

The Midwife.

"THE WELFARE OF THE EXPECTANT MOTHER."

An excellent little handbook, entitled "The Welfare of the Expectant Mother," by Mrs. Scharlieb, C.B.E., M.D., M.S., has been published by Messrs. Cassell & Co., La Belle Sauvage, E.C. 4, as one of the English Public Health Series, and should prove of much value to the classes of the community for which it has been written.

Though the volume is a small one, the subjects cover a wide area, from the "Signs and Symptoms of Pregnancy," to "Laws and Regulations Concerning Maternity Welfare."

Couched in simple and concise language, the book is well within the intelligence of all classes of readers.

The calculation of the duration of pregnancy for instance, is given with the reasons why there are sometimes errors in making this calculation. The author states "that where fertilisation takes place before a period, the calculation will be out any number of days, up to fourteen"; and makes the interesting suggestion that the old saying concerning a "lazy girl" was that, when a baby was late keeping its appointment, it was generally a girl, the supposition being that the child conceived when its mother's nutritional value was at its highest—immediately before menstruation—would develop into the highly specialised female. She says that "it has also been observed that during the hardships and privations of war boy babies are more numerous."

In the chapter, under heading of "The Midwife," the author remarks "that it is unfortunate that the midwife is not bound under the Acts to make any special examination with a view to ascertaining whether or not the woman's calculation appears to be correct, and whether there is a reasonable expectation that the labour will be normal."

"It is, therefore, desirable that a careful examination should be made as soon as possible after the booking of a case, special care being taken to notice the height and conformation of the patient." In the case of suspected gonorrhœa, the author suggests that a specimen should be collected and sent in a sterilised test tube to the woman's doctor, or to the hospital at which she is advised to attend. We do not endorse the suggestion that it is the duty of the Health Visitor to visit the mother and child within the first few days after the confinement, and "see if the infant is comfortably dressed, and whether its eyes and eyelids appear to be normal."

We hold that, during the puerperium, the Health Visitor should have no jurisdiction in the lying-in room, though after-care may be, and no doubt is, of extreme value, if she is properly

equipped for her work. We observe that, at the conclusion of the chapter the author remarks that "the industrial woman is justly apt to resent so many visitors and such varying advice."

The chapter on "Maternity Homes" gives some very useful suggestions as to the establishment of such homes. The suggestion is that "in very small towns and country districts a well drained and comfortable house should be taken by the local authority for the accommodation of the midwife and two or three patients."

"Such an arrangement would provide for the comfort, cleanliness, and careful supervision of lying in women, and, also by concentrating some portion of her work, it would economise the strength and time of the midwife." It is pointed out that if this suggestion were to be carried out it would be necessary for a maternity nurse to work under the midwife.

We are greatly in favour of this suggestion as from the point of view of the patient, the Lying-in-Hospitals, invaluable as they are to those in their immediate vicinity, are comparatively useless to those women where transport is not as easily obtainable as in the big towns, and, in cases of emergency, they have to fall back upon the local Poor Law Infirmary.

The last two chapters dealing with "Illegitimacy" and "The Laws and Regulations concerning Maternity Welfare" are, perhaps, the most valuable in the book, for we imagine that many otherwise excellently equipped nurses are often ignorant of laws connected with what is indirectly a very important part of their work. A nurse is doubly valuable if she is able to be, in addition, a sympathiser and "friend in need."

The eligibility for Maternity Benefit of course intimately concerns the midwife when it may be, perhaps, the sole source of the necessary provision for the mother and child.

Dealing with "Illegitimacy," the author gives the recommendations of the National Council for the Unmarried Mother and her Child." Those who know anything of the affiliation laws will gladly welcome its recommendations. To quote only two:—

(1) That paternity proceedings for purposes of affiliation shall be taken in future without reference or expense to the mother, and that the onus of proving paternity should fall on the State rather than on her.

(6) That where a father cannot be found, the payment of the allowance should be made by the State.

A nurse or midwife who knows the ropes in these directions will often be able to render incalculable service to young mothers under her care.

We cannot conclude without one word in defence of the foster mother, who, in our experience is often the salt of the earth.

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