

The Midwife.

The Central Midwives' Board.

THE JUNE EXAMINATION.

At the June examination of the Central Midwives' Board, held in London and the provinces, 495 candidates were examined, and 408 passed. The percentage of failures was 17.2. It would be interesting to know how many of these midwives intend to practice midwifery, and how many of them will act as maternity nurses and take the certificate in order to prove their competence in this branch.

Monstrosities.

The idea that "monsters" were sent to warn or threaten men, their advent presaging sinister events, was popular among the Greek and Romans. The idea was that the gods required to be propitiated, and the natural sacrifice seemed to them the malformed child; this was a common practice in the early and middle ages. The idea was still prevalent after the introduction of Christianity, and lasted till the seventeenth century. It has been suggested that the term "monster" is derived from the Latin, *monstro*=I declare, or show, and that it came into use because the birth of such children foretold calamities. Writer after writer associates the two together, but perhaps the most interesting of all the literature is a curious document discovered by Assyriologists at Nineveh; it was one of many brick tablets belonging to a library. It is truly startling to find a catalogue of human monsters, born in all probability 2000 B.C. In each case, the event connected with their birth is subjoined. These were for the most part unfortunate, though a few presaged happy events, *e.g.*, when an infant with three legs was born, there was to be great prosperity in the land. The descriptions of many of these malformations are identical with those of the present day.

The word "monster" may have another origin, the Latin, *monere*=I warn. The instances are numerous of the apparent connection between national or personal misfortunes and the births of misshapen children. The superstition has not wholly died out even to-day. The attention of scientists is being seriously given to the mysterious causes which give rise to these abnormalities. The subject

is treated exhaustively by Ballantyne in his "Anti-Natal Pathology and Hygiene." Many of the laws of Eugenics (well-begetting), are yet to be formulated. It would be well for the race if the pathological newborn child could become a curiosity of a past age.

An Interesting Case.

The case recorded below is one of obstructed labour, due to unruptured hymen and seaming of vagina. The patient was a 2 gravida, aged 31; there had apparently been no difficulty in her first labour, five years previously. The second pregnancy was uneventful, and went to term. Labour proceeded normally till full dilatation; the lie was a first vertex. On making a vaginal examination, one finger only could be introduced. The hymen and fourchette were intact; in the lower portion of the vagina were considerable fibrous masses, thick, inelastic, and evidently old scar tissue. This formed as it were an arch round the vagina, about one inch and a-half from the hymen; it was attached in front to the pubes. The membranes were ruptured artificially. The doctor divided the arch posteriorly with scissors; the second stage then proceeded rapidly, the head causing great distension of the perineum, the hymen ruptured anteriorly; a central rupture of the perineum was threatened, but by vigorously directing the head forwards, it was averted; the posterior portion of the hymen and the vagina were, however, torn; the lacerations were sutured with catgut. The second stage lasted one hour. The patient's condition was good. During the puerperium there was considerable discharge from the vagina. Boracic douches were given twice daily, and she did very well. The baby, a boy, weighed 6 lb. 12½ ozs.; it was noticed at birth that the upper lids entirely overlapped the lower and were slightly œdematous. A drop of silver nitrate, 2 per cent., was instilled into each eye; on the next day there was considerable inflammation of the upper lids and marked symptoms of ophthalmia. This was actively treated.

This case, therefore, presents two rather rare features—the persistent hymen and seaming of the vagina, and the intra-uterine ophthalmic infection.

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