

# The Midwife.

## A TEXT-BOOK FOR MIDWIVES.

The "Text Book for Midwives," by Dr. J. S. Fairbairn, F.R.C.P. (Lond.), first published in 1914, met with the reception it deserved; and a second edition has now been published by the Joint Committee of Henry Frowde and Hodder & Stoughton, at the Oxford Press Warehouse, Falcon Square, London, E.C., price 20s. net. In spite of the war and the cost and difficulty of production, the edition is a sumptuous one, beautifully printed on paper which is both thick and fine, and with three plates and 113 illustrations—five of which are in colour.

Dr. Fairbairn needs no introduction to midwives. As physician and lecturer to midwives at the General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, S.E., many owe much to his teaching; and he is also an examiner to the Central Midwives Board.

He tells us in his preface to the first edition that his reasons for adding another to the many text books from which the midwife can make her choice are twofold. First, that the book has special characteristics of its own; and second, that what special features it may possess represent an experience of the needs and aspirations of midwives acquired by over twelve years' association with them as "teacher, examiner, post graduate lecturer and medical colleague." He says further, "This text book contains more than has hitherto been considered necessary for midwives and is open to the criticism of going beyond what is required by them and of them. On this score, however, those who know the more advanced school of practising midwives will make no demur. That school is possessed with an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and is rarely content with what has hitherto been given it in books written solely for midwives. Formal medical books are in constant use, and my hope is that the scope of this book has been made wide enough to render the purchase of such unnecessary.

"There is, however, another and a better justification for a comprehensive book. A more educated class is now coming forward to qualify as midwives. . . . This book is my contribution towards meeting the legitimate aspirations of the midwife for a higher professional education."

In the second edition the text has been carefully revised in accordance with the changes in the Rules of the Central Midwives Board, and points of difficulty in the chapters on the Physiology of Labour and on Delayed Labour have been cleared up. The most important addition is a fresh chapter on Antenatal Care, which has been added in view of the part the midwife may be called on to take in schemes for Maternity and Child Welfare.

## THE CARE OF THE PREGNANT WOMAN. ANTE-NATAL HYGIENE AND TREATMENT.

"We agree with the author that "'antenatal' and 'prenatal' as applied to the pregnant woman are not satisfactory terms as they mean 'before birth,' and suggest an application to the child only." The Hygiene of Pregnancy would probably be a more exact description. Antenatal, however, is the term in general use.

"Antenatal care involves the close observation of the pregnant woman up to the birth of her child, and aims at keeping her in health in body and mind, preserving the pregnancy to term, avoiding preventable difficulties and complications in labour, and thus diminishing the maternal and infantile mortality at childbirth. Antenatal treatment is therefore almost entirely preventive.

"What part the midwife may be called on to play in this crusade is not easily determined, owing to the divergent views held as to what and how much antenatal care should mean, and to the differences in the provision made for it in different localities. Some would magnify it so far as to have the notification of pregnancy made compulsory, as if it was an infectious disease and every pregnant woman under continuous medical supervision, but probably between this extreme and the other of entirely neglecting it, some intermediate course will be taken till time and experience of its results have decided its true worth and importance as a branch of preventive medicine.

"As the prevention of abortion is so large a factor in antenatal work, and as abortion is most frequent in the early months of pregnancy, it is evident that if success is to be obtained, the pregnant woman must come early under observation. Patients should be encouraged to engage their midwife and make arrangements for their confinement as soon as they know, or even suspect that they are pregnant. The loss of population from the high abortion-rate is quite as great as from the high infant mortality, and to lower it, and to diminish the invalidism and incapacity following on neglected abortions, it is essential that the midwife should use her influence to induce her patients to report their pregnancy early."

Again, "overcrowding, slum life, and bad housing conditions in the big towns are more than anything else the cause of the high infant mortality rate, and therefore all efforts to combat it, whether antenatal, natal, or postnatal are largely a social problem."

A chapter is devoted to venereal disease, a subject upon which it is very essential the midwife should be informed.

The book is one which should be in the library of every training school for midwives, and individual midwives who purchase it will be well recompensed for the outlay.

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