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Contents.

EDITORIAL.—THE REGISTRATION OF MIDWIVES.—I.	289
OBSTETRIC NURSING. BY OBSTETRICA, M.B.N.A....	291
PRACTICAL LESSONS IN ELECTRO-THERAPEUTICS. BY ARTHUR HARRIES, M.D., AND H. NEWMAN LAWRENCE, MEMBER INSTITUTION ELECTRICAL ENGINEERS	292
TERMS USED IN NURSING, THEIR ORIGIN AND MEANING	293
NURSING ECHOES. BY S. G.	295
WOMEN AND THEIR WORK. BY VEVA KARSLAND	297
LETTERS TO THE EDITOR	298
COMPETITIVE PRIZE ESSAY	300

EDITORIAL.

THE REGISTRATION OF MIDWIVES.—I.

WE have on several occasions discussed in these columns the important subject of the Registration of Midwives. But lately we have abstained from doing so for various reasons. There has been, and nominally even now is, a Bill before the House of Commons which proposes to legalise the system. We examined the clauses of this document with considerable care when it was first issued to the public in February last, and then found so many great and glaring defects in its details that it was impossible for us to accord it any support. But we so earnestly approve of the principle of Registration that, rather than seem to be antagonistic to the Bill, we determined to maintain silence on the subject altogether, until it was decided what its Parliamentary fate would be.

Probably most of our readers are aware that its sponsors obtained a hearing last month, and that they were unable within the limited time at their disposal to persuade the House to read the Bill a second time. Nominally the discussion

was adjourned, but, to all intents and purposes, there can unfortunately be no doubt that the question is settled for this year, because the press of public business is so great that no private legislation has much chance. But, all the same, a great advance has been made. For thirty years the subject has been discussed, and legal control over Midwives has been advocated. Nine years ago a Bill was drafted, was debated, and was decided upon by a few eminent Obstetricians and a few Midwives and other ladies. The former interviewed successive Presidents of Council; the latter incited each other to action. However, despite all this energy, the Bill slept a long sleep of eight years in dusty deferment. It might be instructive to know why this urgently-needed measure was thus suspended and postponed. It is said that the delay was caused by a fear upon the part of its promoters lest they should be accused of "feminine impetuosity" were they to make any attempt to bring about reform. If this be so, we earnestly counsel them to fear not, but to take heart and mark for their encouragement what has befallen those who have been accused of such a crime.

The British Nurses' Association, founded little more than two years ago, has not only drawn to itself one-quarter of the whole number of Nurses at work in the United Kingdom, but has forced forward upon public attention the question of Registration of Nurses so forcibly that an immense and wide-spread interest has in this brief space of time been aroused on the matter. We do not for a moment deny that the Association has played its cards skilfully as well as strongly, and has utilized its enemies to the fullest possible extent in obtaining publicity for its propositions. We have enjoyed as much as anyone, for example, the sight of certain ladies and gentlemen spending their time, their utmost energy, and even their

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)