

of her marriage. The fallacy of this prognostication has been proved by the fact that the Society has pursued the even tenor of its way during Miss Hughes' term of service, and we have little doubt that the nurses will soon discover that her successor possesses invaluable qualifications for the post.

As we go to press the tumultuous meeting of Welsbach Shareholders is being held at the Cannon Street Hotel, an ostensible object being to get rid of Sir Henry Burdett and his supporters from the Board of that mismanaged concern. There is a wise and ancient saw "physician heal thyself." We should advise the Nurses' Co-operation to wait until the Welsbach Company is financially sound before accepting overtures from its Chairman to take over the control of their business affairs, which so far have been managed with conspicuous success.

Dr. Malins on Midwives.

A most interesting address was delivered by Dr. Edward Malins, President of the Birmingham and Midland Counties Branch of the British Medical Association, and Professor of Midwifery in the University of Birmingham, at the Annual Meeting of the Association on the subject of Midwifery and Midwives. We should like to print the whole, but have only space to quote some of its more important points. Dr. Malins says:—

"It is self evident that the art of midwifery took its rise and is coeval with the history of mankind. The process in its liability to morbid interruption and dangerous complications must have been essentially the same in all countries and all ages since the beginning of the world. . . . The concurrent testimony and allusions of all the older authors render it indisputable that women were in commencement the chief, if not the sole practitioners in midwifery, and that they likewise exerted the privilege of treating the diseases peculiar to their sex, as well during the pregnant and puerperal state as at other times." The lecturer then gave instances from the Bible of natural, precipitate, and complicated labours attended by midwives, and continued: "That the pathological conditions should have existed is in some measure a mark of civilization, for in savage or primitive states the process of child-bearing is looked upon as a physiological one, needing no help. Southey's *Tale of Paraguay* refers to this graphically, speaking of Monema:—

But human help she needed none.
A few short throes endured with scarce a cry;
Upon the bank she laid her new-born son,
Then slid into the stream and bathed, and
all was done.

In the early history of our own country we cannot gather much information about midwifery or midwives. That midwives were licensed by the bishop, and subjected to an examination as to fitness and character, is evident. Thus from certain Articles of Visitation in 1559 inquiries were made as to the use of "charms, sorcery, enchantment, invocations, circles, witchcrafts or imaginations invented by the devyl, and specially in the time of women's travyle.

So far no teaching in the practice of midwifery existed. The first book of which we have any account is the one translated from Rhodion by Thomas Raynalde in 1540 entitled, "The Byrthe of Mankynde, or the Woman's Booke." This abounds in the most flagrant errors; no wonder that, acting upon such authority, deplorable blunders were committed, and confidence abrogated in those who followed its precepts.

A remarkable era in the interest of midwifery was that inaugurated by the Chamberlens. In 1616 Peter Chamberlen represented to the King (James I.) by petition the lamentable state of this branch of his art, and begged that some order be settled by the State for the instruction and civil government of midwives. This was the first-bid for a Midwives Bill; we have had many since doomed to the same untimely end. It is true that this talented but eccentric man may have had some personal motives in the request; such at least were attributed to him by his enemies, for later on Peter's son wrote: "Fame begat me envy and secret enemies which mightily increased when my father added to me deliveries and the cures of women.

In that peculiar and prolix production, "A Voice from Rhama, or the Crie of Women and Children Echoed forth in the Compassions of Peter Chamberlen," he pours forth his grievances at length. The roll of the College of Physicians gives some clue to this lamentation. "Dr. Chamberlen," it says, "was extensively engaged in the practice of midwifery, and at one time attempted, in direct opposition to the wishes of the College of Physicians, to obtain from the Crown authority to organise the female practitioners in that department into a company with himself at their head as president and examiner." Still we may reasonably regard the project as a laudable and humane one. In the same year a meeting was held at the College of Physicians to deliberate about letters patent for the incorporation of midwives; while admitting that abuses existed, and that reforms were needed, they thought it neither convenient or necessary that they should be made a corporation to govern

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