

The Midwife.

THIS PICTURE AND THAT.

The new Maternity Ward at Charing Cross Hospital is a charming place. It exhales serenity and, when I recently visited it, not a sound was to be heard from any of the fourteen wee occupants of the cots slung at the foot of as many beds, where mothers were being nursed back to health and strength—in which good food, good care, and rest from domesticity, play such important parts—save an occasional gurgle of contentment. That alone to anyone with a knowledge of maternity work, implies good nursing, under the direction of an expert sister.

Nor was the contentment confined to the babies. The mothers were manifestly happy, and here and there a convalescent had her baby on her arm, the fluffy little head tucked safely in its crook, while a face expressive of mother-love brooded watchfully above it.

Much thought has gone to the making of the ward, which, with the gynæcological section, now makes a complete flat. There is one single ward where a patient can be isolated, but in these days the maternal mortality, which half a century ago compelled hospitals to close their doors, is practically a thing unknown, thanks to the patient research of scientists like Lord Lister. Probably there is no safer place now for a woman during delivery, and the post-partum period than a well-managed hospital ward.

The annexes to the ward include a labour ward with two beds, and all necessary fittings. A spacious operating theatre, sterilising room and annexes, and linen cupboards bountifully stocked by the Ladies Guild, with every thing needed for the equipment of the ward and the comfort of the patients.

Walls we know are almost sentient things, their atmosphere is inexplicable but real, and while absorbing that of the new generation, I was conscious that they also had another story to tell.

And then the veil was lifted, and I envisaged it under other conditions. From the stores of memory I drew a picture not of the sweetness of new life growing up in due time to the perfect man, but of men imperfect, maimed and halt, struggling painfully back from the border of the grave to face the battle of life always at a disadvantage, for that battle is to the strong.

During the war that ward had been used for the reception of some of the cases whom the public used daily to watch carefully removed from the great station nearby on stretchers in ambulances, or otherwise.

Tenderly they were nursed back to life, or cared for till their frail hold on it loosened, and they passed beyond the veil worn so thin with constant passings that just then it was almost transparent.

What of those who were willing, but were not called upon to make the supreme sacrifice. Some of them, maybe, the fathers of the babies who have now taken possession of the ward? How often one's heart aches at the pitiful sight of ex-service men painfully eking out a living by standing in the cold street selling matches and bootlaces, how mean and inadequate the coin with which one purchases these trifles.

What are the feelings of mothers who, agonised in the Great War, while their husbands served in the trenches, as they clasp to their breasts the man-child so tiny and so precious, when someone speaks glibly of "the next war," and they realize that bone of their bone, and flesh of their flesh may be called upon to form a living wall against the most ruthless machinery and other inventions that man can devise for its destruction. Surely all mothers will "do

their bit" to hasten the day when there shall be neither sorrow nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain, for the former things are passed away.

Well, that is in the future, the veil is drawn again over agony and death. The matron, Miss Cochrane, and the sister materialise, the ward is peopled by happy mothers, and one knows that these London children have a much better chance of health than those of a quarter of a century ago because of the beneficent work of the L.C.C. School Medical Officers and Nurses. For the present all is well.

M. B.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD.

OCTOBER EXAMINATIONS.

At the October Examination held by the Central Midwives' Board, 597 candidates were examined, and 469 passed the Examiners. The percentage of failure was 21.4.

CENTRAL MIDWIVES' BOARD FOR SCOTLAND.

The Examination of the Central Midwives' Board for Scotland, held simultaneously in Edinburgh, Glasgow, Dundee and Aberdeen, has concluded with the following results:—

Out of 126 candidates who appeared for the Examination, 102 passed. Of the successful candidates, 24 were trained at the Royal Maternity Hospital, Edinburgh, 23 at the Royal Maternity Hospital, Glasgow, 4 at the Maternity Hospital, Aberdeen, 14 at the Maternity Hospital, Dundee, 10 at the Queen Victoria Jubilee Institute, Edinburgh, 8 at the Cottage Nurses' Training Home, Govan, Glasgow, and the remainder at various recognised Institutions.

SOCIAL PATHOLOGY

SEX EDUCATION IN THE HOME.

Mrs. Amy C. Ransome, First President of the Educational Council of Social Hygiene Committees of Women's and other Organisations, contributes a paper on Sex Education in the Home, to an extremely valuable pamphlet on Social Pathology, in which she deals with the parents' responsibility, and methods of handling the sex problems of childhood and adolescence in the home. She holds that "only the parent knows how much to tell at the different stages, by careful thought and sympathy with the child mind as it gropes for enlightenment. These questionings are like the tendrils of a vine reaching for support. By a rude blow they can be shattered and spoiled, but give them the firm wall of truth to cling to, and the plant of right sex knowledge grows on and upward to the thing of beauty it should be—the knowledge of life in its wonderful completeness.

LAST WORDS FOR 1924.

Question not, but live and labour,
Till your goal be won;
Helping every feeble neighbour,
Seeking help from none.
Life is mostly froth and bubble,
Two things stand like stone—
Kindness in another's trouble,
Courage in your own.

A. L. GORDON.