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Editorial.

OBSTETRIC NURSING.

EVENTS are moving so rapidly in the nursing world that before very long some decision must be taken concerning both the curriculum of training to be given to Obstetric Nurses and also the best methods by which such special education can be obtained. It is generally felt that training in this branch of work is essential before a nurse can be considered to be thoroughly educated in her technical duties; and those who hold this view point with much force to the fact that no medical practitioner can now be registered by law unless he has obtained a diploma in Medicine, Surgery, and Obstetrics. The days, in fact, when a doctor could be a physician, a surgeon, or an accoucheur are gone for ever; and no one is now recognized as fit to practise the healing art unless he is qualified in every department. So, in like manner it is held that Obstetric Nursing is no mere specialty, but an integral part of the education of a thoroughly trained nurse, and that, in fact, it is the midwife who is an anachronism, and a survival of the unfit. With this view we are thoroughly in accord, but at the same time we recognise the great practical

difficulties with which the question bristles. First and foremost, there is the essential difficulty of obtaining sufficient material for training in this branch. The great nursing schools have no obstetric wards—all their midwifery work being amongst the outside population—and we fully realise the impossibility of utilising any extern work for training nurses on the Hospital staff. It is, in fact, essential that nurses to be trained in obstetric work must go through a regular course of tuition in special lying-in wards. The comparatively small number of beds possessed by the lying-in hospitals naturally limit the number of possible probationers; but there is an immense field, and one which has hitherto been hardly touched, for clinical instruction in the lying-in wards of the workhouse infirmaries. And, briefly, we would suggest that, for the purposes of obstetric training, these Institutions should be affiliated to the training schools, and that each probationer at the latter should be sent as a regular part of her curriculum, say, for a three months' course in obstetric nursing, under the Poor Law service. The benefits to everyone concerned would be incalculable, and the system might do much to solve more than one difficult problem.

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