

give them a legal status until, with the advance of civilisation, it found its mistake and withdrew the legal status in the middle of last century. Is then this country to go back in civilisation one hundred years in order to be on a par with the neighbouring and less civilized countries?

*That Midwives now exercise their calling without restraint.*—This is not so, as this country does not recognise Midwives as a lawful institution, and consequently these women are liable to both civil and criminal proceedings should anything go wrong; but, given the protection of an Act of Parliament, their acts are almost unassailable, in spite of all nonsensical talk of regulations.

*That the whole Medical Profession cries out for the Act.*—This is perhaps, of all the misleading statements made by the supporters of the Bill, the most glaringly false. Why have means not been taken to ascertain the opinion of the profession? The answer must clearly be because the supporters of the Bill are conscious of that opinion being overwhelmingly opposed to them. Their excuse for not approaching the mass of the members of the profession is that "sordid interests" would lead to an interested statement. This, to say the least, is a gross insult to the other members of the profession, whose moral tone, however, will no doubt compare favourably with theirs; but if they wanted the honest truth they could easily have obtained it by issuing to each member of the profession a series of questions, and thereby bowl any black sheep who happened to give a dishonest opinion.

*That sixty per cent. of the births are attended by Midwives* is another equally unfounded assertion. The Registrar General says there are about 3,000 Midwives, and 900,000 births which take place annually; now, sixty per cent. of 900,000 would be 540,000 to be attended by 3,000 Midwives, or one hundred and eighty to be attended by each Midwife in twelve months. How a woman can attend this number, and act as Monthly Nurse as well, which the supporters of the Bill say she is to do, is beyond comprehension. Then with regard to the remaining 360,000 births, if they are divided between the 18,000 medical men it will give twenty each per annum. How is this consistent with the statement that in the East End of London (one of the hot-beds of Midwives) many medical men attend upwards of two hundred cases a year each.

*That the death-rate in child-birth when attended by medical men and certificated Midwives is one in six hundred; whereas it is nearly three times as many when attended by uncertificated Midwives.*—Observe, that medical men and certificated Midwives are carefully coupled together. Now the question arises: if these two classes of

attendants were taken separately, what would be the percentage of deaths of patients under the care of medical men compared with those under certificated Midwives? If the answer is that they are coupled together because the death-rate is equal, then it is evident that superior knowledge and skill are of no value to lying-in women, and consequently the uncertificated Midwife is as much a guarantee of safety as the certificated, and the certificated as the Doctor; or if it be admitted that the Doctor is the safest person to conduct the case, why do those good people who profess so much anxiety for the safety of lying-in women show such a desire to create a class whose services they admit must be attended with greater loss of life. Furthermore, what can the supporters of the Bill say in explanation of the fact—that in all countries in which Midwives largely attend confinements, the death-rate in child-birth is so much heavier?

*That the Act will lessen the number of Midwives.*—Are they so ignorant of the subject under discussion as to really believe this? What greater incentive can you give a poor class of women to follow a calling than the protection of an Act of Parliament? Think, then, how many would flock to a newly-created calling requiring so little knowledge and expense—and a newly-created calling it certainly would be, since there is, at the present time, no legally licensed body of women following it. Besides which, the Act will have to bear all the Midwives and Monthly Nurses of the present day as Registered Midwives. It is nonsense to talk about registering only those who are *bonâ fide* engaged in the practice of Midwifery at the passing of the Act. Is it for a moment to be supposed that any Act can sift out *bonâ fide* Midwives, and refuse to Register every old Gamp of a Nurse of the present day? Let those who think so ask the General Medical Council if they could sift out the *bonâ fide* dentists; and if the Act cannot stop the enormous flock of Monthly Nurses registering, they must be an addition to the new class; but if it can stop them, then an Act can stop Midwives altogether. Where will, then, be the decrease in the number of Midwives? Given a woman with ever such an elementary education, but bearing the Government stamp, and the public will flock to her as they do to patent medicines, believing her abilities to be equal to the presumed skill she will not fail to parade before the public in spite of all regulations. The only satisfactory way out of the difficulty (if there be any real grievance) is to pass an Act simply saying that, after so many years, no woman will be allowed to practise Midwifery for gain unless fully qualified under the Medical Act.

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