

step in bringing about improvement amongst Midwives should not be by an arbitrary interdict against all uncertificated assistance in child-bed, which would protect a few, but certainly would cause cruel deprivation to thousands in their hours of greatest need; but rather should be the institution of means whereby an ever-increasing number of women could be aided and encouraged to gain greater knowledge and skill in the Obstetric art. Such means are not existent now, but we firmly believe that Registration would prove their necessity, and procure their general a loption.

Still excluding from our consideration the upper grade Midwives, let us show how, in our judgment, this system would tend to raise the *morale* of village Midwives, and by vastly improving their efficiency, tend not only to the greater safety and comfort of their patients, but by pressure from below, so to speak, tend to elevate the other class of their fellow-workers in the great towns and cities of our land. Now, we take it for granted that, after a brief "period of grace," no woman would be entered upon the Register of village Midwives unless and until she had proved to the satisfaction of some competent examining body that she possessed a definite amount of knowledge, both of Midwifery and Nursing. It was pointed out last week how wide a field exists in our Poor-Law Infirmaries whereby this experience could be gained by rural workers. And we believe that it would be not only possible, but profitable to these Institutions, for each and everyone of them to admit such women to a regular course of instruction, extending over a term of twelve months. And if this is possible now, it will become more and more so as the present improvement in the Nursing of Workhouse Infirmaries extends and increases.

It may be asked, however, whether, on the one hand, many women of this class could devote a year to such discipline, work, and study, as the fulfilment of this scheme involves; and, on the other hand, whether there is any probability that many would do so. To both questions an affirmative reply may instantly be given. Because the opportunity would be eagerly welcomed of obtaining for one of the daughters of the hamlet an occupation, useful, honourable, and lucrative, which would enable her to continue to live at home, instead of being obliged to earn her livelihood in domestic service or shop employment, far away from her native place. There is no reasonable doubt, also, that the better the education necessary to the occupation of village Midwife and Nurse is made, the better position will the occupier of the post come to hold, and, consequently, the more highly will the work be remunerated, and the

more keenly will the office be sought after. From all of which reasoning it can easily be foreseen that the class of village Midwives will tend constantly to improve. So we would strongly maintain that the best foundation, therefore, upon which to build—in order to secure elevation of the worker—is simply and solely the enhancement of the value of the work.

But one of our readers asks us the pertinent question: "How are poor women to get the necessary training and pay the fees for examination and Registration?" To which we reply that we believe that a system could easily be organised whereby the whole cost would not exceed twenty-five pounds for each pupil, and that considering the vast benefits which would accrue to a whole community, however small, from the presence in its midst of one such Trained Midwife, this amount could easily be raised in each locality by individual benevolence. And as we remarked last week, the system, once initiated in any one village, would by very local jealousy doubtless be soon adopted in every neighbouring one.

The main object, however, of our present consideration of the subject is rather to attempt to define a great principle than to undertake the threshing out of details, however important, and to clear away certain misconceptions which, whether disseminated or not amongst others, must tend to prevent rather than forward any measure of midwifery reform, which all professional people must agree is imperatively necessary.

MR. BARNARDO AND SISTER CLARA.

WE have received from Sister Clara, who is known to many of our readers, a mass of correspondence, covering a period of some years, and which has taken place between Mr. Barnardo and herself, in respect to the appointment which she has recently resigned.

Sister Clara has requested us to publish this correspondence, as she considers that it contains several points of vital interest to the Nursing profession, and much as we regret having to deal with so much that is of a personal character, we feel bound on the strength of Sister Clara's appeal to accede to her request, although we must confess we can at present ill afford the space requisite for the purpose.

Sister Clara found it necessary to resign her appointment with Mr. Barnardo some few months ago, under circumstances which we will explain more fully in our next, by such explanation hoping to save our readers the necessity of reading the whole of a voluminous correspondence.

On the strength of Sister Clara's request that

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)