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EDITORIAL.

MIDWIVES—OR OBSTETRIC NURSES?—II.

IT is asserted by many and influential Medical men throughout this country that "Midwives have become a glaring anachronism, and if they were only left to themselves, and not dragged forth into publicity by a few excitable faddists, the race would very speedily become extinct." We frankly confess that this assertion at first appeared to us to be nearly as extravagant as those which have been made in favour of the Bill for the Registration of these women which is at present before Parliament. But a careful examination of the arguments which are advanced in support of the statement has compelled us to

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admit that a strong case has certainly been made out for its truth, although we ourselves would, even upon these facts, have refrained from making so very sweeping an assertion.

The antiquity of Midwives and their great usefulness in olden days, and even down to very recent times, is, we understand, admitted as an historical fact. But upon that very ground it is argued that women were immensely serviceable as attendants on parturient females because it is only within the last two thousand years or so that any men have studied Midwifery; and that where both sexes were equally ignorant of the art, the natural and the moral law alike demanded that women should be attended by women. But as time went on and knowledge increased, Physic first and then Chirurgery passed into the hands of the stronger sex, and where formerly herbs were concocted and administered, wounds cleansed and simples applied, by women, the mysteries of life and death, of health, disease, and injury, began to be questioned and unravelled, one by one, by men. Slowly, and with many falls and drawbacks, Science advanced. Fostered, first by soothsayers—men far beyond their day; then by priests—men generally above their fellows; now wrapped in mysticism, anon in the blaze of light from a great discovery, Medicine and Surgery slowly but steadily increased in power and knowledge. Meanwhile women followed in its wake, and carrying out directions given for the treatment, again became connected with the healing art. And so Trained Nursing arose.

Precisely the same course of events has taken place with regard to Midwifery. Advancing

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