

## Lecture

ON THE

## HISTORY OF MIDWIFERY,

Introductory to the Course on Obstetrics delivered at  
St. Mary's Hospital Medical School.

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GENTLEMEN,—I propose to day to give you a brief sketch of the History of Midwifery, because I believe that the study of the history of any branch of science or art is capable of affording to the diligent student many useful lessons, if only he will take the trouble to think for himself. This is a practice which too many of us, I fear, in the present day, are very apt to disregard. Patient, persevering, continuous thought—steady application of the mind to one object—is by no means easy in these times of excitement and of hurry, when the boast of the day is that this is an age of progress. But the very desire for progress, if too eagerly sought after, is apt to become a hindrance and a snare, and, by encouraging hasty generalisation, to the neglect of minute attention to detail, is very liable to lead in the long run, not to advancement, but to retardation. This danger is one which, I think, especially besets the student of medicine in these days.

I make these preliminary remarks—which may seem to some of you, perhaps, rather out of place in the introductory lecture to a course on the Theory and Practice of Midwifery—partly because I wish, at the outset of your studies here, to impress upon you the great importance of your not contenting yourselves with merely listening to what I or my colleagues in this school have to say, but that you should practise habits of thoughtfulness, remembering always that you are not here merely to learn what we have to teach, but that it is quite as much your duty, and, I would add, your privilege, to educate yourselves—ay, even by criticising what you see and hear from us,—so that your mind is exercised, and your reasoning faculties and imagination stimulated. There is no better safeguard against that greatest of all dangers to the student and practitioner of medicine—namely, routine—than the early cultivation of independent thought.

Another reason which induces me to make these observations is, that in these lectures which I have to deliver we shall have much to do with *theory*; and here, more perhaps than in the *practice* of our art, you will have ample scope for the exercise of thought. Practically, midwifery has become very much a matter of rule. This only testifies to its degree of perfection as an art, and it is the result of centuries of observation by some of the most accomplished, the acutest, and I would add the noblest intellects of past ages. It was the fashion once—it is so still with a few whose claim to have an opinion on the subject is founded only upon the happiest ignorance of the question—to regard the obstetrician as a man of lower grade in the medical hierarchy—a kind of hybrid, half man, half woman, with intellect to match. Yet I would venture to affirm, without a fear of contradiction, that among the practitioners of midwifery in past times are to be found the names of men who have done as much for medical science as any equal number of men from the other departments of medicine and surgery.

I have said that scientific history is full of instruction to the thoughtful student, and the history of midwifery certainly furnishes no exception to this statement. Moreover, it is a subject which, from its very imperfection, is pre-eminently useful for the purpose which I have had in view in the remarks just made; for, in the absence of any written record, no sooner is the mind concentrated on the subject than we are lost in conjecture and speculation as we ask, What was the practice of midwifery among the earliest members of the great human family? Who were the attendants? How did they perform their office? I am sure I need not stay one moment to point out the interest

of such an inquiry. Can we find an answer? Now, there is but one book which comes to us with any stamp of authority as a record of the history of the human race. You know the title of the work to which I refer. As men of science, however, and as members of the Christian family, we know that that book is not intended as a work of reference in disputed points of scientific interest. Some there are who seem very fond of using, or, I ought rather to say, of abusing it for this purpose; for their object seems generally to be attained when they have succeeded, as they think, in casting discredit upon its statements. While, however, I disclaim all idea of referring to the Bible for the solution of any scientific problem, we may nevertheless consult its pages for the record of facts in regard to a people of whose history it gives many minute details. Nor shall we seek in vain for some points of interest bearing upon the question which we are now considering.

