

it unfortunately passed into law the present evils would have been intensified and exaggerated to a most alarming extent. To Dr. Rentoul, of Liverpool, the public, and even the better class Midwives themselves, owe a great debt of gratitude for his prompt and clear *exposé* of the many absurdities of the Bill. And the Parliamentary Bills Committee of the British Medical Association, having been moved to act, secured the withdrawal and the complete reconstruction of the measure even after it had passed its second reading in the House of Commons, the Chairman of that Committee himself describing it in its original form as a "very bad Bill." There can be no reasonable doubt that had it not been for Dr. Rentoul's powerful arguments the Bill might have been smuggled through Parliament. Let us, then, to point the moral of how great harm can be done by ignorant, if well meaning, interference by lay people with professional matters, briefly discuss a few of the clauses of the now defunct Midwives' Registration Bill.

It firstly declared that after the end of this year no one should take or use the name of "Midwife" unless she was duly registered; and should she do so, that she should be liable, on summary conviction, to a fine not exceeding five pounds. It is hardly necessary to point out to our readers the absurdity of this clause, which, had the Bill become law, would have inevitably become absolutely a dead letter, because it could have been evaded by anyone with the least ingenuity. It is not the word "midwife" which does harm. It is the attempt by ignorant women to practise midwifery, wherein lies the danger to the public. The unregistered woman would be, according to this Bill, quite safe, however many disasters she might cause, so long as she modestly refrained her doorplate from exhibiting the magic word "Midwife." This alone, at the very threshold of the Bill, is sufficient to make it eminently ridiculous. But in order to accentuate the absurdity, there was next actually introduced into this penal clause a saving provision to the effect that the section should not "*apply to anyone called in to assist in a case of urgency.*" Humbly and meekly we would like to ask how many confinement cases are not "cases of urgency," and where the wisdom of Parliament would draw the line? In fact we are informed by a Counsel learned in the law that this clause is so wonderfully drawn that it probably would render null and void the whole effect of the rest of the Act.

The Bill next proceeds to form a Central Board of Registration for England and Wales, of eighteen gentlemen—the senior acting Obstetric Physician of the eleven general Hospitals in the Metropolis; four medical practitioners nominated by the

medical examining bodies in London; one each by the Obstetrical Society and the Midwives' Institute; and the Medical Officer of Health for the City of London. And this latter gentleman, willy nilly, is to be the General Registrar, and also act as Secretary and Treasurer of the Board! Most unprejudiced persons would imagine that the Medical Officer of Health for a county containing five millions of people would have enough work of his own to do, without being saddled with the enormous responsibility of the control of an unknown number of thousands of uneducated women. But before the Bill becomes law the Medical Officers of Health throughout the kingdom will probably take the opportunity of quietly and firmly declining such an extraordinary addition to their present burdens. It is, in the next place, a very moot question whether Parliament has the power to force the unpaid officers of privately supported charities, such as the Physicians to Metropolitan Hospitals are, to undertake a very serious and onerous amount of public work and responsibility, apparently without any remuneration whatever.

Finally, although the two private bodies might readily find representatives, it is most doubtful whether the great London medical corporations could induce anyone to do a large amount of work as their nominees for little or no reward. With considerable wisdom the Bill does not mention the number of these gentlemen necessary to make a quorum at any meeting of the Board, and in view of the facts we have mentioned, we would suggest the advisability of *one* being quite sufficient. Because it is morally certain that the whole Board would, after a very short time, consist merely of the representatives of the Obstetrical Society and the Midwives' Institute, and the whole control of the Registration of Midwives would devolve upon these two gentlemen. This is doubtless anticipated by the promoters of the measure. But it would be well for them honestly to state it when next the Bill comes before Parliament; or better still, for those who deem such a consummation undesirable to bring before the public the inherent improbability of busy gentlemen like those named in the Bill being able or willing to devote to the work the necessary time and trouble. There is moreover another very serious blot in this constitution of the governing body of the scheme. There are no Midwives upon the Board—a fact which speaks very little either for the confidence the promoters of the Bill have in themselves, or in their knowledge of the class for which they desire to legislate. There would certainly be many questions of importance which would have to be decided by the Board, especially as to the training of Midwives, or as

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