

The Royal British Nurses' Association and the Midwives' Institute.

Rumours of internecine warfare in the Council of the R.B.N.A. have been common gossip for some weeks past—all along, as the man in the street would say, of the Midwives' Bill. The official organs of the Association and the Midwives' Institute are now to hand, and one cannot help smiling at the ingenuous surprise of the latter at the murky methods of business employed by the hon. officers of the R.B.N.A. The Midwives' Institute does not know its Fardon and his colleagues. We do. We have worked with them.

The whole shady story is admirably set out in this month's *Nursing Notes*. To us it is an old, old story, infinitely stale and profitless. Same old professional jealousy, same old private meetings, same old perversion of resolutions, same old nobbling of letters, same old unjust ruling from the chair (Sir James Crichton Browne), same old garbled account in the *Nurses' Journal*, same old double-shuffle by the powers that be, and the same old fatuity on the part of their nominees and dupes—in a word, the same old R.B.N.A. as all the world knows it. Its only use, a wholesome warning what to avoid to nurses all the world over.

To be brief, Mr. Fardon, without the consent of the members themselves, had a "List of Nurse Members who have also obtained certificates of special training as Midwives" inserted in the Roll of Members of the R.B.N.A., although the Royal Charter gives no such power to the Royal British Nurses' Association.

Then the Midwives' Bill comes along, and under Sub-section 2, Clause 1, provides that, whatever nursing qualifications a woman may hold, her midwifery qualifications can only be registered by the Central Midwives' Board; and quite right too. Hence, under the Act, Mr. Fardon's List of Midwives will find themselves liable to a penalty of five pounds, should their midwifery qualifications be published separately in the Nurses' Roll. The matter is quite simple: away with Mr. Fardon's list!

Now, like all small-minded persons entrusted with autocratic authority, Mr. Fardon's *amour propre* is injured by this simple method of settling the question; so he proposes, and has carried by his nominated Council, a resolution to prevent midwives holding the certificate of the London Obstetrical Society being eligible, by statutory right, to registration by the Central Midwives' Board, and, further, he invites the Association to fight this question in the House of Lords.

Then uprises Dr. Griffiths, and proposes a conference before taking action, and it is agreed that representatives of the London Obstetrical Society

and the Midwives' Institute shall be invited to confer. Trusting Council! A conference of specially-invited persons *is* held in Mr. Langton's private house, but the two Societies are not *communicated with*, and the conference report is brought up by Mr. Fardon at a special Council meeting. Then again uprises Dr. Griffiths and asks what steps have been taken to carry out the conference resolved on at the last meeting, which simple question naturally provokes a hotly partisan discussion, Miss Thorold getting amazingly excited in defence of Mr. Fardon's course of action. Of course Sir James Crichton Browne ruled that the conference had been duly held in accordance with the decision of the previous meeting, but, as we have done upon numerous occasions, Dr. Griffiths refused to accept the ruling of the chair, and moved "That until the conference agreed to at the last meeting is regularly summoned and has been reported to the General Council the meeting declines to proceed further with the discussion of the subject on which it is summoned." This resolution was seconded by Mr. Arthur Barker, and, of course, lost; and considering that out of twenty-three persons present, half that number were from the Middlesex Hospital, the Chartered Nurses' Society, and hon. officers, and all present had been nominated by Mr. Fardon, it was not surprising that the official policy was triumphant by ten to six.

But more remains to tell. The Midwives' Institute, through its President, addressed a letter to the "Chairman of Council of the R.B.N.A.," wanting to know "why a representative of the Institute had not been invited to attend the conference called to consider a clause in the Midwives' Bill." *This letter was withheld from the Council by the Chairman* (Sir James Crichton Browne), and an ambiguous reply sent by Miss Leigh, the Secretary.

Like *Nursing Notes*; we are not surprised to learn that, on ascertaining the fact that the R.B.N.A. intended to promote an amendment in the House of Lords to throw out the certificate of the London Obstetrical Society as a qualification for registration, a meeting of all those interested in the training and employment of midwives was at once summoned. And a most influential meeting it was—medical men and matrons and nurses and midwives—at which a strong resolution was proposed by Dr. Champneys, and, naturally with much pleasure, seconded by Dr. Griffiths, pledging those present to oppose the action of the R.B.N.A. in the Lords; and, moreover, in order to carry the resolution into effect a memorandum was most influentially signed and forwarded to members of the House of Lords, praying that the amendment from the R.B.N.A. might be rejected. And it was.

We have warned Mr. Fardon all along that his Midwives' List is absurd. It is no good wriggling any more; it must be deleted from the Roll.

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