It is an interesting, but perhaps in one sense not a very profitable, inquiry as to what was the practice at the first human birth, in regard to those details about which we are now so very careful. What, for instance, was the position of the patient? How was the child separated at its birth? What was the management of the placenta? Answers to these questions are none the less interesting because they are wholly conjectural; and, moreover, they have a bearing upon the subsequent history of obstetric art, as I shall presently show. The first thought that strikes one in the consideration of this subject is this, that the whole process would inevitably be regarded as a purely natural phenomenon, and as such of course its details would be left entirely to nature. Unless any distinct information was given to the progenitors of our race as to how they were to act under these circumstances, it is likely either that they would imitate the example of the brutes around them, so far as that was possible, or they would remain passive spectators of an act in which they did not feel called upon to interfere. In all strictly natural cases, as we now call them, the latter course would probably be the one adopted; even this, however, would require some slight interference, unless we are to imagine that for several days at least after the birth of the child the entire placenta and umbilical cord was allowed to remain attached until such time as it dropped off by the ordinary process of sloughing. It cannot be supposed, however, that in such a matter man would be less careful or have lower instincts than the brutes around him, and if they are anxious, as we know they are, to detach their offspring, our first parents would scarcely be less so; on the contrary, it is reasonable to suppose that, in some way or other, they would improve upon what they must have witnessed almost daily. The division of the umbilical cord would thus take rank as one of the first of surgical operations on the human subject; but of the exact method adopted for this division we know nothing, nor do we know whether any steps were taken to prevent hæmorrhage from the cut end of the cord. Probably, however, nothing was done, partly because the method of division would most likely be such as to avert bleeding, and partly because it might not occur to an observer that the hæmorrhage in question could be easily arrested. It is remarkable, however, that even among the most uncivilised tribes precautions are taken against this accident. Travellers have observed and recorded their experience on this point among the Hottentots, who are in the habit always of applying some particular form of ligature to the umbilical cord; and this practice they have adopted from time immemorial. Nor are we left in absolute ignorance on this subject in the pages of Holy Writ; for the prophet Ezekiel, writing nearly 600 years before Christ, makes distinct allusion to the practice when he says, in his denunciation of the Jews, "And as for thy nativity, in the day thou wast born *thy navel was not cut*, neither wast thou washed in water to supple thee." From this we may infer that section of the umbilical cord was the established practice in that day, though it does not appear that as yet the ligature had also been adopted; indeed, we may suppose the contrary, because Plutarch states that the operation of circumcision was delayed until the eighth day on account of the weakness of the umbilical cord—a statement which evidently refers to the liability to hæmorrhage which might arise from the struggles of the child during the operation, a danger which certainly would not be incurred if a ligature were applied.

In regard to the other question, as to the position of women during delivery, though we may well believe that the recumbent posture, whether on the back or on the side, would not only be the easiest but also the safest, yet it is certain that this was not the custom in early days, nor is it even now of universal adoption. You remember the verse in the first chapter of the book of Exodus, where the King of Egypt spake to the midwives who were in exile with the children of Israel, and said, "When ye do the office of a midwife to the Hebrew women, and see them upon the stools," &c., from which it is evident that at that time, which was nearly seventeen hundred years before Christ, the practice was to be delivered in the sitting posture; and in some parts of Germany, I believe, even at the present time, the same practice is adopted, at least among the midwives. In France, too, up to at least the seventeenth century, it was the custom for the midwives to carry about with them to their patients' houses a chair in which delivery was effected. In an old work on midwifery, written in Latin by one Daventer, of Leyden, who, we may suppose, had, with or without reason, a pretty good opinion of himself, inasmuch as he states on the title-page of his book that in it "the many errors in all the books hitherto written upon this subject are clearly refuted"—in this book is a chapter on "the utensils which the midwife carries with her, either in the country or in the city"; and it opens thus: "A Midwife who lives in the City is to be furnished with a commodious and well-made Chair or Stool for the Use of Women in Labour, in which, as Occasion requires, the Women may sit or lie down in any Manner, whether it be an easy or a difficult Birth. For in a Chair so perforated Women may much more commodiously bring forth than in an ordinary Chair, a Bed, or short Couch; and Midwives may do their duty more conveniently." The chair in question admitted of the recumbent posture by the lowering of the back; the seat of the chair had a large aperture in front, and over this the patient was to sit, the idea being that the expelling force of the uterus would be directed in this way to the opening in the seat, where it would meet with no resistance, and no upward pressure would be exerted to counteract it, as would be the case, it was thought, if the patient were sitting on an ordinary seat.\* From all this it is evident that, though the recumbent posture may occasionally have been used in those days, yet the upright or sitting position was much more frequently adopted. In proportion, however, and only as the obstetric art has become more perfect, the sitting posture has been abandoned and the recumbent one practised, and in all probability the former was universally adopted in the early ages of the world's history. I need not stay to remark how strangely opposed to our modern notions of propriety and delicacy would be the practice of an accoucheur carrying a chair from house to house for the purpose of delivery. Imagine the gossip of a West-end servants'-hall at such a sight as this!

