

# The Midwife.

## A TEXT BOOK FOR MIDWIVES.

Dr. John S. Fairbairn, F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S., Obstetric Physician at St. Thomas' Hospital, and physician and general lecturer to midwives at the General Lying-in Hospital, York Road, London, S.E., &c., is to be warmly congratulated on the "Text Book for Midwives" recently published by the Joint Committee of Henry Frowde and Hodder & Stoughton, Oxford Press Warehouse, Falcon Square, E.C., price 10s. 6d. net. The author by an association of over twelve years with midwives as teacher, examiner, post-graduate lecturer, and medical colleague, is well acquainted with their needs and aspirations, and although he states in his preface that "the text book contains more than has hitherto been considered necessary for midwives, and is open to the criticism of going beyond what is required by them and of them," yet he holds that "those who know the more advanced school of practising midwives will make no demur. That school is possessed with an insatiable thirst for knowledge, and is rarely content with what has hitherto been given it in books written solely for midwives." He writes further that the book is his contribution towards meeting the legitimate aspirations of the midwife for a higher professional education.

The book is arranged in nine parts, with many sub-divisions: 1. Anatomy and Physiology; 2. Pregnancy; 3. Labour; 4. Abnormal Presentations; 5. Abnormal Labour; 6. The Puerperium; 7. The Infant; 8. Hygiene and Disinfection; 9. Midwives' Duties. There is also an Appendix dealing with note taking, weights and measures and drugs, a glossary of terms not explained in the text and a comprehensive index. There are also numerous and excellent illustrations, five being in colour.

It is quite impossible to comment on all the subjects dealt with in 284 closely written pages. The object of this review will therefore be to draw attention to points on which little stress is laid in the ordinary manuals for midwives, and first in this order comes that of "Bacterial Infection." A clear elementary knowledge of this subject is essential for a midwife; without it she must be regarded as unsafe. Yet the author writes: "Every examiner at the Central Midwives Board has had experience of the extraordinary ignorance exhibited by candidates as to what bacteria are, and what they are like. A candidate will say that bacteria are 'just germs'; whether animal, vegetable or mineral she is uncertain; all she knows is that the troublesome ritual of antiseptics is necessary to prevent them appearing from somewhere or other. If the midwife is to carry out intelligently the methods

of preventing bacterial infection she must know more than this, and this brief account of the characteristics and mode of growth of the more important varieties of bacteria is given as the minimum of knowledge necessary for the well-trained midwife." Then follows a lucid description of bacteria, their method of growth and multiplication, and the difference between the putrefactive and the disease-producing bacteria, but as it is impossible to describe all of them the author confines his attention to those which specially concern midwifery practice, the pyogenic cocci, as they give rise to the most serious forms of puerperal fever.

"The cocci commonly found in the septic infections of child-bed are the *streptococcus*, the *staphylococcus* and the *gonococcus*." The last-mentioned merits consideration as the cause of ophthalmia in the newly born.

The author concludes an illuminating chapter with the words: "The work of the bacteriologist in discovering how to increase the resistance of the blood and tissues to bacterial infection, and produce immunity, and how to destroy the poisonous effects of bacterial toxins, has led to some of the greatest advances of modern medicine, and much more is to be hoped for in this direction."

Under the management of normal pregnancy we read: "All women pregnant for the first time should be carefully observed during the last two or three months of pregnancy. They are more liable to certain complications, and also there is no history of previous labours to guide the attendant as to what is to be expected. In all cases it is advisable to make an examination a few weeks before labour is expected in order to determine how the child is lying, and whether the head fits the brim, and generally to detect any abnormality that may call for medical aid."

A chapter is devoted to the investigation of a labour case, including the diagnosis of the onset of labour, and of the presentation and position; also the methods of making abdominal and vaginal examinations.

The author describes abdominal examination as "the most important part of the examination of the patient in labour, and with practice it will be found that earlier and fuller information can be obtained by it than by vaginal examination, while it has also the further advantage that it can be repeatedly carried out without incurring any risk of infecting the patient. Hence every opportunity must be taken to acquire sufficient skill in abdominal palpation to enable the midwife to rely on it as the best means of discovering the presentation and position of the foetus." The methods employed are then described in detail.

The duty of the attendant on an obstetric case is summed up as including the use of "every

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