

The Midwife.

THE EVOLUTION OF OBSTETRIC MEDICINE.

Sir John Byers, M.A., M.D., M.A.O., Professor of Midwifery in the Queen's University of Belfast, contributes a most interesting article on the above subject to the *British Medical Journal* with illustrations from some old midwifery books. One of the most interesting of these is

THE COMPLEAT MIDWIFE.

This was published in 1663, and contains a "Preface by Sundry Practitioners in and about the City of London," which runs as follows:

"Christian Reader,—It is high time there being already published many Treatises in this kind, for us to discharge our consciences to the good of the Nation; we have perused all that have been in this nature in *English*, and find them strangely deficient, so crowded with unnecessary Notions, and dangerous Mistakes, that we thought it fit to give you warning of them, that for the future the unfortunate Practisers may prevent the *almost guilt* of the crying sin of Murder."

Referring to the writings of Mr. Culpeper "a man whom we otherwise respect," the Sundry Practitioners say: "We must deal faithfully with you, that that same piece of his intitled 'The Directory for Midwives' is the most desperately deficient of them all; except he writ it for necessity, he could certainly never have been so sinful as to have exposed it to the light."

Having thus disposed of Mr. Culpeper, they continue:

"Now, Christian Reader, to give thee a true information of what we have here done for thy good, we shall not only justify from our own experiences, but fully demonstrate from the writings of the best Practisers, both of the *French*, *Spanish*, and *Italians*, and other nations; and we must clearly confesse, that we are highly obliged to the incomparable labours of that most Famous Woman of the World, *Madam Loug. Bourgeo*, late midwife to the Queen of *France*: the praises that we read of all those that ever heard of her, are not so much a flourish, as truth; for her reasons are solid experiences, and her witnesses have been all of the most eminent persons of *France*; and not only of her, but as we have already exprest, of the most excellent known Men and Women of this Art of other Countries: It's upon this account that we break the barriers and boldly stand the brunt of all Censures.

"The chief occasion of this Book is, to make it a great Exemplary and School, where Medicine married to the Midwife's industry, may teach everyone the admirable effects of the Divinity of this Art of Midwifery.

"And now knowing, Reader, that the Receipts herein contained, which have ever had happy successes, are not made publick to the world on any other sign, than of the assistance of such persons, whom either the want of fortune, or opportunity desireth such sudden helps, neither can we be without bleeding hearts, if we but consider how many have been lost by the unskilfulness of those that attempted this great Work; our should we have prostrated our reputation and private experiences but to correct the frequent mistakes of most *Midwives*, who, resting too bold upon the common way of delivering women, neglect all the wholesome and profitable Rules of Art, which might concern them in the occult diseases of Women, as also of the anatomical parts of the Body. Thus having discharged our consciences, we have no more to write, but refer you to the Book itself, desiring a blessing of God on these our faithfull endeavours. We are the hearty Well-wishers of your good."

The book opens with

THE COMPLEAT MIDWIFE HER

PRACTICE ENLARGED.

The serious and most choice secrets of Madam Louyse Bourgeoies, Midwife to the Queen of France; which she left to her daughter as a Guide for her; And also for the Practice of all discreet Midwives, to prevent all dangerous Mistakes in a work of so high Concernment; necessary to be known by all Child-bearing Women, and others.

The "Compleat Midwife," Sir John Byers informs us, occupies 276 pages of the book, the first 242 being contributed by Madam Louyse Bourgeoies, with steel plates, one giving "The natural forme of a child lying in ye womb," the other showing figures of the special organs in both sexes, which are fully described in the text, in accordance with the anatomical and physiological knowledge of those days. Hints are suggested for the proper management of pregnancy and for the minor complications of labour; while in chapter xxviii, "Of cases of extremity, and first, what is to be done to a woman, who in her travail is accompanied with a flux of blood, and with convulsions," she shows how well she must have been taught by Ambroise Paré. The cross-bed position is recommended, podalic version is fully described, and when the child is dead in the womb and it is necessary that it should be delivered, the method of using the hook is demonstrated.

The remainder of the book is occupied with:

"A full supply of such most usefull and admirable secrets, which Mr. Nicolas Culpepper in hi

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