

question as it affects the much larger number of women who attend both to mother and child, who, in fact, combine the duties of the Midwife with that of the Monthly Nurse. It must be granted that at present the great majority of these—such, for example, as those whose work we described last week—have no professional feeling to guide or control them, and no definite standard of knowledge to which they must attain.

Now, Registration will probably change this state of affairs entirely. For the first time there will be established a definite means whereby the public can discover, with certainty and ease, who are competent Midwives, and where they are located. There is no doubt that, on the one hand, the public will constantly consult the Register for this information; and, on the other, that it will be the first object of better-class workers to obtain enrolment of their names thereon. For the first time, therefore, a definite standard of professional knowledge will become recognised as a necessity both by Midwives and by the public at large.

Everyone is aware of the large amount of good which has been done in this direction by the institution of examinations and the bestowal of diplomas by various obstetrical bodies. The focussing of the results which have already been, or in the future may be, obtained by these examinations upon one point—the Register of Midwives to wit—must therefore have a proportionately wide and valuable effect. From the large cities to the smaller towns, and thence slowly perhaps, but surely, the knowledge of Registration will inevitably spread to every hamlet and village in the land; by sheer force of public opinion and example compelling Midwives in the future to attain to its essential standard of professional acquirements; and thereby also fulfilling the still higher functions of increasing their usefulness to others, and greater cohesion and *esprit de corps* amongst themselves; making the general public understand that a woman who undertakes the grave and responsible duties of the Midwife should, as a matter of necessity, first obtain some special knowledge and practical insight into the nature of the work, and that all those who are Registered have become so because they have proved to a competent and impartial professional body that they do possess an adequate amount of such experience.

But now arise the crucial questions as to the manner in which the necessary knowledge and skill is to be obtained by the dwellers in country villages, and also in what manner such can be Registered. The first is a problem of no small difficulty, for it must be remembered that the essential necessity is that each village shall be provided with a Midwife who is known and trusted personally. In other words, one of the inhabitants

should somehow be trained to perform the duties. The pay is too poor, the distances too great, and the work too irregular to be sufficiently profitable to induce a stranger to set up in any village centre. It is now a common and well-known custom for some benevolent and wealthy resident—perhaps shocked by the tales of suffering and danger caused in the neighbourhood by incompetent assistance in childbirth—to send one of the villagers, who possesses a natural inclination for the work, to some Lying-in-Hospital for training for a month or so.

Without saying one word against the many good results of the smattering of knowledge thus obtained, there can be no doubt that at best it is only superficial, and in many instances affords only that "little knowledge" which is such a dangerous thing. It is, however, a step in the right direction, and unless we greatly mistake, the first effect of Registration will be simply to strengthen and widen the step. Because so soon as a definite standard of experience is requisite for enrolment upon the Register, the Lord or Lady Bountifuls will doubtless, as educated people recognising the value of the measure, make the necessary provision for their *protégées* to attain that amount of knowledge, in order that their people may be supplied with an attendant of equal professional standing to that of the Midwives in the surrounding district. In these days of instantaneous inter-communication, we have no doubt that the news that one village possessed a Registered Midwife would soon lead to the provision of similarly skilled workers in every neighbouring hamlet.

The next difficulty to be solved is as to the means whereby all these thousands of women are in the future to obtain the training requisite to secure Registration. Local benevolence, aided perhaps by Her Majesty's Nursing Institution, will, we doubt not, supply the pecuniary part. And as to the places of training, we would make a bold surmise. Throughout the Kingdom there are large Poor Law Infirmaries, which would furnish illimitable material for instruction in Nursing and Midwifery. The tendency of the day undoubtedly is to utilise this material for Medical research. We confidently look forward to the day when they will admit women of the cottager class to a distinct course of training, suitable to the requirements of village work. Probably a year spent under efficient instruction in a Poor Law Infirmary—nine months in general Nursing, and three months in the Lying-in Wards—would fit women of ordinary intelligence to obtain the knowledge necessary for Registration. Certainly such a course of work would be productive of enormous advantage to hundreds of thousands of women throughout the British Islands.

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