

The Whole "Nursing Question."

AT a recent meeting of the Midwives' Society held in The New Manchester Young Women's Christian Institute, Manchester, at which Mrs. Currie, the President, presided, the Midwives' Bill of 1899 was read at length, and discussed clause by clause, and we learn "that without a single voice being raised on behalf of the Bill it was decided that it be opposed by all means within our power, as a grossly unfair and unprecedented measure, prejudicial to the true interests of midwives and detrimental to those of the public."

THE Midwives' Society of Manchester is strongly opposed to the concessions made by the Midwives' Institute in London, and the Midwives' Bill Committee, in discarding the principle of Registration of Midwives, and substituting licensing at the instigation of the General Medical Council.

OUR objection to the Midwives' Bill of 1899 is based on the fact that if it becomes law, this class of women workers would be deprived of all personal liberty and rights, and on that ground alone it should be fought against by every woman in the kingdom—such restrictive and penal legislation would not only injure midwives, but establish a precedent for the further economic enslavement of women as a class. The whole tone of the General Medical Council in relation to this question is very offensive, and would lead the public to imagine that "midwife" was synonymous for "criminal," and that these dangerous female persons must be legislated for, and exist only, by "ticket of leave."

THE General Medical Council has a plain duty to the public on the Midwife question—quite irrespective of fees—a duty which it has neglected in the past and will continue to ignore in the future, unless compelled to observe it by strong expressions of public opinion. Trained Nurses, including efficiently trained obstetric nurses, have a right to legal status, by State Registration, and a Bill to effect this reform and thus protect the public from the legion of harpies, now preying upon it, in the guise of "trained nurses," is urgently necessary. The General Medical Council is well aware of the scandalous manner in which the public is at present victimised by these immoral women, and yet its members are bitterly opposed to any measure of justice either to nurses or the public on this question. They say, "Trained nurses shall not have legal status"! Very well! Then the public must be aroused to the dangers of their present defenceless position, and they must demand protection from the prostitute, the thief, and the blackmailer,

who are under existing arrangements insinuated into their homes in "nurses' uniform." The whole matter is a notorious scandal, and the conscientious nurse, and helpless public, must join hands and demand the justice and reform, which it is the duty of the General Medical Council and other medical bodies to obtain for them, but which for years they have used all their powers to prevent. For instance, last year more than eighty members of Parliament agreed to vote for a Parliamentary inquiry into the whole "Nursing Question," but the greatest pressure was brought to bear by some well known medical men to prevent any such inquiry. Of course, the matter is only postponed, however!

Elementary Justice.

ONCE more the good name of trained nurses has been dragged in the mire during the trial of Jane White for the murder of Alice Birmingham by the performance of an illegal operation. "Charge against a nurse," makes an effective newspaper heading no doubt, but at the same time it is intolerable that trained nurses should be credited with all the crimes which women who adopt their name and their dress, without a tittle of right to either, commit. The circumstances under which Jane White was charged with murder are now well known. In consequence of the death of Alice Birmingham, Mrs. Nelson, who had nursed her on a previous occasion, and who, having accompanied the deceased woman to Jane White's house in the Kingsland Road, communicated her suspicions, as to the business carried on by this woman, to the police. Jane White was accordingly arrested, and the body of the deceased woman was exhumed, the opinion of medical experts being that there were clear indications of an internal injury which caused death. The accused woman was therefore tried for murder and eventually condemned to death, but has now been reprieved. It is to be hoped that some alteration will be made in the law relating to cases of this nature. In the event of an accused person being found guilty of having caused death by an illegal operation the judge has no option, but is compelled to pass the death sentence. Such a sentence is, however, a solemn mockery, for no one supposes that it will be carried out, and the sooner some alteration in the law is made the better.

When will trained nurses insist upon being dissociated from women of the White description? There is little doubt that public opinion would go with them in such a demand, both as a matter of elementary justice to nurses, and also of protection for themselves. When a medical man was accused of a similar crime to that of Jane White it was promptly pointed out that he had been removed from the Medical Register. Nurses have no such protection.

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