

PROFESSIONAL REVIEW.

MODERN SURGERY AND ITS MAKING.
A TRIBUTE TO LISTERISM.

Any book from the pen of Dr. C. W. Saleeby, F.R.S.E., who has won for himself a foremost place in the ranks of eugenists, commands the attention of all thoughtful people, and to nurses "Modern Surgery and Its Making," by this brilliant author, published by Messrs. Herbert & Daniel, 21, Maddox Street, W., is of especial interest, both because the history of surgery may be divided into the pre-Listerian, and Listerian epochs, and also because of the generous, most generous, tribute paid by him to the work of the modern nurse.

To the modern midwife also the book appeals, for Listerism has benefitted not only those who require surgical operations, but very especially mothers in the pain and peril of childbirth; and the practice of the obstetrician, whether doctor or midwife, is, or should be, revolutionised by it.

LISTERISM AND MOTHERHOOD.

Dr. Saleeby distinguishes sharply between "two fundamentally different things, childbirth uninterfered with, and childbirth as it occurs under the care of midwife, nurse, or doctor. Natural childbirth, as we may observe it amongst primitive peoples, is very largely protected from infection. Nothing occurs to introduce it, and the trend of events is towards expulsion rather than introduction. The patient is not confined in infected surroundings, she is not in the same ward with other patients who are infected, and having no attendant at all, she runs no risk of danger from doctor, midwife, student or nurse, who may have come straight from opening an abscess, or from the post-mortem room, or the dissecting rooms. And further, anyone who will consider the anatomy and physiology of the function of childbirth from the point of view of Listerism will perceive that the natural obstacles to and provision against infection are various, efficient and almost insuperable. It is only with human interference that the risk begins." The author proceeds to show that the civilised woman and her child are the better for proper attention at this time, because "never was normal function so near the pathological as this is," but that with the doctor or midwife "there enters not merely a safeguard, or possible saviour of mother and child, or both, in many common circumstances, but also a most substantial risk, or rather, one should say, there did enter, and may enter, a most substantial risk. But Pasteur and Lister have revealed the facts, and so far from this special risk now attaching to good obstetrics, it lessens the naturally very slight risk of infection.

"It was the very profession of the attendant that constituted the bulk of the danger; it was the very fact that the lying-in hospital was a lying-in hospital that made it dangerous for the lying-in women. One does not take a sufferer from, shall we say, varicose veins, and treat him

in a smallpox hospital. But we did take women who were not suffering from surgical inflammation and put them at the very time when they were to undergo a wounding (a natural wounding, but that made no difference), beside patients who were suffering from this terrible infection. And thus, if things were risky in ordinary practice in the patients' homes, and if there was an obvious danger in the carriage of microbes to the susceptible, the risk was vastly greater in maternity hospitals. It could often be shown with strict and literal accuracy, these hospitals were more deadly than the battlefield; the proportion of those killed in giving life was higher than amongst those who went forth to take it."

If Listerism were conscientiously practised by those attending women in childbirth, the mortality from puerperal fevers, pyæmia, and all forms of septic infection would be wiped out, and the fact that thousands of women annually still lose their lives from these preventible causes is a national disgrace.

Passing over many chapters of absorbing interest we must confine our review to two which primarily concern the readers of this Journal those on "Miss Florence Nightingale" and "The Modern Nurse."

MISS FLORENCE NIGHTINGALE.

Dr. Saleeby writes:—"It is a commonplace of Sociology that even the most individual work of art is a social product. Similarly, it is true of the history of science that great achievements are built by many hands, even though individuality be as necessary here as elsewhere; and if we review the causes which have created modern surgery, we find that one of the most remarkable women in history, and certainly one of the most valuable, played an indispensable part in its creation."

The author then demonstrates that without the work of Miss Florence Nightingale, undoubtedly, modern surgery would not be what it is, and says:—"So soon as we recognise in her the creator of modern nursing, and so soon as we realise what modern nursing means for modern surgery, so soon must we perceive that her name deserves correlative honour with that of the great man who begat modern surgery. This is indeed a product of the two sexes, as all human products, rightly considered, are; since all human producers are. The achievement, as we now see, may be said to be the immediate product of Lister and Nightingale, and even those who have the folly to pronounce themselves partisans of either sex will do well to forbear if they are tempted to allot a higher degree of merit to either the indispensable man, or the indispensable woman whom we here celebrate.

"All our ideas of merit and credit are at the mercy, if we knew it, of the principle of causation. In judging our fellows we have to refer to their physical parents, whom they did not choose, and to their spiritual parents whom, in a sense, they may have chosen, but for whom they are not responsible. We have seen that

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