

# The Midwife.

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## The Responsibility of the Pupil Midwife.

We desire to draw the attention of pupil midwives to the rule of the Central Midwives' Board, regulating the admission of persons to the examination of the Board, which provides that to be admitted to an Examination:

"She must have, under supervision satisfactory to the Central Midwives' Board, attended and watched the progress of not fewer than twenty labours, making abdominal and vaginal examinations during the course of labour, and personally delivering the patients."

The schedule testifying that this rule has been complied with, has not only to be filled in and signed by one of her instructors, but countersigned by the pupil, and, herein lies her responsibility.

Many persons, unfortunately, sign documents far too carelessly, as a matter of form, and a pupil who is asked to endorse a statement to which her teachers have already testified, is specially apt to do so. Nevertheless, she is responsible for her own actions, and she must be careful to distinguish between having merely watched the progress of twenty labours, and having in each of these instances personally delivered the patient, and only to sign the schedule in the latter event.

The requirement of the Central Midwives' Board is explicit, and is printed on the schedule above referred to.

"Although a case of labour may be used for the instruction of more than one pupil, the case can only be counted to the credit of the one pupil to whom the actual delivery is entrusted."

It would seem impossible for any mistake to be made on this point, and yet, from facts within our knowledge, it is evident that some authorities still consider themselves justified in signing the schedule stating that a pupil has under their supervision personally delivered the patient when, in point of fact, she has not done so. Either these authorities do not understand the Rules of the Board, and it is time they did, or they are evading them, and it is time they didn't. Lastly it should be noted that any woman attempting to procure a certificate under the Midwives' Act by means of a false declaration is liable to twelve months' imprisonment with or without hard labour.

## The Hygiene of Pregnancy.

H. G. Wells has made startling suggestions in his book "Anticipations"; he advocates the State-supported "Mother." The idea is repugnant, yet looking at the poor physique, the miserable health, and the absolute lack of qualities that go to the making of efficient parents which characterise so many of our population, the question of reserving the honour and privilege of child-bearing to the fittest is one that is worthy of our best thought. The problem is how to get "better births." One solution is to teach the pregnant woman the simple rules of a hygienic life, that she may, as Plato says, "successfully bear children to the State."

A celebrated French physician called "pregnancy" the "nine months' disease"; it should be, however, rather a condition of ease than disease, a natural and physiological function performed cheerfully and healthily, involving limitations it is true, but rarely entailing ill-health or invalidism.

The amount of ignorance and superstition prevalent with regard to what is advisable or inadvisable for a pregnant woman is appalling; no details, however simple, can be regarded as too trifling in a midwife's directions to her patients. She should advocate strongly a daily tepid bath, where this is impracticable, the whole body should be washed with soap and water once a day, as this ensures the healthy action of the skin. Cold or very hot baths are to be avoided, though the latter are useful in the last week of pregnancy. Special attention should be given to the nipples to prevent their becoming abraded, caked or fissured. The last month they should be moistened daily with some astringent such as Eau de Cologne, Methylated Spirit and Glycerine equal parts, or Compound Tincture of Lavender. If retracted or depressed they should be drawn out gently with the finger and thumb and held for a few minutes night and morning.

With regard to diet, it is a mistake to think that an extra quantity of food is required, it should be generous, wholesome and simple, and the patient should avoid those things she finds indigestible. One meat meal a day, plenty of fresh vegetables and fruit, abstinence from alcohol, half-a-pint of water first thing in the morning and last thing at night, and no eating between meals will do much to save a patient from constipation and indigestion. Mr. Pecksniff was hopelessly wrong when he averred that "much water drinking brings the dropsy," he would have been nearer the mark if he had said "too little water drinking brings constipation." If there is troublesome morning sickness, it is better to breakfast in bed; a small cup of coffee, brown bread and either stewed or raw fruit are excellent

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)