

The Midwife.

THE CHRISTMAS GIFT.

The lights were low in the Maternity Ward, the patients comfortable and mostly asleep, and clear through the frosty air came the sound of Christmas bells.

It was my last Christmas Eve there, for in the spring I should be married, and we were going out to India immediately afterwards. Of course, I was looking forward to the new life before me, but I had been very happy in the hospital, I loved my patients, and to-night I was sad to think that my active nursing career was ending; neither here nor hereafter would the dear familiar round, the satisfying sense of helpfulness, the service of sick humanity fill my life with joy.

I pulled myself up with a start. Was I really so selfish that, for my personal pleasure, I wanted the continuance of sickness and suffering so that I might have the satisfaction of alleviating it? A thousand times no! There surged through me a passionate resentment at all the suffering endured by men, women and little children, and a passionate joy that in the new earth there will be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying, nor any more pain.

I looked round the ward. Who can estimate the anguish before a babe is even normally born into the world, and these were not normal cases, or they would not be here. The mother of the little "Cæsar," in No. 1 bed, was in desperate plight before the surgical skill, which is able to defy a contracted pelvis with a conjugate diameter of $2\frac{1}{2}$ inches, delivered her of a child which could never otherwise have been born—now the joy and pride of his parents. Next to her is Mrs. B—, whose leaden complexion, and premature wailing infant, tells all too plainly the source of her trouble to those with knowledge. Devoted to her husband who, in her view, is "such a gentleman," it would be cruel to enlighten her. She must be kept under treatment and, especially in the event of another pregnancy, at an ante-natal centre or elsewhere. Then there is dear little Mrs. C., admitted with her baby suffering from ophthalmia neonatorum and isolated in the Annexe. "Did this man sin or his parents that he was born blind?" may be asked in after years. He was not born blind, however, but with eyes as blue and beautiful as those of his dissolute father must have been in infancy and innocence. Within a few days of birth a dread disease had extinguished the light, and now he will never see the beauty of the world.

Mrs. D. is the wife of an ex-service man, whom we thought we should lose from post-partum hæmorrhage; the baby is bonny, but at the expense of its mother, who could not stand the strain of semi-starvation and the burden of supporting two lives. A relaxed uterus and

consequent hæmorrhage after delivery were the result.

But at least skilled help had been available for these poor mothers. In India—and my thoughts wandered to those poor women behind the purdah, which but dimly veils their immeasurable burden of pain.

"Day dreaming, nurse?" said the House Physician. "No time for that. They are just bringing up a case of placenta-prævia. I hope we shall save her."

Well I knew what that meant. A stern fight between death and science. In the case of the mother science won. But as the first bells were chiming for service on Christmas morning we laid in the crib prepared for him the little waxen form whose brief span of life was counted in minutes, and he drew his last breath as in the sacrament of baptism he received the name of Noël. Close by the crib we placed the Bethlehem picture with the adoring shepherds at the manger-throne of the Holy Child, whose hands were raised in benediction.

"He asked life of thee, and thou gavest him a long life, even for ever and ever."

M. B.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

EXAMINATION PAPER.

The following are the questions set by the Central Midwives' Board at its Examination on December 3rd:—

1. Describe the sutures and the fontanelles of the foetal head. How may they be recognised during labour? What circumstances may make it difficult to recognise them?
2. How would you conduct the First and Second Stages of a breech delivery? Name the common difficulties with which you are likely to meet.
3. Describe the symptoms of shock following severe post-partum hæmorrhage? Give in detail your treatment in the absence of a doctor.
4. If ordered to give a douche on the third day after delivery, describe in detail how you would do this. What apparatus would you use and what fluids would be suitable?
5. Give some examples of conditions during pregnancy which, according to the Rules of the Board, necessitate sending for medical help. What forms will have to be filled up and to whom will they have to be sent?
6. What is meant by placenta prævia? By what symptoms and at what period of pregnancy is such a condition generally first suspected? What would you do in the event of the arrival of the doctor being delayed?

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