

Medical Council, and I look in vain in "Nursing Notes," the organ of the Midwives' Institute, which has always supported the Bill, for any indication of the seriousness of the situation. In refraining from placing before those midwives who look to it for guidance a plain statement of the case at the present crisis it appears to me to lack completely a sense of the public and professional responsibility which it has assumed.

With regard to the position adopted by the General Medical Council I am at one with it in thinking that a midwife, as such, has no locus standi, and that she must either be a qualified medical practitioner or a trained nurse, but the General Medical Council appears in the highest degree illogical in supporting legislation for one class of nurses when it has, in connection with its own profession, determinately set its face against legislation for specialists. The General Medical Council would be doing good service if it brought before the Privy Council the need of the introduction of a Bill for the Registration of Medical, Surgical and Obstetric Nurses, but unhappily it has not taken this wise course, and the internal condition of its own affairs, as evidenced by the controversy which is being so ably conducted by Mr. Victor Horsley at the present time, does not inspire one with the hope that it will conduct the business of a subordinate profession with ability, or that midwives will receive generous treatment or even justice at its hands.

A BILL TO PROMOTE THE BETTER TRAINING OF MIDWIVES AND TO REGULATE THEIR PRACTICE.

BE it enacted by the Queen's most Excellent Majesty, by and with the advice and consent of the Lords Spiritual and Temporal, and Commons, in this present Parliament assembled, and by the authority of the same, as follows :

1. SHORT TITLE.—This Act may for all purposes be cited as *the Midwives Act, 1899.*

2. DEFINITIONS.—In this Act The term "midwife" means a woman who undertakes for gain to attend women in childbirth.

"Midwives Roll" means a roll of midwives kept in pursuance of this Act.

"Central Midwives Board" means the Board constituted under this Act for the purpose of carrying out the provisions of this Act.

The term "midwife" is defined to mean "a woman who undertakes for gain to attend women in child-birth." This is not retrospective, but is the definition of the term as used in the Act. No guarantee of competence, therefore, is suggested as requisite before permission is given to adopt the name of midwife.

3. LICENSING.—(1) From and after the first day of January one thousand nine hundred, no woman shall be entitled to take or use the name or title of midwife (either alone or in combination with any other word or words) or any name, title, addition, or description implying that she is licensed under this Act, or is qualified to act as a midwife, unless she be licensed under this Act.

(2) Any woman who, after the first day of January one thousand nine hundred, not being licensed under this Act, shall take or use the name of midwife or any other such name, title, addition, or description as aforesaid, or shall habitually and for gain attend women in childbirth, shall be liable on summary conviction to a fine not exceeding five pounds.

(3) No woman shall be licensed under this Act, until she has complied with the rules and regulations to be laid down in pursuance of the terms of this Act.

(4) The licence under this Act shall not confer upon any woman any right or title to be registered under the Medical Acts or to assume any name, title, or designation implying that she is by law recognised as a medical practitioner, or that she is qualified to grant any medical certificate.

It is now proposed that a woman must be licensed under the Act before being permitted to use the title of Midwife. The substitution of annual licensing, for Registration is most deplorable. As a registered midwife a woman would possess legal status, and once on the Register she could only be removed for grave misdemeanour or incompetency, but, with an annual license, she is dependent entirely upon the pleasure of the Midwives Board, who may at any time refuse to renew her license, and she will then be deprived of her means of livelihood. In taking out a license, therefore, a midwife must understand that she places herself entirely in the power of a Board composed of medical practitioners, and representatives of the Privy Council, a Board composed, that is to say, of the very persons with whom she is necessarily brought into commercial competition, and upon which no provision is made for direct representation of midwives. She has, in fact, no voice in the organization and government of her calling, but places herself unreservedly at the mercy of another profession whose interests are frequently antagonistic to her own.

It is impossible to believe that well educated and efficient midwives, will place themselves in such a false position. The probability is therefore that, if this Act becomes law that the most thoughtful and skilful midwives will not take out licenses. Their services, which are at present of immense value, and highly appreciated by working class women, will be thus lost to them, and the practice of midwifery will fall for the most part into the hands of unskilled and illiterate women, to the great loss of those who at present avail themselves of the services of skilled midwives.

(To be continued).

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