

OBSTETRIC NURSING.

— BY OBSTETRICA, M.B.N.A. —

PART I.—MATERNAL.

CHAPTER I.—DUTIES BEFORE LABOUR.

THE old adage, "Cut your coat according to your cloth," is peculiarly applicable to our portion of Home Nursing work. Assuming that the finer the "cloth" the finer the "coat," we still claim that the "cut" is of far more importance than the "cloth," and alone gives distinction to the "coat," quite irrespective of the material.

Whilst, then, Nurses must learn to adapt themselves to circumstances which are "as variable as the wind," they must ever remember that skill is unchangeable, and alone gives distinction to their art; and that good Nursing is *good* Nursing under all conditions and in every rank of life. It is this adaptability to circumstances, combined with steadfastness to principles, that makes the difference between a skilful, earnest Nurse and an ignorant and careless one; the latter invariably lays the blame of her misdoings upon adverse circumstances, that she has neither the skill, nor, alas! too often the will to overcome.

I do not purpose to enter in these pages into those gynæcological details that occupy so large a space in our handbooks, as they have but little, if any, bearing upon practical Nursing. Nor shall I attempt the intricacies of Obstetric "arithmetic" (?), which, faultless on paper, rests too much upon hypothesis to be relied on in everyday practice, and for that reason, perhaps, evinces a mysterious tendency to come out wrong in the end! Of no use in Nursing, these calculations are of importance to Nurses for timing their engagements; and as some of my pupils have been "experts" in the matter, I may refer in the latter part of my papers to a plan that, simplicity itself, worked well in their hands, and so far is of interest to all Nurses.

The actual duties of Obstetric Nursing do not begin until the advent of labour, but it is a wise and customary plan to have the Nurse in the house a week or so beforehand, and you may consider you are in attendance from the day of your arrival. Assuming that you have to "adapt" yourself to favourable circumstances, it will be your duty to quietly get things into readiness for the work that lies before you. With respect to the *layette* that will be handed over to your charge there is not much to be said, as it will most likely be complete in every way; still you must carefully go over it, to see if anything be wanting or amiss. There should always be two flannel bed jackets or nightingales (I prefer the

former for our patients), and a cashmere or flannel dressing-gown or rather wrapper. A large woollen shawl should be put away with the other things, so that you can get it at once if required during or after labour. The binders that are provided for your patient must also claim your attention, as they play an important part in Obstetric Nursing.

And here we will just pass under review the different kinds that are so often provided for our use on these occasions. Let us begin with the worst horror first—the so-called shaped-out binder. A complication of loops, tapes, and buttons, it would require a special course of instruction to understand the use of it; it is mostly made of twilled calico, or jean, and its shining merit consists in its utterly failing to give the required support, so we will dismiss it summarily. Then we have a sort of twilled material, not unlike webbing, smooth and close in texture, with a thin edge (of much comfort to the bindee). These binders have also a delightful quality of "slipperiness," and are difficult to hold in. They find favour in certain nursing circles, but I have not discovered the merit of them yet. Then there is a sort of towelling in narrow widths, which is better than the other material, but too harsh and heavy for our purpose, and then sometimes, and worst of all, *new and white calico* with plenty of "dress" in it, cut into lengths and sewn along the sides, and at the ends. The "blessing" of this binder to the patient and to her Nurse can be "better imagined than described."

Now what are the qualities required in an Obstetric Binder? It should be simple, soft, smooth, pliable, of a material sufficiently open to admit of free transpiration from the skin, sufficiently strong to stand the strain of adjustment, and hold in the pins. Now we find all these qualities in a very humble material, viz., *unbleached* twilled calico, at a few pence the yard. It should be cut into lengths of a yard and a quarter to a yard and a half long (never more than that for each binder), and left perfectly open. The reason for this is plain to see. The binders can be so easily and thoroughly washed and dried—an important point in a binder which is worn constantly next the skin. The calico should always be washed and mangled in the *first instance*, when the lengths are cut off to remove all *dress*, and to make them smooth.

The skilful adjustment of the binder will be discussed in its due place. After the binders, you must turn your attention to the pins that may have been provided for you. The best pins are the *best*. For obstetric binding, those of Kirby Beard, at a shilling the sheet, are absolutely to be depended upon; they are nearly two inches long, beautifully smooth and straight, and perfect as to points and heads. Safety pins are much in

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)