

The Nurse at a Confinement.

By MISS S. F. POLLARD.

Since the passing of the Midwives' Act a great wave of interest in midwifery and monthly nursing has swept over the country. Every nurse of three years' training rightly feels that she lacks efficiency if she is not capable of at least undertaking "monthly" duties under a doctor. Many go further and qualify as midwives under the C.M.B., as they are then fitted for all contingencies at home and abroad.

In private work nurses as a rule are not called upon to act as midwives, but as monthly nurses under the direction of doctors, and a conscientious nurse, even though fully qualified, will generally find such duties sufficiently arduous and exacting. She is often required to be in evidence a week or more before the expected birth. On receiving her summons she should at once ascertain that all her necessary equipment is ready, that is to say a catheter, a douching apparatus which consists merely of a glass funnel, long piece of rubber tubing and glass vaginal nozzle, boracic crystals and corrosive sublimate tablets. Two shillings spent on these two antiseptics will obtain a supply to last some time, and they will keep fresh with ordinary care for a long while. She should also be provided with a few test-tubes as one of her first duties on arrival will be to test the patient's urine for albumen. Often a busy doctor has no time to see the patient more than once or twice before her delivery and will leave instructions for the nurse to test the urine daily and to report to him any adverse symptoms such as headache, visual impairment, swelling and pitting of the legs, arms or face.

Kidney disease may result in eclampsia, when the patient is seized with a violent fit not unlike epilepsy. The nurse would of course send immediately for the doctor, ensure absolute quiet for the patient, endeavour to prevent her hurting herself in any way, and if possible save the urine for examination. While waiting for the doctor a catheter may be got ready, and a simple enema prepared. It is well for a private nurse to be provided with a Higginson's syringe though often the patient has her own. During the time the nurse is in the house prior to the delivery she should see that everything is in absolute readiness. All the baby clothes should be placed in a basket with the dressing and additional ligature for the cord, powder, soft sterile linen, safety pins, scissors, needle, cotton, thimble, soap, sponge, flannel, towels,

and flannel apron. Sanitary knapkenettes are advisable for the first few days, as the meconium stains the washing diapers, and one packet of the former is not expensive and lessens trouble. The cot should be raised off the ground and made up with a mackintosh, small pillow, and light, soft, warm blankets. A rubber hot-water bottle in a flannel cover should be added in cold weather. A flannel receiver must not be forgotten; a shawl or old blanket fresh from the wash will do quite well.

For the mother's use there must be provided a bed-pan, a long bed mackintosh to go under the bottom sheet and blanket, and over that a smaller mackintosh and draw-sheet, which she will need all through the lochial period. During the delivery she will need, in addition, an accouchement sheet; they are soft, warm, and absorbent, and generally liked; afterwards it is cut up and burnt. Have also ready for her a roller towel or soft knitted pulley to be tied to the bed-rail, that she may pull upon it during labour pains; often it is a great relief.

Most women prefer sanitary towels to the old-fashioned diapers, and needless to say they are far preferable in lying-in cases, as they are immediately burnt, and all danger of sepsis avoided.

The binder dies hard. Though obsolete in lying-in institutions, in private houses it is still used. Probably the popularity is due to the feeling of support it gives, and as it does no harm by all means let the mother wear one if she wishes, only see that it is kept perfectly clean, particularly during the first few days.

Have a kettle placed at your disposal; if there is no fireplace, or it is summer, a spirit-stove is very convenient. You will also need a clean nail-brush, some extra basins for lotion, &c., a quart jug in case of douching, a pail or foot-pan, an extra mackintosh, and a supply of absorbent wool. The nurse must personally see that the threads for tying the cord are ready, also blunt scissors and boracic lotion, with pledgets of cotton-wool for cleansing the infant's eyes as soon as born.

The mother is sure to turn to the nurse for advice and cheer as soon as she enters the house. Do not encourage her to dwell too much on the approaching confinement; but if she is worried by stories of hard labours, told her by well-meaning friends, it is better to talk them over quietly, and she will often be comforted by the sensible, kind manner of a tactful, trained nurse.

Try as much as possible to win her confidence or you will bitterly regret it when her trouble comes. She should take exercise every day without fatiguing herself, have a light, nourish-

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