

The Midwife.

THE KING'S FIRST GRANDSON.

Nurses and midwives, who know so well the relief in the houses of rich and poor when fulfilment succeeds expectation, and King Baby arrives to hold sway over his court, can appreciate the pleasure of the King and Queen on the birth of their first grandchild, and the joy of Princess Mary that "a man is born into the world." More than most Royal Princesses, her experience in the wards of the Great Ormond Street Children's Hospital will have enabled her to appreciate the responsibilities as well as the joys of motherhood. The nurse selected for the honour of nursing the Princess is Miss Ida Thomas, trained at Guy's Hospital, who holds the certificate of the Central Midwives' Board.

SOME PIONEER MIDWIVES.

Miss M. Olive Haydon, Sister-in-Charge, Paget House Midwifery Training School, and member of the Central Midwives' Board, gives the following interesting details of some pioneer members of "the Senior Profession for Women," in this month's issue of *Maternity and Child Welfare*.

SOME FAMOUS PIONEER MIDWIVES.

Of all European midwives the best known perhaps is Madame la Chapelle; her memoirs are delightful reading, and she did much for improving the education of midwives in France. For details of other celebrated midwives of the 15th, 16th, and 17th centuries, we are indebted to G. J. Witowski, doctor of medicine of the faculty of Paris. One of the early pioneers was Fulvie Morrata, born at Ferrara in 1526. Delacoux writes that she received an excellent education from her father, who was a man of culture, "an education adapted for the happy dispositions with which nature had endowed her." She was very proficient in ancient languages, which became "as familiar as her own." She lost her father early, undertook the education of her young brother, and supported him. She married a German doctor, and, although ignorant of scientific language, prepared lectures for him. At that time men were excluded from the practice of midwifery, the law enacting the punishment of death to any man assisting at a labour! Fulvie Morrata conceived the noble idea of establishing a school for midwives in Heidelberg. Her early death at 29 prevented its coming into being, but later, owing to her inspiration, the Archbishop of Cologne established a school of midwifery at Bonn.

GERMAN PIONEERS.

Marguerite Fuss, "Mère Marguerite," was a renowned German midwife; her mother, who be-

longed to a noble family, was also a midwife, and her father a teacher in Heidelberg. She married at the age of 22, but had no children. As her husband was dissipated, she got a separation, and devoted herself to midwifery. On her mother's death she inherited a little money, and resolved to study midwifery more thoroughly. Marguerite went to Strasburg, and followed courses of lectures by famous doctors, and learnt how to deal with difficult cases. After two years spent in this way she settled in Cologne, and made a great reputation. She was called to royal courts—Holland, Denmark, and others—to exercise her profession, and her success was brilliant. . . In the 17th century there also flourished in Germany Justine Siegemundin, daughter of a pastor in Silesia, who has perhaps a larger European reputation than Marguerite Fuss; in 1690 she published a book which consisted of conversations between Justine and her pupil Christine, a book which is often quoted. She decided to be a midwife because at 23, when she had suppression of the periods, midwives made a diagnosis of a full-time pregnancy; this convinced her of their ignorance, and she decided to devote herself to their instruction. She too, like Mère Marguerite, was often summoned to foreign courts.

FRENCH PIONEERS.

It is, however, France that has the most celebrated midwives. Peronne du Moutier, midwife of Anne of Austria, was head midwife of the Hôtel Dieu, Paris. When she died the queen paid the expenses of her funeral as a thankoffering. Marguerite de la Marche wrote a manual for midwives, "an elementary, methodical and concise book."

Anne Catherine Caranda was the first married woman admitted as midwife to the Hôtel Dieu in 1871. She had been separated from her husband twenty years, but it was stipulated that she should retire if she rejoined him. In the 18th century, we read of Christine Clare, whose lectures were so popular that they were followed by doctors. Marie Prudence Plisson, distinguished in literature as well as in natural sciences, made a study of the controversial question as to whether gestation might be prolonged, and came to the conclusion that it might be longer than 280 days. . . Madame du Coudray obtained a permit from the king which authorised her to hold courses of instruction in all the provinces of the kingdom. She did practical demonstrations with a mannequin of her own invention, and made the midwives practise with it and a flexible foetus. She died in 1825, but her niece and pupil, Marguerite Coutenceau, continued the lecture courses, at one of which she met her husband, an obstetrician. She founded the Bordeaux Maternity Hospital, to which she and her husband devoted their time, money, and energies. She published a book on midwifery principles.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)