

The Midwife.

A TEXT-BOOK OF OBSTETRICS FOR NURSES:

We have received from the publishers, Messrs. D. Appleton & Co., London and New York, a copy of "Obstetrics for Nurses," by Dr. Everett Dudley Plass, Obstetrician-in-Chief, Henry Ford Hospital, Detroit, formerly Associate Professor in Obstetrics, Johns Hopkins Medical School.

The book is "affectionately dedicated" by the author "to my wife, an American nurse and mother."

The author states in the preface that "while actively engaged in instructing nurses in the classroom, and in the wards, it became apparent that the existing text-books on obstetrics were quite unsatisfactory adjuncts to such efforts, the standard medical works being too complicated and technical, while the special nurses' books go into so much detail that fundamental facts are apt to be overlooked. . . . While too much knowledge is sometimes decried as being detrimental to the development of a good, 'practical' nurse, there can be no question that the individual in any line of endeavour who does things knowingly and thoughtfully is superior to the automaton. Nursing itself is constantly rising to a higher plane and progressively more learning will be required of all in the profession. Because of these beliefs, then, concerning the trend of the times, the author has sought to anticipate the nurses' needs, and to develop a text which shall be a bit ahead of the present line of advance, thereby, of course, inviting the criticism that the subject matter is altogether too theoretical."

The author in his introductory chapter defines *obstetrics* as "the branch of medical art and science concerned with the problems of child-bearing. In the past its scope has been too frequently limited to the actual delivery of the child, but the present tendency is toward a much broader conception, which includes the whole process of reproduction. From the more modern viewpoint the study of obstetrics divides itself naturally into four phases: *Preparation*, the menstrual cycles; *pregnancy (gestation)*, the development of the ovum within the uterus; *labour (parturition, confinement)*, the expulsion of the child into the outer world; and *puerperium (lying-in period)*, the return of the mother to the normal."

The fact is emphasised that "Labour is the greatest ordeal in a woman's life, and, from the stand-point of the race, the most important. A successful labour is one that results in a healthy baby and a strong, organically sound mother. The occasion calls for the very best professional skill and care, for the outcome vitally affects two individuals. The disastrously high maternal and fetal mortality, formerly so common, has been

greatly reduced by reason of the introduction of surgical methods and perfected details of treatment, so that, at present, labour is not a particularly dangerous experience."

RELATION OF OBSTETRICS TO OTHER BRANCHES.

"Every branch of medicine is, at times, dependent upon each of the others, and obstetrics is no exception to the rule. Physiology, pathology, and chemistry, among the underlying sciences, have a prominent place in the development of obstetrical knowledge, and, on the clinical side internal medicine, as well as practically all the specialities, must, on occasion, come into the foreground."

GENERAL DUTIES OF THE NURSE.

"Before beginning her obstetrical training, a nurse should be familiar with general nursing and with the details of good surgical technic. The special aspects of the work must, of course, be learned, but the practical nursing care of obstetrical patients consists largely in the employment of measures previously mastered. This enables the pupil nurse to concentrate upon the new facts with which she must familiarise herself without shirking the essential nursing details. Reasonable curtailment of routine procedures on a maternity service, where nurses are trained, is advocated, because it increases the time available for instruction. Intelligent objective observation of the patient means much to the busy practitioner or house officer, and should be cultivated. Too much stress cannot be laid upon the two fundamental qualities—*cleanliness and patience*."

DISSEMINATION OF KNOWLEDGE.

"At present women are much more reliably informed about the subject of child-bearing than ever before, but a vast amount of education is still necessary and no one can do this better than the nurse, who meets her patients in such an intimate association. She should have at her disposal a definite knowledge of facts which can be presented to combat the prevalent superstitions and lay theories, and she should use every opportunity to enlighten those less well informed. The establishment of pre-natal clinics in the larger cities has been a great factor in public enlightenment among the poorer classes, and the wealthy woman early seeks the advice of the specialist, but the unfortunate middle-class is, as usual, most in need of instruction and advice."

"Within recent years there has been a gradual improvement in the details of treatment, but no epoch-making discoveries have been forthcoming. The past decade has had as its outstanding feature the introduction of systematic pre-natal care, the beneficial results of which are already becoming apparent."

The book is admirably produced and illustrated.

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