

In the hospital of the American Orphan Asylum of Havana many little children are slowly dying. Waiting for the intervention of a friendly power, that all of them still rely upon, the reconcentrados die by hundreds. In Matanzas alone 1,200 died in November, 1,200 in December, 700 in January, and 500 in February, the number of deaths decreasing, it is stated, only because the population is being exterminated.

One American woman, who has just written from Havana, says: "If the mothers in the United States could see the misery in the faces here the American nation would be compelled to act at once."

One picture given is that of a little girl who died of starvation. The nurses could not save this child, nor yet will they the second one, a boy, who lies on his cot, a rack of bones, the big eyes and shining hair the only human looking things about him. These pictures remind one of Gustave Doré's illustrations of Dante's "Inferno."

The third picture shows a Cuban nurse ministering to a child in the same hospital. This little creature is slowly recovering from the effects of starvation, and the tiny negro in the next cot is even further advanced toward convalescence.

And so the work goes on with heartrending slowness. In the other hospitals men and women are dying, too, in no less dreadful want, and the distress that is felt in the country places where no help can be had is beyond description. It is reported that since the *Maine* disaster one thousand deaths a day have been taking place within the Spanish lines, not counting those occurring in the hospitals.

We regret that we are unable to reproduce the pictures referred to, but they are of the most heart-rending description.

The Midwives' Question.

It has often been a source of wonder to us why the people who actively support the registration of midwives do not upon the same principle as actively support the registration of trained nurses. The point of view of one important section of the community—namely, medical women,—is, we understand, that midwives, as at present existing, constitute a menace to the public health and safety which unskilled and uncontrolled nurses do not. We do not understand the logic of this argument, for it appears to us that both are equally dangerous, or, at least, that the numbers of unskilled and uncontrolled women who at pre-

sent adopt the name, the distinctive dress, and demand the pay, of fully qualified nurses are an element of public danger which requires reform, a fact which we believe the public will recognise when they realise, as they are beginning to realise, that they are charged the fees commanded by skilled labour for unskilled work, and that they have no guarantee of even the respectability of the women whom they admit into the innermost shrine of their domestic privacy.

That midwives, or, rather, the persons who pose as midwives, constitute a menace to the public health we are fully aware, and we do not wonder that women skilled and competent to undertake midwifery demand to be dissociated from the ignorant and unscrupulous. For, it must be remembered, that any woman, who has never seen a case of midwifery, may, if occasion arises—if she desires to make money, that is to say—put a plate stating that she is a midwife upon her door, and act in this capacity to the discredit of the whole calling. Medical practitioners have seen the danger and discredit likely to arise from a similar condition in their own profession, they will not meet quacks in consultation, they have demanded and obtained registration, and they have the power of removing from their register those who bring discredit upon their profession; but trained midwives are obliged to be associated with the totally ignorant and uneducated, and trained nurses must work side by side with, and command the same fees as, totally untrained women. As an instance of the type of woman who goes private nursing we may mention a fact narrated to us by a registered nurse. She was on opposite duty on a critical case with a "nurse" of the untrained type, and as the temperature of the patient as chronicled by this person appeared to her somewhat erratic, she inquired of her colleague where she was in the habit of taking the temperature. The answer she received was, "I always take my temperatures in the axis."

The danger to the public from a nurse of this type, the wholesale robbery entailed in charging full fees for such untrained services, is a matter which certainly calls for reform, the public have the right to be protected from such a condition, and we have no doubt that eventually they will demand it.

It is a matter of some surprise that amongst the medical women, who have so recently themselves attained professional status, that it might be expected that they would appreciate the struggles of a younger and kindred profession, and lend them a helping hand, not one has so far publicly come forward to help trained nurses in their demand for registration. Medical women, in common with all medical practitioners, owe much to trained nurses, for it is incontestable that the most brilliant operation may be futile if the

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)