

## The Midwife.

### Scopolamine in Childbirth.

An Austrian obstetrician has recently published a valuable report on 1,000 cases of parturition conducted with the assistance of scopolamine. It has been stated that scopolamine is one of the most deadly of all poisons, and that there is no justification for employing it, but as the toxicity of a drug is merely a matter of dosage, there is no reason why a small dose should not be considered safe. He used only very minute doses, about 1/6400th grain. Among his 1,000 cases he did not lose a single one from the scopolamine. In his last 500 cases he had one death, which was due to internal hæmorrhage in a contracted pelvis case. He did not experience a single instance of cardiac disturbance of serious nature. With regard to hæmorrhage, he finds that after measuring the loss in 363 cases, in 92.8 per cent. the loss was within the usual average. The placenta was born spontaneously in 51 per cent. by means of slight pressure, or Credé's method in 48.1 per cent., while it had to be removed manually in 0.4 per cent., and by Cæsarean section in 0.5 per cent. Forceps had to be applied in 6.83 per cent. The children were not harmed by the medication; 70.5 per cent. of them were born lively. The mortality of the fœtus was certainly not increased during the time in which he has used scopolamine as compared with the period preceding. Another writer in the same journal also gives his experience of the use of scopolamine and morphine in childbirth. He treated a series of 120 cases, and to this he adds another 100 cases dealt with by his predecessor, making 220 in all. The first injection is carried out as soon as the pains distress the patient. He watches the effect on the circulation. If the desired sleep does not set in he injects in an hour a second dose, which has almost always the desired result, and the patient shows the signs of a combined scopolamine-morphine action. This is a quiet, not heavy sleep, which is interrupted at each pain, when the patient complains of pain, but there is total forgetfulness of this pain afterwards. He continues to inject in pauses of from 1½ to 3 hours. He aims at obtaining peaceful sleep between the pains and complete forgetfulness, and is not disappointed at a momentary awakening during the pains. The patients were extremely pleased with the re-

sults. In 18 per cent. he only obtained a sleepy condition, which was associated with a lessening of the pain, but no forgetfulness. In 12 per cent. no satisfactory result at all was attained. This was due in some cases to the fact that the birth was so rapid that there was no time to obtain a good action, and in some cases to the onset of symptoms which indicated threatening toxic symptoms. Actual failures only took place in 4 per cent. He describes the unpleasant side-effects of the injections, and considers that if one is careful in the dosage of the scopolamine, one will not meet with dangerous symptoms. He thinks that in from 20 to 30 per cent. of the cases the duration of the labour was lengthened somewhat, and sums up the conditions of the births, which show that in other respects the injections had but little deleterious effect. He believes that the method is suitable for relieving the pain of childbirth if proper care is exercised, and if no severe disturbance of the circulatory and respiratory organs is present. Each case must be carefully watched during the whole period.

### Maternity Work in Rhodesia.

Miss E. Maud Halliwell, formerly Matron of the Samaritan Hospital for Women, Liverpool, and a member of the Matrons' Council, who was recently appointed Lady Superintendent of the Salisbury Hostel and Maternity Home, Salisbury, Rhodesia, by the South African Colonisation Society, has found plenty of work awaiting her. The maternity work, which comprises a large part of that done by the institution, is growing rapidly, and is becoming known all over Rhodesia, and it is probable that shortly there will be openings on the staff for more fully trained nurses with C.M.B. certificates. "Sairey Gamp" had been in full possession in Rhodesia for years, but one or two accidents resulted in the recognition of the value of the trained and competent maternity nurse, first introduced into Salisbury by the Salisbury Hostel.

Miss Halliwell speaks warmly of the good work done by her predecessor, Miss Bicknose. She also says that though Rhodesia is quite a land of promise, no one should come out without a previous engagement.

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