

Clause III. gives the one hundred and thirteen County Councils in England and Wales power to appoint and conduct examinations, and to grant certificates to Midwives. How can County Councilors be expected to add these to their many duties? What can they know about the requirements of examiners? Why not give the examining and granting of certificates to the twenty-one Universities and Colleges? I would point out that although County Councils are to grant certificates, they are refused the power of supervising the conduct and practice of Midwives; of suspending or removing them from the Register. Why, under the Medical Acts such power is freely given to the Medical Council, while many Universities and Colleges possess it. Further, no power is provided for dealing with those County Councils which carelessly grant Certificates to inexperienced candidates. Even the rights of existing schools which train Midwives are unprovided for in this Bill.

Clause 17, Sub-Clause 2, states that "no private person" is to institute proceedings unless with the consent of the Attorney-General or County Council; thus placing Midwives absolutely beyond the power of the people who employ them, although it is well-known that in cases of "vexatious litigation," a Judge can give an order for costs against the plaintiff.

Again, by Clause 9 all *bona fide* Midwives now practising and all Pupil Midwives are given absolute power to Register *without their passing any examination whatever*, and on condition they pay not more than thirty pence for their diploma. How will this protect "poor lying-in women"? Will it not endanger their lives, by leading them to believe that all Government Registered Midwives are guaranteed educated women? Not even is a certificate of moral character required from them: while they are permitted to employ unqualified Midwives. Further, although the duties of a Midwife are defined, yet no penalty is provided if she exceeds her duties—as by performing any Midwifery operations; prescribing medicines or drugs; vaccinating; or treating diseases of the infants. No doubt the Bill says she is to perform her work according to "the prescribed regulations"; but no body is appointed to draw such up, and even if they were drawn up, they could not be enforced, as the Medical Council has absolutely refused to have anything to do with administering this Bill—if passed. Clause 6 gives only to those Midwives residing in England the power to Register. But it gives them the power to practise *in the United Kingdom*, while Scotch and Irish Midwives are not allowed to practise in England, and could be fined £5 for

calling themselves "Midwife." Is this humane or honourable? If the Bill is such a heaven-sent measure, why refuse its blessings to "poor lying-in women" in Scotland and Ireland?

I hope the above remarks show that the Bill gives *carte blanche* to Midwives: it registers them without any certificate of moral character and without any testing of their knowledge; and it allows them to practise as they please. No doubt the Privy Council is given the power of "drawing up regulations," but is it likely any real supervision will be carried out?

I shall next try to show that this Bill would, if passed, add a new danger to the lives of mothers and infants. It makes no attempt whatever to protect poor women from unregistered and irregular Midwives. Why does it not say, "Any person who practises Midwifery for gain, and is not Registered, shall be fined £20"? Again, it is proposed to supply the wives of the working classes with an order of Midwifery practitioners, whom neither the public nor the profession of medicine would employ. The first Bill said that a Midwife was to be trained for thirteen weeks or less, while this Bill does not even mention the time. Is this a fair proposal? Is it not distinctly and dangerously retrograde, this proposal to hand over women to illiterate and badly-trained Midwives? If it is fair, then why not give the working classes the power of enjoying all the advantages of improved medical skill? What would be said of a proposal to register all existing quacks, unqualified practitioners, and prescribing chemists, so that the working classes may be supplied with registered practitioners? The theory of British charity is—the poorer the woman the more skilled the help which she receives. Yet the proposals to register all existing "Midwives," bone-setters, quacks, and unqualified practitioners are identical. Other reasons for believing that this Bill is dangerous are:—(1) By Clause 9, about 24,000 women, old and young, will be placed on a Government Register, and be granted official certificates without undergoing any examination. A most shocking and criminal proposal, and one which all good Midwives will surely resent. (2) No penalties are imposed on a Midwife who fails to send for skilled help in cases of difficulty or danger, and with this result, that women will be left too long in labour, life-long illness will be contracted, lives will be lost, and a great number of infants will be still-born. (3) The limited education and the utter want of medical knowledge will prevent Midwives from even recognising diseases. How could they detect some disease of the heart, lungs, or kidneys? To those so afflicted it may be laid down as a rule that the more ignorant the Midwife, the greater the

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