

the midwife who does so after five or six weeks' work. To the uninitiated it would appear rather as if the whole of the five years referred to was passed in studying obstetrics, but a medical student does not spend this time upon his obstetric training. One is rather inclined to wish that he did! I believe that the average training he receives in this subject is six weeks in the obstetric ward of a Hospital, and six weeks out-patient midwifery practice without systematic supervision, that is, he is not usually accompanied by a medical man in attending ordinary cases, though he can, of course, send back to his Hospital for assistance if he is in difficulties.

If, as we hope may be the case some day, midwives are trained Nurses first, and midwives afterwards, and as many are even now, the Midwife is in much the same position with three months' training in this special work as the medical student, the time devoted to acquiring knowledge in this particular branch being much the same. Again, I am open to correction, but I know no Lying-in Hospital which undertakes to train midwives in five or six weeks. The usual time of training is two months for Monthly Nurses and three months for Midwives. Further, there is a very important distinction between the responsibilities assumed by Midwives and those which devolve upon medical men which I have never seen anywhere noted, namely the medical man is qualified to attend, and may at any moment be called upon to act, in the most difficult case of instrumental Midwifery, and in instrumental Midwifery, as was once said to me by an obstetric physician, "you may slay your patient in a very few moments unless you know exactly what you are doing." A midwife never interferes instrumentally, and I certainly do not desire to see this power placed in her hands by any future legislation.

It seems to me that what we must aim at, in obtaining any legislation for Midwives which will confer increased power upon them, is—

That every person presenting herself for Midwifery training must produce a certificate of having undergone general training before she is eligible to receive the special one, and a written statement, signed by the Matron and two medical men of the Training School, that in their opinion the applicant is a person suited to cope with the responsibilities which will devolve upon her.

That the period of special training be for *at least* six months under qualified supervision, by which I mean that no pupil until she has obtained her diploma should attend any labour, except in company with a qualified person.

That the examination of candidates for diplomas should be conducted partly in the same way as that of the London Obstetrical Society, by means of written and *viva voce* examinations, but also in part in the wards of a Lying-in Hospital, where the candidate should be required to give practical evidence of her ability accurately to diagnose, and skilfully to conduct a case.

I am aware that I shall probably be called visionary, and this scheme impossible; at the same time, I do think most strongly that if we are to go in for legislative reform and legal rights and privileges for Midwifery Nurses, we ought to "tighten up" and not ask to have these powers conferred on persons who are only indifferently capable. Any legislation on slack lines must of necessity be ill-advised and mischievous.

There is, of course, no reason why the public could

not still employ unqualified attendants if it prefers to do so. The only thing we ask is that they may be recognised as such.

One of the difficulties of a longer and more thorough course of training is the expense of the training and the scarcity of training ground. Many Nurses who would like to qualify in Midwifery are prevented from doing so because the fees are for them quite prohibitive. This difficulty might, I think, in a great part be overcome if the Workhouse Infirmaries would co-operate with our general Hospitals in the matter on some definite plan.

There the training ground is ready to hand, and if Nurses were satisfied that the education they would receive in this special branch in the Infirmaries would be thorough, both practically and theoretically, no doubt many would be willing to give their services for six months or a year, as an equivalent for the training they would receive. The advantage would be mutual, as the Infirmary patients would receive skilled nursing, and the Nurses would obtain a valuable special training gratis.

Further, local rural centres might also be formed, and Nurses trained in district Midwifery. It is well, however, in each training home to have a few beds available where patients can be admitted whose cases from their previous history, or present symptoms, seem likely to be complicated at the time of labour, as, for instance, patients suffering from albuminuria, antepartum hæmorrhage, deformed pelvis, &c. These cannot be conveniently nursed in their own homes, and both for their own sakes, and for the education afforded in the treatment of abnormal cases to the pupil Midwives, it is well to have them under constant observation.

That there is a great field of usefulness and of intensely interesting work open to women as Midwifery Nurses, when we have emerged from the present chaotic condition of things, I, for one, emphatically believe. I must not trespass longer on your space. I should be most glad to see the question of the Midwifery of the future discussed in the NURSING RECORD.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

MARGARET BREAY.

Inglewood, Fleet, Hants.

IS IT FAIR PAYMENT?

To the Editor of "The Nursing Record."

MADAM,—I see that the Isle of Wight County Council is advertising for a Chief Female Officer for the County Asylum, of about 300 beds. The advertisement says, "The person appointed will, in addition to the ordinary duties of Head Nurse, act as House-keeper. Salary £50 per annum, with board, lodging, and washing, but without beer. Applications, stating age, experience, musical abilities, and other qualifications." Considering the enormous mental and physical strain of such a position, do you consider the salary offered is a fair one? Nurse, housekeeper, and musician, and only £50 a year!

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