

but few country districts, in which women trained as "midwives and nurses" are not to be found following their calling with success. The medical practitioners raise no complaint because these women very rarely presume to go beyond the limits they are trained not to exceed.

If the promoters of the Bill desire to benefit the poor they will adopt the suggestion that these women are trained and registered as "midwives and midwifery nurses." If they do so opposition to the Bill will be materially lessened. If they refuse it is difficult to believe that the good of the poor is the sole object in view.—I am, etc.,

Monkstown, co. Dublin, April 4th.

LOMBE ATTRILL.

SIR,—It is very desirable that members of the House of Commons should have before them statements of the feelings of the medical profession in various parts of the country as to the Midwives Registration Bill promoted by the Midwives Institute. The Bill as introduced into the House of Commons this year by the Right Hon. J. B. Balfour is identical with that introduced by Mr. Tatton Egerton last year. Many of the Branches of the British Medical Association have passed resolutions with regard to the Bill, and I shall be glad to receive from the Secretaries of Branches copies of any such resolutions in order that they may be printed together, with the view of calling the attention of the House of Commons to the extent and unanimity of the opinion which exists with regard to the unsatisfactory character of the Bill. I shall also be glad to receive copies of similar resolutions passed by other medical societies.

I would suggest also that it would be desirable that the course which the East Anglian Branch have decided to adopt should be imitated, and that special representation should be made to members of Parliament for the districts comprised within each Branch.

At present no petition against the Bill appears to have been sent in, although the presentation of several in its favour has been announced. Petitions, of course, have not very much weight with the House of Commons, except as evidence of public interest in a measure before the House. The absence of any official evidence of such interest in the present case would not improbably be relied upon by the supporters of the Bill as a proof of indifference, if not of approval. It is therefore desirable to show that the profession all over the country has taken a very lively interest in the matter, and probably no more effectual way of doing this could be devised than that of submitting to members of the House of Commons the resolutions which have, during last year and this, been adopted by so many Branches and medical societies.—I am, etc.,

SAM. WOODCOCK,

Chairman of the Subcommittee of the Parliamentary Bills Committee.

Old Trafford, Manchester, April 4th.

P.S.—May I suggest to the honorary secretaries of any of the Branches which may as yet not have adopted resolutions with regard to the Bill, to take an early opportunity of bringing the matter before a meeting of the Branch.

SIR,—I have such a great respect for Mr. Victor Horsley's scientific position, and my personal relations with him have hitherto been so pleasant, that I cannot but deeply regret the tone of his last letter on the Midwives Registration Bill. Medical politics seem to have the same demoralising influence that ordinary politics are said to have. I do not quarrel with him for differing from me in opinion, or for fighting as hard as he pleases for the opinion he believes to be right, provided that in doing so he preserves the rules of civilised literary warfare. No man of the intellectual calibre of Mr. Victor Horsley ought, even in the heat of controversy, to permit himself to throw doubts on the good faith or sincerity of his opponents. Such tactics have a flavour of what is termed in theatrical language "playing to the gallery," and should be left to those who have no better weapons to fight with. If a disputant knows himself to be truthful, and to be actuated by a pure motive, what excuse can he have for suggesting untruthfulness and dishonesty of purpose in his adversary?

With regard to the particular matter in debate, would it

<sup>1</sup> BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, April 2nd, p. 894

not conduce to the attainment of the object in view if a little less personal feeling were shown, and if a little more stress were laid on the fact that, although there are some points upon which the two Committees differ, there are many more on which they agree?—I am, etc.,

CHARLES J. CULLINGWORTH.

Manchester Square, W., April 4th.

SIR,—There are three Bills before the profession, two of which would constitute midwives (new and old) quasi-independent practitioners, and the third, by myself, proposes to create trained nurses for the "sick and parturient poor" under medical supervision and control. Our course is clear, namely, to have all three referred to a Select Committee and a new and comprehensive measure introduced by the Government next session. If our opponents are sincere in their professions they will agree to this and so end the controversy. I have reason to believe that several of the promoters of midwives' registration are dissatisfied with the present Bill, which all admit does not meet the case of "the poor," and it would be intolerable to arm the ignorant "Gamp" with powers of "attendance upon both mother and child during the lying-in period," as advocated by Dr. Cullingworth in the March number of the *Contemporary Review* and on page 916 of the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL*. No question of expediency or Parliamentary practice could justify such a proposal, and one is struck with consternation that it should be made by one who professes to have the interests of "the poor" at heart and who regards the untrained midwife as the *fons et origo* of puerperal fever and the other maladies of childbirth.

—I am, etc.,

East Sheen, April 4th.

ALEX. MCCOOK WEIR.

SIR,—The title or term of "nurse" as used by medical men necessarily implies that she acts according to the instructions and under the more or less direct supervision of a registered practitioner. Our district nurses are not allowed to visit cases unless a medical man is in attendance. The proposal of the Parliamentary Bills Committee of the British Medical Association that a clause should be inserted in the above Bill that a doctor should see an obstetric case within twenty-four hours after delivery, appears to me simply futile, as the simplest ostler would consider it useless to lock the door twenty-four hours after the steed had been stolen.

The Deputy Coroner of the City of Manchester, a few months ago, investigated a case of "stillbirth" where the foetus was living on the arrival of the midwife, as she herself admitted, but on the arrival of the doctor two hours afterwards it was dead, and was not born until another two hours, as it was a case of crossbirth, and everyone will see that to have preserved the child's life, the case ought to have been examined by a doctor immediately after the arrival of the "midwife." How ridiculous, then, is the proposal that a doctor should see the case within twenty-four hours after the birth, as if there were no risks to mother and child before birth! Therefore, what is required is that a doctor, where practicable, ought to see and examine a case as soon as possible after the commencement of labour, and certain cases amongst the poor, perhaps a large percentage, could be handed over to the "nurse," then she would be a nurse indeed acting under the doctor's immediate supervision and direction.

The above case had not occurred long before Mr. Horsley visited Manchester during his campaign, and he was asked "what he understood by medical supervision of a midwife," and in the course of his reply he mentioned about this visit within twenty-four hours after delivery, when the further question was put to him whether this would take place if death has occurred in the meantime. He innocently replied that would be a case for an inquest. He does not seem to have advanced any further than this, and now this remarkable clause is proposed by the Committee of which he is a prominent member. How many further cases for inquests we shall have it is awful to contemplate.

That the Committee of the above Association should, especially after inserting such a clause as the one indicated, "take power and authority upon itself," to take steps to have the Bill introduced into Parliament without consulting the members of the Association certainly seems to indicate