Of the management of the placenta by the early obstetric practitioners little or nothing is known; but it is probable that, if the upright posture was the one usually adopted, difficulties in the way of retained placenta would very rarely be met with, except in cases of morbid adhesion; for, undoubtedly, early and speedy expulsion of the placenta is greatly facilitated by such a position, though that which gives the facility is also a cause of danger.

Now, as to the persons who ordinarily attended to this branch of practice. It is a remarkable fact, and one which no doubt has been duly chronicled by those who are now so clamorous for the medical education of women, that in all countries, in all ages, and among all classes of society, women have been the usual obstetric attendants. Of this there are proofs innumerable; and, though it may be difficult to find any absolutely true explanation of it, yet, undoubtedly, the known practices in the earliest ages of the world, and among a people who were recognised distinctly as the favoured of God, must have exercised a powerful influence in establishing the custom in successive ages. The proofs of this in Holy Scripture are very numerous. The earliest mention of it of which I am aware is in Genesis xxiv. chapter, 17th verse, where Rachel, the wife of Jacob, being on a journey from Bethel to Ephrath, "travailed, and had hard labour. And it came to pass, when

she was in hard labour, that the midwife said unto her, Fear not, thou shalt have this son also," which she did, and very soon afterwards died. This was supposed to have taken place upwards of 1700 years B.C. There are many other references of a similar kind, all tending to the same conclusion; and there certainly is not, so far as I am aware, any statement showing that men were ever so employed. It seems not unlikely that women occasionally delivered themselves, without having attendance from anyone even professedly qualified. For instance, in the notable case with which you are all acquainted, where King Solomon gave his remarkably wise judgment as between two women, each of whom claimed a particular child as her own, it is stated that one of the women came and said, "Oh, my lord, I and this woman dwelt in one house, and I was delivered of a child with her in the house. And it came to pass the third day after that I was delivered that this woman was delivered also; and we were together; there was no stranger with us in the house, save we two in the house." Here then is a very circumstantial account, dating upwards of 1000 years B.C., of two deliveries which were accomplished in much the same way, no doubt, as are those of concealment of birth of which we hear occasionally. But whether this practice were frequent or not, it seems clear that only women were in attendance, and many of them were in great renown in their day. Nor was this limited to the Jews, for with the Greeks, the Arabians, and possibly also with the Egyptians, the same rule obtained, though not perhaps so absolutely. In regard to the Romans we have undoubted evidence that men practised midwifery, but not exclusively; we know also that midwives were a recognised class among them. It is probable that after the Jewish captivity, and up to the time of their dispersion, the practice in this respect began to vary, for Herodotus tells us that the Jews copied many of the customs of the people with whom they sojourned, and it seems likely therefore that, as the Egyptians undoubtedly had male accoucheurs, the Jews would also after their release from captivity. That the Egyptians should have favoured such a practice is not to be wondered at, seeing how much they associated with the Greeks; and it cannot be doubted that as midwifery was studied and practised, not as a rule, but only in emergencies by the men of Greece, and especially by the Athenians, many lives would be saved by men which would be lost by the midwives, and this could not fail to influence those who associated with them.

It is usual, and there is no doubt a certain warrant for the opinion, to regard Hippocrates, who lived about 460 years B.C., as to some extent the founder of the obstetric art; but his writings on this subject serve only to betray the ignorance which existed in his day, even in the case of a man so deservedly great in medical science. Plato tells us something more of the character and function of the midwives at that time, and from him we learn that some of them were very distinguished in this particular department. Aristotle and Galen also mention them, and the former describes the treatment of the umbilical cord which was adopted by them. From this it appears that in his day, nearly 400 years B.C., before applying the ligature, the umbilical cord was squeezed from the placenta to the fetal end in order that all the blood it contained might be pressed back into the vessels of the child. Probably then the child was not separated till after the expulsion of the placenta, so that as much blood as possible might be procured for the purpose in question. Aetius, of Alexandria, spoke also of the midwives in terms of high praise. Gradually, however, as a taste for the arts and sciences was developed among the Greeks, so in exact proportion did the study and practice of midwifery by men become more and more general. It is difficult to say exactly where or when the change was effected; we find mention made of it by several of the authors I have referred to, but they nowhere tell us why it was nor whether in that day the same objections were raised against this innovation, as is now being done in England and elsewhere against the study of medicine by women. There is, however, one instance recorded where a revolt was made against the innovation in question—viz., in Athens; here the feeling was very strong, and some of the ladies of that city declared that they would rather die than be attended by the stronger sex. Notwithstanding this, a law was actually passed prohibiting women from studying or practising medicine, but a certain woman named

\* This work was translated into English and published in this country in the year 1746, so that the practice in question would seem to have existed in this country even so late as that.

