

# The Midwife.

## IS A SPECIAL TRAINING FOR TEACHERS DESIRABLE? \*

BY MISS M. OLIVE HAYDON.

The certificated teacher is a feature of modern times, we have the certificated teacher of massage, cookery, laundry, and other arts and crafts; the teaching of practical midwifery is on the same lines as these, but on a higher plane—a higher plane because indifferent, bad, or careless teaching may endanger the lives of mothers and babies. At present practical teachers of midwifery have to satisfy the Central Midwives Board as to their experience, their management of their practice, their character, and their willingness to give adequate instruction to the pupils. All these are admirable in themselves, and necessary, but it does not follow that such an approved teacher has the gift or ability for imparting her knowledge. It is as much a fallacy that any skilful midwife can teach as it is that every mother has an instinctive knowledge of how to manage a baby.

There are a few gifted persons who, without any special training for teaching do it inspiringly, originally, and brilliantly; they are not always the most learned in theory, but they are usually people with love and enthusiasm for their work, progressive, and intensely interested in "leading out" the mental and physical capacities of their fellows. The born teacher loves the pupil to excel in his or her work, and even to excel him or her. There are exceptional pupils who have previously been educated in other branches of work who learn without teaching. But such teachers and pupils are rare.

In the educational world it is coming about more and more that a high degree is not sufficient to secure a good post as teacher, unless its possessor has also taken a course of practical training as a teacher.

There are, it must be confessed, men and women who would never make good teachers whatever courses they followed; there are the "born" teachers who might profit little by them; midway is the mass of average ability who greatly profit by such courses. The majority of practical teachers of midwifery would, I think, welcome a special training for their difficult and delicate task, and would do their work better if they were more conversant with the principles that underlie successful teaching, had some knowledge of psychology, were conversant with the methods of men and women who stand out as great teachers.

The teaching of practical midwifery is, in many respects, similar to the teaching of little children—

\* A Paper read at the Conference for Teachers of Pupil Midwives, Midwives' Institute, London, May 30th, 1918.

the training of the senses to observe accurately, manual training, the training in expression of sense impressions, in making discoveries, and in applying common sense and such knowledge as they possess, practically. Every teacher of midwifery would do well to study the work of such people as Froebel, Rousseau, James, Montessori. There are latent capacities in everyone that only need suitable environment and opportunities to develop, and our problem as practical teachers is how best to deal with each individual. Personally I found Madame Montessori's book a great inspiration and encouragement; she thought out good methods for educating feeble-minded and backward children, and met with wonderful success. Most of us are backward, and many of us are comparatively feeble-minded (I mean in contrast to what we might be), and certainly many of our pupils, owing to the stupid way they have been taught in earlier years, are poor material. In desperation we are apt to perpetuate bad methods, learning by rote, unintelligent swallowing of information, slavery to printed matter, incapacity for retaining whatever is not written down, &c. A German girl once said to me, "in England it is always 'schreiber, schreiber' (write, write); in Germany our professors say 'denken' (think). They do not all do so. We teachers are faithful to Madam How. We are afraid of Madam Why?"

Practical teachers of midwifery have much the same job as the N.C.O.s of the Army. They may be weak on strategy, history, mathematics, but they have been through the mill; they know "how" things should be done, if they do not know "why." So the teacher of practical midwifery usually knows how to manage normal pregnancies, labour, or puerperia; although she may know little of embryology, bacteriology, and other sciences. The N.C.O. who was progressive enough to study theory, would probably get a commission; why should not the practical teacher of midwifery, who studied theory more advanced than that required to be certified, be promoted?

I understand that in Scotch universities it is the custom for aspiring graduates to take students for coaching outside the university; if they gain a reputation as able men, they are likely to be offered a chair in the university with wider opportunities. I like to look forward to a time when the Midwives' Institute will be the College of Midwifery, with the ablest professors to pilot it, and midwives, who have distinguished themselves as teachers, will have opportunity to help practically juniors and midwives who are keen to train pupils.

This Conference, brief as it is, may be regarded as a course for practical teachers, for its aim is to inspire higher ideals. We hope that it may be held yearly in different centres. The demon-

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)