARLINGTON.

January 19, 1895.

SIR.

My attention has been drawn to a paragraph in your paper of January 12th in which you speak of 4 members of the Select Committee on the Registration of Midwives and having taken a part in it "whose minds were made up" and as I am mentioned as one of the 4 I beg to protest against such a remark as implying we were incapable by reason of prejudice of giving a fair judgment upon evidence brought before us, which is I think a remark you had not right to make reflecting as it does upon a Parliamentary Committee, I hope you will see you have been in error

Yours truly

H. FELL PEASE.

[Mr. Fell Pease, M.P., does not, and cannot, deny the absolute accuracy of our facts. The "Bill to provide for the Registration of Midwives," "printed by Order of the House of Commons on July 18, 1890," is officially stated to have been "prepared and brought in by Mr. Fell Pease" and others. Surely Mr. Fell Pease does not desire it to be believed that he so gravely departed from the custom of Parliament as to "prepare and bring in a Bill" on a novel subject concerning which he himself had *not* "made up his mind"? But, if he had "made up his mind" as to the need for Midwives' legislation in 1890—as in justice to him we are bound to conclude was the case—then we hold that his selection as Chairman of the Select Committee, appointed in 1893, to consider the advisability of legislation, naturally deprived the Report which he drew up in favour of legislation, of the great weight which unbiased judgments always carry. We have only stated facts which it is quite impossible to controvert; so that wherein our "error" consists, we have still to learn, and can only hope that our correspondent will be good enough to enlighten us.—ED.]

THE UN-PROFESSIONAL AMONG NURSES,

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I think there must be many in our ranks, holding positions of varied responsibility, who will re-echo Miss Landale's lament concerning the lack of *esprit de corps*

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