

with uncertificated persons who, apparently, are incapable of earning their living as Nurses for various reasons. What do these ignorant men know of professional nursing conditions? Absolutely nothing! But they do know that the majority of Nurses have votes—and that unless they can be enticed into a trades' union these votes are usually not at the service of the Labour Party. Then we have the National Association of Local Government Officers, practically governed by laymen, which is highly indignant with the recent action of the Senior officials of the London County Council in calling a meeting of Matrons and others at the County Hall, and practically at the point of the bayonet inviting them to form an organisation of the Nursing Staffs, and which the Association claims is being done without the approval of the Council.

There is also the National Union of County Officers, which has recently established a medical and nursing section within its ranks, which appears in strong antagonism to the College of Nursing.

And then there is the Mental Nurses' Trades Union, governed by Mr. G. Gibson, the Secretary-General, who is apparently entirely ignorant of the psychology of the highly qualified general trained nurse, as he proposes to include them in his "Mental" trades union baited with the Batey Bill.

These various organisations appear to me like the tentacles of the octopus, all seeking power to strangle self-government in our ranks. We have our own professional organisations, free of male and economic control—and I claim we do not need any of these "patrons."

The interference of the laity and Government officials with the profession of nursing is a mania. What we must firmly demand is to be left alone to work out our own salvation, as men's professions are permitted to do.

AN ADMIRER OF YOUR PLUCKY POLICY.

#### THE HONOURABLE PRACTICE OF MIDWIFERY.

DEAR MADAM,—I have recently been reading "Down the Garden Path," by Beverley Nichols (Jonathan Cape, Ltd.), a book in many respects charming, but it contains what purports to be a description of a practising midwife which has made me so hotly indignant that I send it to you, hoping that by expressing this indignation publicly the author may realise the injustice and cruelty of his portrait to midwives as a class, and may for shame delete this caricature from future editions of his book. To quote:—

"One day I received a mysterious telegram from my gardener which caused me to hurry up to the cottage without a moment's delay.

"When I arrived, I rushed out into the field and saw that there was every cause for alarm. Just beyond the little iron fence, within a stone's-throw of my bedroom window, a small plot of ground had been pegged out for building. It transpired that the person who was going to build was Mrs. Thyme, a lady from a neighbouring village, who supported herself by the honourable practice of midwifery. And all you could say in Mrs. Thyme's favour was that she would have been a better midwife if she had not endeavoured to emulate Mrs. Gamp, when she was so disposed . . .

"I am afraid that when I saw, and smelt, Mrs. Thyme, I was seized with an extreme distaste for the lower classes. She was very small, with eyes like a malign ferret, and a thin toupé, that seemed to be attached to her forehead by suction. She spoke in a low whining voice.

"When I was first introduced to her, in my field, I tried to be ver- gallant, as though she were some elegant creature whose acquaintance I had long been seeking.

"Ah, Mrs. Thyme." Even as I said it I wondered how such an astonishing aroma could possibly come from any living creature.

"Huh," she said.

"I see we're both after the same bit of land, what? Ha! Ha!" I glanced quickly round to see if it could possibly be some very unhealthy pig which was responsible for the aroma. But no. It must be Mrs. Thyme. So I took out a handkerchief, and for the remainder of the conversations spoke through it in muffled tones, occasionally turning my head and taking a deep breath."

After further conversation Mrs. Thyme said, "Very well, gentlemen. If that is the way it is, I'll take my money elsewhere. Yes, sir. Elsewhere. You can keep your bloody land."

"And then, without further warning or argument, she departed. A skunk-like effluvium lingered after her."

Mr. Nichols has apparently a country cottage in Huntingdonshire, about a mile from the Great North Road. What is he doing about Mrs. Thyme? Has he done his public duty and reported her to the Local Supervising Authority for Huntingdonshire, or, having secured his own privacy, by buying the plot of ground which she proposed to purchase, is he content that she should continue to practise, to the certain danger and detriment of the mothers and babies she attends?

But is Mrs. Thyme a midwife at all? I take leave to doubt it, for any one so egregiously insanitary could not for long escape the notice of the local Inspector of Midwives and citation before the Central Midwives Board. That point can soon be settled by reference to the Roll of Midwives, or to the Secretary of the Board. If her name does not appear on the Roll then, as Ministers inform Members of Parliament at Question Time, "The question does not arise."

Mr. Beverley Nichols should know that midwives are compulsorily registered under the Midwives' Act, and no one whose name does not appear in the Midwives' Roll may use the title of midwife, or practise midwifery, under penalty.

I am proud to number amongst my friends many noble women who have devoted their lives to this exceedingly arduous and exacting vocation, and I resent with all my heart the presentation to the public by Mr. Nichols of this description of a midwife.

I am, dear Madam,

Yours faithfully,

MARGARET BREAY,

State Registered Nurse,

Certified Midwife.

#### KERNELS FROM CORRESPONDENCE.

Sister B. M. writes: "I note your reminder that 'Eternal Vigilance' is imperative. I do heartily endorse it, for over and over again we have experienced the truth of this saying in the history of the Nursing Profession. Without vigilance, when we have made one step forward we should often have been driven two steps back. Moreover without the clear call of the BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING sounding the warning note to tell us in what direction, at the moment, vigilance is specially needed, over and over again we should through ignorance of impending danger have been overwhelmed by it. A voice in the press is of first importance, and I do thank you from my heart for your wonderful devotion to the Nursing Profession in acting as its Hon. Editor for the last forty years, and over and over again sounding the alarm, and then organising the forces of right against might, and leading them to victory."

#### PRIZE COMPETITION FOR JUNE.

State some reasons for lack of sleep, and methods of inducing sleep.

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