

## The Midwife.

### The Maternity Hospital in Brussels.

A holiday on the Continent is very salutary; it corrects one's insular prejudices; it convinces us of the fact that in many respects we are far behind our neighbours, and it leads us to a more thorough appreciation of our own good things. My visit to *L'Hospice de la Maternité* at Brussels had the last effect; I thought of our own smart, efficient, cheerful lying-in hospitals with affectionate pride after having seen this very primitive and dreary building, consisting of six houses thrown into one, which is the only maternity hospital of which "little Paris" can boast. It occurred to me, however, that our own superiority might be brief-lived, when I heard of the elaborate plans for a new building outside the city; it is proposed to have an emergency and receiving station in Brussels, and a motor car is to convey patients when practicable to the hospital. The scheme, however, is as yet but a scheme, and governments move slowly; the hospitals in Belgium are controlled by the State; it seems, however, to be the custom to give large donations in memory of friends; this fact is testified on a slab attached to the building. There were a number of these on the *Grand Hospice*, of which the *Maternité* is an adjunct. Three doctors supervise the obstetric department, one of whom is called *Le Chef du Service*. None of them, however, live in the building. There is a room fitted up as a laboratory, and clinical and theoretical lectures are given by the staff to the pupil-midwives. The lecture room or *auditoire de clinique* was quite the best feature of the hospital; at need it could be transformed into a theatre. The floor was covered with linoleum, the walls were white, there were porcelain sinks and an operating table, in addition to the usual desks and furniture! Every term lime-light slides are demonstrated to the pupils. The Head Midwife or *Maitresse Sage Femme* received me kindly, though she was evidently a little reluctant to show the poor accommodation and equipment to her English colleague; however, she answered questions with good grace.

There are eight to ten pupil midwives, who work under her direction; they stay two years, and pay 1,500 francs (£60) for their training; a certain number of scholarships are given. They wear their ordinary dress, but are en-

veloped in long-sleeved holland overalls; two are "on call" to receive the patient, and take the case. They must pass an examination at the end of their course; they then either set up in practice among the poorer classes, the usual fee being about 10 francs, or they attend the better classes with a doctor and act as maternity nurses.

About 400 deliveries take place yearly in the hospital; each patient has a small separate ward; these were bare and comfortless in appearance, and in only one or two were the windows open. The patient is delivered in a small room adjoining; here there was a sitz bath, a bed with wool mattress, and what looked like a long high sloping desk with a mattress, mackintosh, and clean sheet over it; the patient is delivered upon this in the lithotomy position, her feet being supported on two high chairs; as a rule no interference is made with the third stage of labour, the uterus is not controlled, and the placenta is only expressed an hour after the birth of the child. My guide assured me that post partum hæmorrhage was most exceptional, but as the amount of blood lost is not measured, there is no standard by which one can compare results. The antiseptic in use is perchloride of mercury 1 in 4,000; formalin is also used for douching, etc.

Fairly voluminous records of the cases are kept, with details of the pregnancy, labour, and puerperium. The child is weighed directly after birth, and before leaving hospital. The usual stay is about 11 days, eight of which the mother spends in bed.

There is something rather forlorn about the whole building; the new Maternity Hospital is decidedly urgent. Meanwhile, it seemed to a flying visitor that good work was being done under the existing conditions. M.O.H.

#### A SELECT COMMITTEE ON MILK.

Midwives and Monthly Nurses, who are specially concerned in a pure milk supply, will be interested to learn that Earl Carrington, President of the Board of Agriculture, speaking at the annual conference of the North-Eastern Agricultural Federation, said that the Government proposed to refer the pure milk question to a Select Committee, with power to hear evidence. After acquiring facts, they would embody the salient points in a Bill, and get it through Parliament.

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