

# The Midwife.

## PREVENTIVE OBSTETRICS.

Miss Mary Beard, Director of the Instructive District Nursing Association, Boston, writing in *The Modern Hospital* on the above subject, says in part:—

"What is known as the 'West End' in Boston is a very congested district. Russians, Poles, Italians and many other foreign-born women live here. In the heart of this district, the Boston Lying-in Hospital is situated. Near by is the pregnancy clinic of the out-patient department of the hospital. This out-patient department was established in 1888. Since that time 43,454 patients have been cared for in their homes by this department in various parts of the City of Boston. In many particulars, this service has met the fundamental needs of the mothers in the West End. Frequently women who have moved away come back in order to have the care of the Boston Lying-in Hospital doctors and nurses before and after the time of confinement. The following is the routine procedure: Women are encouraged to come early and may apply at any time to the pregnancy clinic for admission to the out-patient department. A thorough examination is made at the clinic. The patient is then given a card of admission to the out-patient department, her name and address are given to the district nurse in her locality, and a routine of prenatal nursing is begun. Printed instructions are pasted into each nurse's notebook and are intended as a reminder to her.

"Every ten days a visit is paid by the nurse. For each patient there is a medical history card and a family social history card.

"Observation of the patient's physical condition, of her habits of personal hygiene, diet, recreation, exercise, clothing, regularity of living, is the nurse's first concern. Any abnormal condition is reported immediately to the doctor in charge of the pregnancy clinic and the patient is visited by the doctor if she does not report at the clinic when she is sent by the nurse. Observation of the physical condition is only part of the nurse's duty on these prenatal visits. Upon the nurse's ability to teach the mother such things as the importance of preparing herself for the duty of nursing her baby, of clothing him properly and providing for him a suitable sleeping place depends the real value of her visit. Reassurance to an anxious young mother counts for much and reacts definitely upon her physical condition.

"When labour begins the Boston Lying-in Hospital is notified; an extern is sent who is one of the Harvard Medical School students. This student delivers the patient unless some abnor-

mality presents itself, in which case the house officer is called, who, if he sees fit, calls upon a member of the attending staff. Immediate response to the patient's call is assured by this system and the skill of the best obstetricians in Boston is at the service of the patient who needs expert care. The service is generally recognized in the neighbourhood as a charity, although the Boston Lying-in Hospital collects an indefinite fee where this is possible.

"After-care for a patient is as follows:—The student who has delivered the patient visits her twice daily for three days. The routine after-care given by a student is planned with infinite attention to minor details. For instance, he is expected to examine the patient on each visit, to do the dressing, to see that the binder and bed linen are clean and in proper condition, to prepare and leave in a covered dish the pads to be used between visits. He must also examine the baby and is responsible for the condition of eyes and cord.

"After the third day, the student visits the patient once a day until the ninth or tenth day. The house officer visits each patient on the third day after delivery and again on the tenth, in order to discharge her in good condition.

"Nursing care is given by the same district nurse who made prenatal visits in the family. The cost of a nurse's visit is fifty cents. She collects the whole or a part of this fee, according to circumstances. An Italian doctor with a large foreign practice in the neighbourhood of the pregnancy clinic has said that these women are both able and willing to pay as much as ten dollars for care during child-birth. Since emphasis has been laid in the Nursing Association upon the principle of fee collection in the last two years, the amount collected in this district has increased to one hundred dollars a month.

"Attendance at the pregnancy clinic means that such measurements are taken as will preclude the surprise of discovering an abnormal pelvis when it is too late. It means, too, that tests will be made whenever a patient shows symptoms of syphilis or gonorrhoea, so that treatment may be begun at once.

"The pregnancy clinic and prenatal nursing, with the best care at confinements, has become a very popular service. This is to be accounted for by the recognition of the people themselves that the best that science can offer to any prospective mother is at their service and is also practically available.

"The regularity of the service, the perfection of the system and the prompt response to the summons when the patient needs a doctor, has made a business-like maternity centre the worth of which is proved daily by its use."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)