

of training at a recognised Hospital is the necessary condition. But presuming that the Bill now before Parliament for the Registration of Midwives were to pass into law, anyone who had been present at a confinement could probably claim to be registered, and have the claim allowed, while in future the County Council would institute examinations and register the resulting certificates. And so it is possible that we might have a hundred examining bodies and a hundred Registers of Midwives, every examination being diverse to every other, and every Register therefore having its own separate qualification. Yet all Registered Midwives would, in the eye of the law, be equally skilled, and all would be under the control of laymen as innocent of professional knowledge as would certainly be the great majority of the women they certified to the public as being efficient and trustworthy. The Bill was obliged, by logical sequence, to institute examinations, because it would otherwise have authorised Registration without providing any necessary legal qualification for enrolment on the Register. The new examination and diploma, therefore, which is now proposed by the British Gynecological Society, would in the same manner be as important a step towards Registration as that proposed by the Bill to be undertaken by the County Councils. Being a voluntary matter, it would, we are inclined to believe, be more likely also to be successful as a commencement, because the history of nearly every great English undertaking proves that those have invariably been the most prosperous which began by private effort, and only when they had grown to great dimensions obtained Parliamentary sanction, or perhaps were even taken over entirely by the State. The most notable example of this is the rise and progress of the East India Company, begun by a few traders with one shop and two ships, and gradually developing until it became merged into our greatest Dependency and passed into the charge of the Imperial Government. Such a course seems to be most in accord with the genius of our race, and therefore we believe that it would be better if private efforts for the improvement of Midwifery attendants could be carried out, than if the State were to lay down hard and fast regulations at the present moment, when there is equally little knowledge of the real extent of the necessity for a remedy, or of what remedy could be best applied.

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In the next place, it is clear that the effects of the institution by a London Medical Society of examinations and diplomas for Obstetric and Monthly Nurses would most inevitably be a great stimulus to these workers to attain to the standard of knowledge and skill decided upon as necessary for candidates, just as there can be no dispute that the examinations of the Obstetrical Society of London have resulted in the formation of a select class of Midwives in England, and the wise endeavours of various medical bodies in Ireland in the great improvement in the same workers throughout the sister isle. Such elevation of one section must necessarily be followed by similar process through every other grade, and so the benefit will tend to increase and multiply itself as it extends. And finally, by the segregation of a number of these workers, a knowledge of their numbers, work, and training, which is at present most defective, will be greatly and most usefully gained.

Thus far we can give a general and strong approval to the proposal to establish by private, though influential, effort a system which is by many precedents likely to prove of much advantage to Nurses and to the community. We have not been able to obtain full particulars yet of the scheme which the British Gynecological Society proposes to carry out, and must, therefore, defer our consideration of details for the present.

But so far as the principle is concerned, it appears to us to resolve itself into the propositions that Obstetric Nurses are better than Midwives, and that a better class of Monthly Nurse is required.

Now the former, we need scarcely say, is an entirely new departure. If we are correct, the proposals practically amount to this: that Monthly Nurses should be improved on the earth, and that Midwives should be improved off it. This will excite no small amazement, if not consternation. Again and again the question has been put, "Are Midwives to be mended or ended?" and the latter alternative has on each occasion been ruled out of court as impossible. But now it would seem that it is quietly inferred that there is no such urgent necessity for the continuance of Midwives in the land; in fact, that they are an anachronism, as well as, some of them, sources of peril. A well-known medical man, who recently contributed a paper on the subject to these columns, pithily combated the idea that because Midwives had

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