

STATE REGISTRATION IN VICTORIA.

Whenever legislation is introduced for the regulation of the nursing profession, or those akin to it, the opposition is not directed to contravening the principle, but against the composition of the governing body. Thus, in the province of Victoria, Australia, difficulties have arisen in regard to the form of government to be established under the Nurses' and Midwives' Bills. In the beginning the nurses associated together in the Royal Victorian Trained Nurses' Association suggested one Bill to cover both nursing and midwifery, which would have been quite possible in Victoria, where midwifery has ranked as an additional nursing qualification. Then the committee of the Women's Hospital, Melbourne, insisted on a separate Bill for midwives. This passed the Legislative Council, and the nurses were informed that it was only a matter of form for it to return to the Legislative Assembly, be passed by that body, and become law. Events have proved otherwise.

When the Nurses' Bill came before the Legislative Council exception was taken to the establishment of two Boards, one for the control of nurses and the other of midwives, and so strong was the feeling on this point that, as we have already reported, the Minister of Public Health, Mr. Drysdale Brown, informed representatives of the R.V.T.N.A., the Women's Hospital, and other bodies that unless they arrived at unanimity regarding representation on a single Board there was little hope of the passage of either Bill.

The nurses were ready to accept one Board, but the authorities of the Women's Hospital were not.

But Nemesis awaited the promoters of the Midwives' Bill, for it did not have the formal passage through the Legislative Assembly anticipated for it. A strong party in the opposition objected to the appointment of an independent Board, and an amendment was proposed by Mr. Jewel on September 28th that the Bill should be administered by the Department of the Minister of Health. After much discussion the division bells were sounded, and rang long to summon absent members earnestly engaged in another room in discussing the selection of a new Premier, when a member reminded the Chairman that no division had been called for and the amendment was put and carried. This vital clause having been struck out, progress was reported. It now rests with the Cabinet to determine whether the Bill shall be proceeded with in this mutilated form.

We await further news of the Nurses' Registration Bill. When it was considered in Committee by the Legislative Council, and progress reported to enable the Council to receive the Midwifery Bill, it was pointed out that the two measures were identical in several respects, and it was decided to postpone its consideration until the Midwifery Bill, with its amendments, had been received from the Assembly. It remains to be seen what effect the action of the Assembly (reported above) will have on the Nurses' Bill.

SOCIAL PROBLEMS.

MATERNITY.

No such poignantly human document has ever been contributed to the literature of obstetrics as the "Letters from Working Women," collected by "The Women's Co-operative Guild." The scientific side of the question has been exhaustively dealt with—medical practitioners, midwives and nurses have filled many volumes, from the various aspects with which they are concerned—but never before have the persons most intimately concerned (the mothers) placed their views on record; and all whose duties bring them in contact with maternity cases should read and ponder over this volume which incorporates the experiences of 160 mothers.

The letters are written by married women of the working class, all of whom are, or have been, officials of the Women's Co-operative Guild—a self-governing organization within the co-operative movement. The Guild has for several years given special attention to the subject of "The National Care of Maternity."

The preface to the book is contributed by the Right Hon. Herbert Samuel, M.P. (late President of the Local Government Board), who points out that "Again and again in history a lofty and brilliant civilization embodied in a small State has been borne under by the weight of a larger State of a lower type. The ideas for which Britain stands can only prevail so long as they are backed by a sufficient mass of numbers. It is not enough to make our civilization good; it must also be made strong; and for strength, numbers are not indeed enough without other elements, but they are none the less essential. Under existing circumstances, we waste, before birth and in infancy, a large part of our possible population."

In reading these letters, it must be remembered that they are written by women who live in better conditions than the average working woman—yet, as the introduction points out, the general impression "is on the whole an impression of perpetual over-work, illness and suffering." The evidence of such writers cannot be impugned; it is that to bear children under such conditions is to bear an intolerable burden of suffering.

The main underlying causes of the present unsatisfactory conditions of maternity appear to be three:

- (1) Inadequate wages.
- (2) Lack of knowledge regarding maternity and of skilled advice and treatment.
- (3) The personal relations of husband and wife.

The introduction points out that thirty shillings a week for a manual worker is reckoned to be "good wages" and there are thousands of men

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