

Nursing Echoes.

* * *All communications must be duly authenticated with name and address, not for publication, but as evidence of good faith, and should be addressed to the Editor, 20, Upper Wimpole Street, W.*



CHRISTMAS has been observed with the usual festivities in most of the hospitals, and many patients are the happier and the richer for the gladness which has been infused into their dull lives by the efforts of their nurses at this season. It is difficult to realize what festivities in the midst of the refinements and niceties of life must mean to men and

women whose surroundings are usually of the most prosaic and dull description. There is nothing which strikes one so painfully in the lives of the poor as the utter absence of all beauty—the dull level of monotony. Their crude efforts at decoration are so pitiful as often to provoke a smile, but the poverty, and the lack of education, which are at the root of them should rather cause a sigh on the part of those who are daily surrounded by things beautiful both in art and nature and to whom the right direction of natural tastes has opened vistas of delight unknown to their less favoured neighbours.

Think, for instance, what it must be to a man who is accustomed to carry his dinner in a handkerchief, and to eat it behind a hedge, or in the corner of a workshop, to have his Christmas dinner served in a ward made beautiful with lovely flowers, and to be waited on by soft-voiced nurses trim and dainty in their speckless uniforms. It is a memory which will abide with him for long, and we welcome the advent of Christmas as an occasion for infusing a gleam of colour into the dull gray lives of many a hard worker who is so busy in securing the necessities that he has no time to think of, or provide, the beautiful things which make life pleasant.

A LETTER which has been influentially signed has been forwarded to the Right Honourable Henry Chaplin, President of the Local Government Board, urging him to use the influence of his Department to ensure the question of the "legal regulation and control" of midwives being dealt with as a Government measure during the ensuing session, as there seems little chance of its receiving attention as a private member's bill. We notice that though the letter is signed by Lady Balfour of Burleigh, the President of the Association for Promoting Compulsory Registration of Midwives, it does not contain any reference to registration, but merely to legal regulation and

control. We are fully aware that those ladies and gentlemen who have signed this letter are actuated by the best of motives, and that they hope by means of the proposed bill to advance the interests of midwives, but we hope that they will realize what would be the effect upon the class for which they desire legislation if instead of the legislation which was originally contemplated midwives are merely granted a yearly license, revokable upon the representation of medical men. It is easy to see that in this case the position of midwives would be in no way improved. It would be a case of the employed absolutely at the mercy of the employer, and competing with him, and it is obvious that the more successful a midwife became in the practice of her craft the more unwelcome she might be to the medical practitioners of the neighbourhood in which she resided. We do not, therefore, think that the interests of midwives would be advanced, but rather that they would be injured, by legislation on these lines.

WE have never been able to support this movement for the Registration of Midwives, because we consider that only two courses are open to a woman who desires to practise midwifery. Either to become a registered medical practitioner, or to work under a medical practitioner as a fully qualified nurse. It is obvious that the work of midwives must always be subordinate to that of the medical practitioner, because, even if they hold the certificate of the London Obstetrical Society—and there is at present no higher examination for midwives than that of this Society—they are only competent to attend cases of natural labour. They cannot, therefore, assume the position of independent practitioners, because they are not qualified to fill it.

THE right position of a woman, not a medical practitioner, who practises midwifery, to adopt is, in our opinion, that of an obstetric nurse, and legislation for obstetric nurses involves legislation for nurses generally. We therefore desire to see the promotion of a bill for the registration of medical, surgical, and obstetric nurses, and we think that the General Medical Council would do well to promote legislation on these scientific lines instead of assenting to legislation for specialists, a proceeding which it utterly repudiates in relation to its own profession.

AT a recent meeting of the Chelsea Board of Guardians the circular letter from the Runcorn Guardians to which we referred last week was read with the following resolution:—"That, in view of the increased difficulty of Boards of Guardians to obtain suitable nurses for their Workhouse Infirmary, the Local Government Board be asked to consider the advisability of starting institutions

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)