

The Midwife.

MIDWIFERY IN DENMARK.*

By MISS RODTNESS,

Matron, Copenhagen Maternity Hospital.

I have the honour of having been sent here as representative of the Danish Midwives to take part in the Congress, and I should like to express on their behalf our thanks for the invitation. It is a great pleasure to me to briefly speak on Danish obstetric aid, and the care of the puerperal mother and child, as also on the organisation for midwives in Denmark.

Before a rational instruction of midwives was introduced in Denmark they were instructed by the ministers of the Church. In 1714 a midwife commission was established by law, and in the same year also an examination for midwives was provided for by law. The first book for midwives was published in 1864, the last having been published in 1919 by Professor Hauch. Rational instruction was introduced in 1787, and has, since then, been conducted by physicians, with the assistance of midwives and nurses. There exist two lying-in hospitals in Denmark, the larger one being in Copenhagen. This hospital is divided into two departments, and forms a part of the National Hospital, the one of these departments being conducted by Professor Cammeltoft, and here the physicians receive their training in gynaecology and obstetrics. To this department is also attached a section for confinements, a section for the care of the puerperal mother and child, and a section for gynaecology, besides a gynaecologic polyclinic, a polyclinic for poor pregnant women, and an X-ray department. The other department forms the Danish School for Midwives, the only institute of its kind in Denmark, being conducted by Professor Hauch. Also at this school there is a section for confinements, the care of the puerperal mother and child, a nursing section, a gynaecological section, and a section for pregnant women.

The lying-in hospital is under the control of the Government, and forms a humane institution intended to receive, free of charge, unmarried girls looking forward to their confinement, as also very poor married women, besides pregnant women with whom irregularities in the confinement may be expected. The physicians of this hospital may also be called by any of the midwives in town to poor patients, both at day and night, equally free of charge.

Every year forty midwives are trained, at ages varying between twenty and thirty years; these midwives are recruited from all classes, some having been previously trained nurses, but this is by no means necessary. Examinations are held once a year, and are conducted by Professor

Hauch, a representative of the Board of Health, and a midwife appointed by the Board of Health. The pupils may take first, second, or third class diplomas (the two best receiving prize awards consisting of a midwife's complete outfit bag of utensils).

In order to ensure that we got suitable women, the pupils are nominated by the district physicians in Denmark, then again selected by Professor Hauch and the Director of the National Hospital. After one month an examination for admission is held, and if the pupils do not pass this examination they are sent home.

The midwives are sent for at all confinements in Denmark, and, as a rule, they conduct all normal deliveries. Only in case anything dangerous may occur the physician must be called.

I shall now add a few words on the instruction of midwives in our country.

This instruction lasts usually one year. (It is the desire of the Danish midwives that the period of training should be lengthened.) Every year several midwives receive permission to take a further year's training, being appointed assistant midwives, partly at the lying-in hospital, or in a private nursing home, these positions affording a splendid training. In November a refresher course is always held for older midwives, conducted by Professor Hauch and the chief midwife.

The midwife pupils daily receive from one to two hours theoretical instruction, partly by the head of the school, the first assistant physician, and the chief midwife. The practical instruction is conducted by the chief midwife after advice of the head of the school.

Instruction is given in disinfection, hygienic treatment of the skin, on bacteria and infection, on the human body, biology, and on normal pregnancy, also on giving advice during the latter. The pupils learn to know the symptoms of the different diseases which may arise, especially during pregnancy. In the latter case we are bound to apply to a physician. At the same time instruction is given how to conduct a normal delivery. The pupils are also taught about diseases which may occur during delivery, and here it is impressed upon them to immediately call a physician if anything irregular should occur, the physician then taking charge of the delivery, with the midwife as his assistant. If the patient desires an obstetric narcosis (this is very common) the midwife must call the physician at the proper time; to act on her own responsibility is allowed only if it is impossible for the physician to come at such time, and if there is any special danger. I may name as such cases transverse presentation, placenta prævia, accidental hæmorrhage, retention of the placenta or part of it, inversio uteri, postpartum hæmorrhage, possibly eclampsia, prolapse of the cord or of limbs, irregular head presentation, breech presentation—by primipara.

* A Paper read at the Hospital, Nursing and Midwifery Conference, London, April, 1923.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)