

seems to be quite possible, the sooner the latter arouse themselves and repudiate all responsibility for, and all connection with, midwives, the better will it be for their own self-respect and public credit. The women who, after scrambling through perhaps, at the most, a three months' course of midwifery instruction, obtain a portentous document termed a "diploma," as the outward and visible concealment of their inward and absolute ignorance, are often as reckless as they are inexperienced. It is, therefore, essential that the Nursing profession should move in its own defence and protection against these relics of Gampdom, and so far as possible prevent them being mistaken by the public for trained Nurses who have passed through an arduous course of three years' Hospital work.

It will be observed with interest that, on the occasion to which we have already referred, the question was asked in the House of Commons "Whether the Government were prepared to bring in a Bill to register duly qualified Nurses to whom certificates to act as midwives might be granted?" and that the official reply was that Sir Walter Foster "was not aware that there was any such intention."

It has been asserted that a Bill for the Registration of Midwives is to be introduced into the House of Commons this session, but it is quite certain that the Government already has its hands too full of more important matters to be able to undertake to deal with such a thorny question, as legislation for midwives has hitherto proved to be. It is, however, a question which we offer for the consideration of our readers, without at the present moment expressing any opinion of our own upon the subject, as to whether it has not become essential for the safety and credit of the Nursing profession that a Bill for the Registration of Nurses should be introduced as soon as possible into the House of Commons. Such a Bill might well provide for certificates of efficiency to be granted by a competent authority to trained Nurses who have acquired a sufficient knowledge of midwifery to be able to attend on lying-in cases under the direct supervision and control of medical practitioners.

We would place especial emphasis upon this last condition, because it appears to us to be the only safe course for the public, and consequently the course which will sooner or later be enforced. The wonderful results which have been in recent years attained in midwifery work in this country have undoubtedly arisen from the more scientific manner in which it is now practised. This has been gained by the fact that "wise women" and ignorant amateurs have given place to skilled medical practitioners in this most important department of work. Every year

now a larger number of well-trained Nurses are adopting this branch of their calling, and acting, as they do, under the direction of medical men, save the latter much arduous watching and waste of valuable time. At the same time they are able to carry out the antiseptic precautions upon which stress was laid in the excellent Lecture which we published last week, and which is undoubtedly of such cardinal importance to the recovery of the patient. From information upon which we can thoroughly rely, we are led to the conclusion that the class of Obstetric Nurses now being formed to meet an undeniable demand will gradually absorb all the midwifery work amongst the poor. Whether as District Nurses or as the assistants of medical men, especially in poor urban, and generally in rural, neighbourhoods, we believe the Obstetric Nurse has a great field of usefulness before her.

We have often expressed our opinion that midwives, as independent practitioners, are not only an obsolete, but a dangerous class, and that legislation with the object of perpetuating their existence must be fraught with the gravest dangers to the public and with detriment to the practice of midwifery. But hitherto the question has not so closely affected trained Nurses as it seems probable will be the case in the future. And, at any rate, it is earnestly to be hoped that the public will not continue to mistake the one class of workers for the other, and to ascribe to the Nursing profession all the damage and discredit which midwives cause.

BLESSED BIDEFORD.

AN old adage tells us that those are really "blessed who expect but little" in this world "because it is blessed little they'll get." And the proverb recurs forcibly to our minds in connection with an advertisement recently issued by the Guardians of the Bideford Union for a Workhouse Nurse. They offer twenty pounds a year for a person who "understands midwifery" and who is expected also "to make herself generally useful under the direction of the Board of Guardians and the Matron." There is a delightful uncertainty about the latter condition which may mean that in the opinion of the Guardians a woman who "understands" midwifery is generally not useful, a conclusion, by the way, in which a good many medical practitioners will join. Or perhaps it may mean that the Guardians desire their "nurse" to undertake duties which she does not "understand." What the Guardians of Bideford expect to get for £20 a year in this direction is certainly not at first sight obvious, because they also express a desire that applicants should state their present occupation; from which it may be gathered that they imagine that women willing to be Nurses in Bideford are usually engaged elsewhere in some other occupation. At any rate, the Guardians of Bideford according to the ancient proverb should be truly blessed for they certainly do not require much, so far as nursing goes; and we earnestly hope they may not be disappointed.

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