

Branch is calculated to meet all present difficulties as far as Midwifery Nurses or Midwives are concerned, and that, as far as other Nurses go, no difficulty exists."

The only comment which we would at present make upon this, is that it is impossible to believe that the British Medical Association will so completely reverse the unanimous decision, at which it arrived last year, as to accept the terms of this motion.

The question of Obstetric Nurses will be brought before the meeting also upon the Report of the Parliamentary Bills' Committee of the Association, wherein a number of most important points are opened up, to which it will be necessary that we should devote—as other demands upon our space permit—the fullest consideration. Our readers may remember that, some five years ago, it was first suggested in this Journal that the women usually designated as Midwives—and who work irreparable injury to the poor by their carelessness and ignorance—should be practically abolished, their places being taken by well-trained Nurses, who should also have passed through a course of instruction in Midwifery, and who should work entirely under the supervision and control of medical practitioners. Little by little, this important suggestion has grown in favour with medical men, and it is in the highest degree gratifying to us to observe that all who are opposed to Midwives as a separate class, and all who disapprove of these women being recognised as independent practitioners, are now accepting the suggestion that they should be replaced by Obstetric Nurses.

This has been especially shown by events which have occurred during the past month. Leading members of the British Medical Association were for years the warmest advocates of the registration of Midwives. When they were finally overborne last year by the overwhelming disapproval of their policy expressed by their profession, they attempted to outflank their opponents by suggesting the creation and legal registration of a special class, to be termed "Midwifery Nurses." The plausible subterfuge, however, imposed upon comparatively few persons, and it became speedily recognised that the difference between the "Midwifery Nurse" and the "Midwife" pure and simple, was precisely that which existed between Tweedledum and Tweedledee. So, at the meeting of the Metropolitan Counties' Branch, recently held

to consider this question, it was resolved "as a mere matter of honesty," that the words "Midwifery Nurses" in the draft Bill before the meeting should be changed into the word "Midwives," because it was apparent to everyone that this was the precise meaning of the new term. Then the meeting—consistently with its former declarations on the subject—declined to waste any further time over a measure proposing legislation for Midwives. This fact will doubtless have its due weight with the meeting at Carlisle, and the members there present will probably decline to be deluded into supporting a principle which they have emphatically condemned, merely because it is called by a different name.

But it is interesting to observe that the Parliamentary Bills' Committee of the British Medical Association, after the meeting of the Metropolitan Counties' Branch to which we have alluded, determined to re-christen its measure the "Obstetric Nurses' Bill," thereby accepting and endorsing, in the most significant manner, the suggestion emanating from this Journal. As if to emphasise the importance of this trend of professional opinion, Dr. Rentoul, who has earned the gratitude of his profession by his determined and energetic opposition to Midwives, has also drafted a separate Bill for the Registration of Obstetric Nurses, to which we must devote considerable attention at an early date. But, so far as the principle of the measure is concerned—the attempt to legislate for one particular section of a large class of women workers—we would appeal to Dr. Rentoul to reconsider his proposal. We would point out to him that it has never been suggested to legislate for physicians apart from surgeons, or for obstetricians apart from other branches of the medical profession; but that the Medical Acts dealt with the education, the discipline, and the *status* of all medical men in whatever branch of their calling they might be individually engaged. So, as a matter of common-sense, consistency, and statesmanship, we have always argued that the Nursing profession must be dealt with, not in little bits, but as a coherent whole; and that it would be as futile as it would be unwise to legislate for any one section of it independent of the others. Such an attempt would inevitably end by increasing a confusion which is already sufficiently great; and, as we shall hereafter show, it would tend more to the detriment of medical men than even to that of the Nursing profession.

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