Agnodice dressed herself as a man, and in this way she eluded the law for some time. Suspicion was, however, roused against her, and she was tried and condemned by the Areopagi, whereupon some very distinguished and influential ladies went to the Senate in her defence, and the judges were compelled to revoke the sentence. This of course led to a repeal of the prohibition, and women thereafter became legally entitled to practise, not, however, to the exclusion of the men, who still practised as before. Thus it appears that the strong feeling which has lately been exhibited on this question finds its counterpart in the principal city of Greece in the early years of the Christian era.

Turning now from the Greeks to the Romans, we find that here also women were the principal obstetricians, notwithstanding that the practice of medicine and surgery was almost exclusively confined to men, even in the earliest periods of Roman history. They also were always called in by the *sages-femmes* whenever any difficulty arose. This fact is established not only by positive statements, but it may be inferred also from the account given by Pliny of the birth of Scipio Africanus, Caesar, and Manlius-Torquatus by means of the Cæsarean section, for it cannot be supposed that women would perform such operations as these. Suetonius also mentions that the Emperor Augustine having married Livia, the wife of Tiberius, she being in hard labour, Antonius Musa was called in consultation "*pro partu accelerando*," and the result was the birth of Nero, showing clearly that at that time men were the recognised consultants in difficult labours. I must not omit to mention Celsus, who lived in the reign of Tiberius, A.D. 35. He was undoubtedly one of the greatest Roman medical authors and practitioners, and has a just claim to consideration as one of the most distinguished accoucheurs of his day, for not only did he advocate a method for the better dilatation of the cervix in difficult cases, but he also described the operation of podalic version, and the cases in which he thought it was applicable. He advocated, too, the use of the crotchet, which had been employed since the time of Hippocrates for the delivery of dead children.

Little is known about the practice of medicine among the Arabians, but it is evident that midwifery was to a limited extent practised by men, and we have knowledge of at least two distinguished Arabian accoucheurs—viz., Albucasis, who lived in about the eleventh century, and another scarcely less distinguished—viz., Avicenna, who practised about fifty years earlier. It would seem, however, that here, also, by far the largest share of midwifery fell to the lot of the midwives, and, owing to the extraordinary contempt with which all surgical operations were regarded by the Arabians, who always got their slaves to perform them, practical or operative midwifery made little or no advance. Albucasis, indeed, gives directions for the delivery of hydrocephalic monsters by craniotomy; and also for the management of cases of retained placenta, but his instructions in this respect are not very forcible. They consisted merely in recommending the patient to sneeze or cough, and if that failed, then they were to apply the vapour of certain herbs to the uterus: I suppose for the purpose of making it contract.

The sketch which I have just given—and it is, after all, but a sketch—brings us up to about 1000 years of the Christian era, and it cannot be said that up to that time much advance had been made either in the art or science of midwifery. As regards natural labour, of course nothing was required, and no advance therefore could take place, except in regard to the physiology of the process, and on this point literally nothing was known. But when we consider that during all these ages, so far as we know, the practice of midwifery was almost entirely in the hands of women, most of whom were very ignorant, and that therefore difficulties and complications must necessarily have been very frequent, and so have given ample opportunities for improved practice, it is, I think, surprising that so little was done to place the matter on a better footing, and it certainly speaks strongly against the propriety of handing over the whole of this branch of medicine to the weaker sex. As regards operative midwifery, the chief points to notice are—the establishment of the Cæsarean section, the use of the crotchet and perforator in the case of dead children, and the performance of podalic version in a certain modified form.

