

## The Midwife.

### A Page in the Life of a District Midwife.

"There is the night bell, and it is your turn out, nurse," said the night nurse on duty in the Home where I was getting my midwifery cases. "Hurry up and get ready, and I'll tell Nurse Jones and then make some tea." I obeyed with alacrity. It was my first district case, and I was very anxious for as much work as possible, but I gave just one regretful sigh, for I had had a hard day's work, and the immediate prospect of a hot bath and a comfortable bed had been alluring.

As if by magic, Nurse Jones appeared, armed with her midwifery bag, and looking capable and confident enough to tackle any emergency which might arise. "Are you ready, nurse? Have you washed your hands, and brushed your nails? No? Well, you must learn to be quick if you are going to be my district pro. There is no time to waste when you've been summoned to a case. You don't know what you may have to contend with when you get there." Within a few minutes we had left the comfortable Home behind, and, following the husband of the patient, who relieved me of the bag which it was my duty to carry, we were hurrying through a snowstorm to a great block of model dwellings where "the nurses"—I am glad to say they were all trained nurses as well as midwives—were frequently employed and very popular. We found that a former patient was in attendance, and there was a kettle of water on the fire, the clothes for both mother and baby were already being aired, so I was in luck's way.

The case was quite a straightforward one, and in a couple of hours we were back again at the Home. Now I should go to bed and sleep the sleep of the just without fear of disturbance. Vain hope. "Drink up your gruel and get to bed quick," said the kindly night nurse. "There has been a run of cases to-night, and the call may come to you again at any moment, as you are first out again."

I sincerely hoped the babies would be kind and let me get some rest, but I seemed only to have got into my first sleep when the night nurse appeared. "I'm sorry, you'll have to get up again, nurse. There is an urgent call, and an interesting one, I think." I am afraid that I thought just then that a call could be

interesting, but I jumped up and Nurse Jones and I were soon on the road again.

Preceding us was a dark little man with greasy ringlets, and I caught a gleam of gold in his ears as he turned straight away from our usual crowded district towards the open country. I looked questioningly at my companion. "Didn't you know we are going to a gipsy caravan?" she said. "It is one of the show people. They are really outside our radius, and the case has not been booked beforehand, but we could not refuse to attend a traveller in distress."

Arrived at the encampment, we were guided to the caravan by the glare of its naphtha lights. Such a wee place it was. Literally scarcely room to turn round, but everything as compact, tidy, and clean as a ship's cabin. Nurse Jones had no eyes for anything but the patient, who had profuse hæmorrhage, and was collapsed, and nearly pulseless. "Nurse," she said in a moment, "you must fetch Dr. — immediately. Tell him it is a case of placenta prævia, nearly central; make him understand it is urgent. Wait for him and bring him here."

Over the waste ground I sped—two lives might depend on my quickness—and on to the doctor's house. In reply to my ring, the doctor's wife answered down the speaking tube. "A baby case?" she said. "Tell Nurse Jones I'll ask the doctor to come first thing in the morning. He has only just come in from another case and got to bed." "Nurse said I was to say the case is very urgent," I replied. "I was to wait and show the doctor the way." Then, to my relief, the doctor's voice came down the tube. I repeated my message. "All right, nurse; I'll come now." Once more I raced over the waste ground, this time with the doctor, who needed no speeding. He realised only too well the critical condition of the patient. But she had been in capable hands, and was in a better condition than when I had left the caravan. The doctor speedily delivered her instrumentally, and to my joy the baby, though feeble, was born alive.

When we at length left the patient, and walked back to the Home in the dawn of a new day, I realised that had we not arrived when we did mother and child must both have died. My sleepless night seemed well worth while, and the life of a midwife a very satisfying one.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)