

The Midwife.

Schools of Midwifery.

THE MIDDLESEX HOSPITAL.

One of the latest schools of midwifery is that in connection with the Middlesex Hospital, where Maternity Wards have recently been added. Very fresh and dainty they look with their walls tiled in a soft shade of blue. One ward contains six and the other four beds, cots for the infants being in every case slung at the foot of the beds. In our view, small wards of this description are the most suitable form for maternity cases, both from the point of view of quiet for mothers and infants at a time when quiet is imperatively necessary, and because in the event of anxiety arising as to the progress of a case the possibilities of infection are minimised, although, happily, at the present day a normal puerperium is the rule almost without exception.

The Maternity Wards at the Middlesex Hospital are provided with bath rooms where patients can be bathed and clothed in clean clothes before being passed on to the convenient labour ward, which is like a small operating theatre, and provided with every appliance and instrument likely to be needed. The patient is ordinarily removed to the general wards at the conclusion of the labour, but if the case has been a severe one, and to move her is inexpedient, she can rest comfortably in bed in this ward until it can be safely undertaken. Mention must be made of the bath room with its convenient china baths for the babies, and hot water rails on which to dry and warm the towels. There are also lockers for the patients' clothes, and a linen closet for the supplies of the Sister-in-charge, who is immaculately neat, in white from head to foot.

In regard to the training school, pupils are received for a period of four months, and prepared for the examination of the Central Midwives' Board, for a fee of 25 guineas. They supplement their work in the wards with experience in the district in charge of an outside midwife, and they have the advantage of residence in the hospital, washing being provided, an unusual concession as midwifery pupils as a rule pay their own laundry expenses, which mount up to a considerable sum in the course of training. Residence in a hospital, where there is a night and day staff, also ensures that meals are easily obtainable at any hour, which is a great convenience when the irregularity of a midwife's work is considered.

Lectures and tutorial classes are given both by the physicians connected with the department and by midwives, and, to judge from the results obtained at the examinations of the Central Midwives' Board, the teaching must be excellent, as out of 38 candidates sent up 37 passed the examination, and the 38th passed on a second attempt, which is a record to be proud of. Nurses are received for training from other hospitals, pupils with previous general training being naturally preferred, and they are permitted to wear their own uniform while in residence. Applications for vacancies should be made to the Matron of the hospital, Miss Lloyd-Still.

Nothing is more significant of the beneficent effect of Lord Lister's discoveries than the re-opening of wards in general hospitals once more, as is becoming increasingly usual, for maternity cases. Previous to the application of the principles of antisepsis, and asepsis in the treatment of patients, it will be remembered that the maternal morbidity from puerperal sepsis, conveyed by entirely preventable means, was so appalling that the entire closing both of maternity wards in general hospitals, and of lying-in hospitals also, was at one time seriously considered. That it should be found possible and advantageous to open such wards once again is a triumph for the exponent of surgical cleanliness, and the lesson which nurses and midwives have to bear constantly in mind is that to relax vigilance in the slightest degree is to expose the patient to peril. The first essentials for a maternity nurse or midwife are intelligence and absolute conscientiousness in carrying out apparently trivial and often wearisome details of aseptic technique.

Nurses should certainly avail themselves whenever possible of the increasing facilities offered them to acquire a knowledge of midwifery and obstetric nursing, so that they may become conversant with the three great branches of their profession, medical, surgical, and obstetric nursing. The medical profession insists, in its own case, on its members being qualified in all three branches, and the nursing profession should follow along the same lines. Does there not seem something almost unnatural in a nurse who can faultlessly prepare everything for a big operation, but is absolutely ignorant of the way to hold a new born infant safely and comfortably? No nurse should be content till she has obtained obstetric training either in her own school or elsewhere.

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