

"poor women," and positively pleaded that it would save life and suffering to bestow a State stamp of efficiency upon such women as we have described. They are apparently oblivious to the fact that this would delude the ignorant poor into the belief that the Registered Midwife must necessarily be as skilled as the Doctor, who possesses a similar State guarantee of his knowledge.

Not content with this, the promoters of the Bill went further, and actually attempted to prevent medical men having any control of any sort or kind over the Midwives of the future. The one and only safeguard, in fact, which could have been left would have been to place this new order of practitioners under the control of a strong professional body. It is hardly credible, therefore, that those who drafted the measure took unheard of pains to obtain, if possible, an exactly opposite result, by providing that Midwives should be under the control of the County Councils. Not even one central authority elected by these bodies, but each Midwife was to be ruled by her local Council. And to complete the grotesque absurdity of the proposal, the County Councils would, therefore, have been called upon to decide upon whether the labour in any disputed case had been "natural" or not. A distinguished member of one Council wrote us a most amusing letter, ridiculing the whole plan as simply preposterous, and we doubt not that, had the Bill advanced beyond its first reading, a strong protest would have been received from the County Councils against its passage into law. But as our readers will see in another column, its strongest supporters admit that the Bill has been laughed out of existence, so that now all that remains to be done is to learn the lesson of the attempt. So strong an organization of medical men has been aroused against the measure that it is most probable we shall hear no more of the question in Parliamentary proceedings for some time to come. We are well aware that we have been much abused for our opposition to the measure, but we can point to the large amount of professional feeling which has been aroused on the matter; we can point to the complete collapse of the arguments of the supporters of the Bill; and we can now claim that our action has been abundantly justified by the refusal of the Government to touch a measure which, after careful consideration, proved itself to their impartial minds to be "an impossible Bill." We have only done our duty to the medical profession and

to the public by opposing the Bill, and we are thankful that it is defunct.

But we do not consider that our duty ends here. Everyone admits that there is abundant need for improvements in the training and education of Midwives and in their supervision and control. Once more we urge that efforts should be made to secure these desirable results by private means rather than by State interference—certainly for the present. We have more than once expressed our regret that the Royal British Nurses' Association declined to undertake this very important work, because we believe that with its organization and experience with regard to similar work, it could, with comparative ease, have carried out the scheme proposed by Drs. MATTHEWS DUNCAN and PRIESTLEY at the Mansion House nearly two years ago.

But events since then have moved rapidly. The Registration of Nurses is an accomplished fact, for we have, this week, received the Register for 1891, and most warmly congratulate the Association upon the accomplishment of its great work. The Midwives' Institute has been galvanised into fresh life, and has made two abortive attempts to obtain legislation, with the result that a most formidable amount of opposition and antagonism has been needlessly aroused. But it appears to us to be a thousand pities that the energy and strength of the Institute should be wasted. So we earnestly advise its moving spirits to re-consider their position and to open forthwith a Register of Midwives upon the lines adopted by the Royal British Nurses' Association in its Registration scheme. Legislation, as we have frequently told them, they will not get until they have something more definite than "approximate figures," marvellously manipulated as they have been by a Medical man whose arithmetical acumen does not equal his almost feminine impetuosity. Let the Institute make a fresh start, and with wiser advisers; because it must surely recognise by now that nearly all its troubles and difficulties have been caused by its confidence in unprofessional people. A beginning has to be made in every reform, and it is more rational to commence building with a solid, if humble and obscure, foundation than to endeavour to place a gilded roof upon a castle in the air. We admit the full fascination and beauty of the latter attempt, but there are common-sense grounds for believing the former plan, if more difficult and slow, is in the end much more successful and sure.

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