

## Professional Review.

### "TRANSACTIONS OF THE MIDWIVES' SOCIETY."

WE have received from the Secretary of the Midwives' Society, Manchester, a copy of its first report, which we have read with considerable interest. The objects of the Society are excellent, and it is with pleasure that we see an Association formed by midwives for the protection of their own interests. The Society was inaugurated at a Conference of Midwives, held at Gorton, near Manchester, on August 10th, 1897, "for mutual improvement in professional knowledge, for mutual assistance in professional duties, and for the promotion of amicable feelings amongst the members." The subsequent elaboration of these objects, which we have not space to give *in extenso*, may be found in the report which is printed for the Society by Messrs. E. J. Sproston, 29, Hyde Road, West Gorton, price 2/6.

We are glad to observe that the Midwives' Society objects vigorously to the Bill at present before Parliament for the Compulsory Registration of Midwives, we have long wondered, and openly expressed our astonishment, that midwives are content to further the progress of a Bill in which they are to be placed under the control of a so-called "Midwives' Board," consisting of twelve medical practitioners. Is any other class of workers willing to be controlled, and governed by another profession, and one, moreover, whose professional and monetary instincts are diametrically opposed to those of the persons they govern? The thing is preposterous, and if midwives further and support this Bill, depriving themselves of all control in their professional affairs, our opinion is that they deserve, what will assuredly be their portion, should the Bill become law. The Midwives' Society have resolved "That the Bill is not truly representative of the interests of trained midwives and the public, and must be opposed," and the opposition of three members having taken the practical form of offering to proceed to London at their own expense on behalf of the Society, it was resolved "That a deputation be formed, consisting of the said three midwives, to interview various Members of Parliament as early as can be made convenient, and otherwise attend to the real advancement of the Midwives' cause." We thoroughly appreciate the efforts of the Society to organise midwives for their own protection and advancement.

Having expressed our sympathy with the objects of the Society, we trust it will be taken in good part when we say that we hope the members will not allow their zeal to run away with their discretion. We think that some of the papers published in the report treat of subjects which are quite outside a midwife's province, and which it will harm their Society to deal with. These things to which we must take exception, however, are the opinions expressed by individuals, not the rule of the Society. We hope that in the near future the Society will lay down a wise and discreet code of professional ethics for its members, so that the support of midwives, who work on sober lines, may not be alienated from it. With the aspirations of the Society for the formation of classes in advanced midwifery, under competent physicians, we are in cordial sympathy, they would be specially valuable to

midwives whose work lies in country districts, and to those likely to go abroad, but, until it is within the power of midwives to obtain such instruction we do not think they should undertake the most responsible duty of attending cases of abnormal labour. They do not at present possess the necessary qualifications, and though no doubt, there are midwives who by wide experience, and natural aptitude, possess a knowledge which would enable them to acquit themselves with credit under most difficult circumstances, it is the many, not the few, who must be considered, and undoubtedly the knowledge attained in three months—the usual period of training in a Lying-in Hospital—does not entitle them to attend any but normal cases.

## Our Foreign Letter.

BY HOLLANDIA.

(Continued from page 299.)

I have as yet not spoken of devotion, the nursing of the sick cannot do without it—no profession can, that must be fulfilled faithfully, and is there any which should not be so? Sick nursing, however, demands a larger amount of devotion than any other profession, because the lack of it will be most painfully felt by suffering and helpless creatures, thrown entirely upon the mercy of others. The fourth of my conclusions: the nursing service in our hospitals, our lunatic asylums, and in district nursing ought to be regulated in such a way that the health of the nurses is not injured by it," I should like to explain a little further. The Board of the hospital, in which the pupil nurse receives her training, is not only bound to give her the opportunity of being taught in the art of nursing, but also to take care, that her bodily and mental health are not injured by too much work. The very praiseworthy desire of the nurse, to exert her utmost strength, to devote herself entirely to the task she has chosen, may not be abused by the Board by asking so much of her activity and zeal at ordinary times, when no epidemic is prevailing, that she feels over-worked and overstrained. Therefore the superintendence of the hospital should be trusted to a medical man, with a large medical experience, a person, fully competent to judge of the bodily state of the nurses and to put each of them in the right place, in those branches of the nursing work that are most fit for their individual disposition, or for which they may become suited. The amount of work, done by a nurse, can only be judged rightly by a medical superintendent, and by his invaluable helpmeet, the Matron, both being informed by trustworthy head-nurses. The Matron must be thoroughly experienced herself in the practice of nursing. This she cannot perform by running, in a few months, through a training course in the art of nursing, but only by following a complete series of lessons in practical and theoretical attendance upon the sick. Practice and theory must keep each other in balance.

A due care for the nursing staff demands much time and much devotion on the part of the medical superintendent and the Matron. I lay great stress upon the necessity of the superintendent being more especially a medical man. Not only in large hospitals, but also in smaller similar institutions, the medical superintendent must be effectually assisted in all financial and domestic matters by an adjunct-manager, a well-bred and educated person.

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