

The attitude adopted by the coroner, however, must at once attract the attention of midwives, as bearing upon their position. A midwife is, of course, unable to give a certificate of death, and if it is accepted as necessary that a fully qualified medical practitioner must be present at all confinements, the race of midwives is abolished immediately. But though a midwife cannot give a certificate of death, she can communicate the fact of the death to the coroner, and if she satisfies him as to the cause of death, and of her own competence to act as a midwife, he is able to order the issue of a certificate, and so avoid the expense of an inquest. The crux of the matter is, we think, that whether a patient is attended by a medical man, or a midwife, the attendant should possess credentials of having satisfied examiners as to his or her competence for the duties undertaken, and that in all cases in which a death has occurred, when the mother has been attended by a pupil who is unsupervised, an inquest should invariably be held to ascertain the cause of death. Poor lying-in women are undoubtedly entitled to this amount of protection, and if persons who have not sufficient knowledge to obtain a certificate continue to attend them, they should do so at their own risk.

It cannot be too strongly impressed upon the public that they should require evidence of efficiency before engaging an attendant. In the case of public institutions, such as hospitals, or maternity homes, it is surely a cruel and unwarrantable betrayal of trust to palm off upon poor lying-in women untrained pupils, more especially when the trustfulness of these women that they will be well cared for is taken into consideration.

TOBACCO.

THE proposed reduction of the duty on tobacco will, we fear ultimately, prejudicially affect the health of the nation. Already the consumption of tobacco is extraordinary, and many men smoke far more than is good for them, and if the price of this luxury is reduced, the consequence will, without doubt, be increased consumption. It is no uncommon thing to see quite small boys indulging freely in the pernicious and somewhat uncleanly habit of smoking. If Parliament would make it punishable for lads to smoke, it would be better for coming generations. Sir Michael Hicks-Beach might with advantage have lowered the duty on some less injurious commodity.

Heart Disease.

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THE whole object of treatment, therefore, in cases of valvular disease of the heart, is to obtain such a compensating hypertrophy of the organ as to enable it to perform its work in spite of the difficulties created by the disease. It is a good general rule, followed by all practical physicians, that the processes of nature should always be imitated as far as possible in medical treatment; and so it is interesting to observe the manner in which Nature, when left to herself, repairs valvular mischief. The edges of inflamed valves are completely fringed by tiny granulations, just like those which are seen on the surface of a wound, and the former are cured in one of two manners, exactly as the edges of a wound are cured. If the edges of a clean, healthy flesh cut are brought to lie closely together, everyone knows that they may adhere and unite, leaving, perhaps, a thin white scar along the skin; but if the edges of such a wound are bruised or are kept asunder, each side will separately heal over and may contract, and so at last there is left a wide thickened cicatrix. So, in the case of the valves, the inflamed edges may unite together and thus, instead of three supple membranous folds with three free edges, we find perhaps a thickened membrane more or less tightly stretched, and with only a small hard-edged button-hole and funnel-shaped opening in its centre. It can be easily understood that in consequence of this curtain being stretched across the opening between the two cavities, the blood passes with some difficulty through its narrow opening instead of flowing freely as in health, pushing in front of it the floating flaccid valves. And, on the other hand, it will be understood that through this permanent hole in the valvular curtain a certain amount of blood will flow back, or as it is technically termed, "regurgitate," into the cavity from which it has just passed.

Nature's first effort is to heal the inflamed valve, and in order to do this, as much rest as possible, that is to say, as little movement as possible, is required. But, upon the exact amount of rest which the valves receive, depends the manner of their healing. It is a curious fact that in men and women the healing process is somewhat different. In the former, it is more usual for the valve, to contract and shrivel; in other words, the patient suffers from insufficiency

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