During the succeeding 500 years several very distinguished accoucheurs flourished, but still the bulk of the practice all over the civilised world remained in the hands of the midwives, and consequently, as I think, no very great advance was made in its scientific practice. Probably the most distinguished of all the writers at this time were the two Arabians I have already mentioned—viz., Avicenna and Albucasis; and it is especially to be noted of both these, particularly the former, who has the merit of priority, that they describe, and the latter actually gives an illustration of, an instrument which was clearly a kind of midwifery forceps, and was intended to be used in the extraction of a living child. I have no desire, far from it, to detract from the merit justly due to the Chamberlens for their great invention of the midwifery forceps; but truth and justice require that it should be stated that something remarkably like this instrument, and certainly intended for the same purpose, was invented about 600 years before. Towards the fifteenth century the study of the arts and sciences was much more generally cultivated; the works of the older Greek writers supplanted those of more modern times, and thus was laid a better foundation for the more careful, accurate, and philosophical study of natural and morbid processes. It cannot be doubted, too—and this is a point especially to be noted at the present time,—that, with the advance of civilisation, and the wider study of the arts and sciences, women have preferred to be attended in their labours by men. Obviously this cannot be due to any merely sentimental idea; there must be some solid basis of fact to account for a change so universal, so opposed at first sight to womanly instincts; and I know of no ground save that of increased confidence, inspired by the consciousness of greater knowledge, and consequent readiness to cope with any difficulties that may arise under circumstances involving sometimes extreme peril to life. From the time when men first began to be consulted in cases of difficulty and danger, it was obvious that in the end, and in proportion as they perfected their knowledge of the process, their physical and intellectual superiority must prevail; hence the custom of the present time throughout the civilised world, which we may regard as the natural result of the building up of that great system of midwifery which it is the purpose of these lectures to unfold to you. Were it not for this vast store of knowledge, the result of ages of accumulated experience and years of thoughtful study and observation, I should not be standing here to-day to lecture to you on the theory and practice of midwifery, nor would there be any occasion for a class of male students; for if there were no science, no skill, no art, sentiment would certainly carry the day, and sentiment, I fear, would surely be against the practice of midwifery by men.

But the work and the genius of the men of the last three centuries, and notably of the last two, have not only secured to the male sex almost the entire practice of midwifery, at least among those classes who are intellectually capable of judging of the merits of the question, but they have laid an obligation upon you and upon me which we must both strive to fulfil. Undoubtedly we owe much to the French obstetricians of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. Indeed Ambroae Paré, a French writer of the latter half of the sixteenth century, may be said to have laid the foundation for the present system of obstetrics, especially in its conservative aspects. To him we are particularly indebted for the first clear description of the operation of podalic version, and of the cases in which it is applicable. He also laid down rules for guidance in difficult cases of arm presentation, and he invented, described, and illustrated several obstetrical instruments. About twenty years before his time the first work exclusively devoted to the subject of midwifery was written by one Eucharius Rhodion, who practised at Frankfort, and who described very carefully the several cranial positions, the differences between natural and unnatural labour, and the treatment required by the latter. A little later on we have a work written by M. Francois Rousset to advocate more frequent resort to the Cæsarean section; and such undoubtedly was the effect of its publication, for it was translated into many languages, and gave rise to much keen discussion. In 1579 a great discussion took place on the question whether the pelvic bones separate at all during labour. The affirmative was maintained by Severin Pineau, who proved it to his own satisfaction post mortem, and

convinced Ambrose Paré, Morgagni, Haller, Harvey, and others. The operation of symphysectomy, or the Sigaulteau operation, which consists in dividing the symphysis pubis, was founded upon this belief in the mobility of the pelvic bones; but it has since been abundantly demonstrated that no such mobility exists as could be of any practical value; for whereas in the great majority of cases of pelvic deformity it is the antero-posterior diameter which is the cause of greatest difficulty, division of the symphysis pubis scarcely if at all affects this, and does very little to increase the transverse diameter.

Since the time of Ambrose Paré the practice of midwifery has, at least among the educated classes, been almost exclusively in the hands of men; and it cannot be doubted that, as a science, it has enormously gained thereby; indeed, it is only within the last two centuries that it can be said to have had a definite scientific basis. The writings and observations of Guillemeau, a pupil of Ambrose Paré, in the early part of the seventeenth century, of Mauriceau in the latter half of the same century, of La Motte, of Portal, and of Levret, the greatest of them all, completely changed the aspect of midwifery as a branch of the healing art, and gave to it a position little, if at all, inferior to either of the other branches of medicine. In this work they were ably seconded by some of our own countrymen, but the palm must, I think, be given to the French authorities, who undoubtedly originated this great movement in the obstetric world; and it would seem as if the translation of their works into English supplied a stimulus on this side of the channel, which has since produced results greater even than any that are recorded by our French *confères*. In proof of this it is only necessary to refer to the works of Harvey, of Chamberlen (to whom we may almost, but not quite, be said to owe the forceps), of Chapman, the two Hunters, Denman, Smellie, and Conquest. These names are mentioned only as illustrations, and because they serve at once to carry conviction to the minds of those who are, even in the smallest degree, acquainted with the subject, that it is to men, and men only, that we owe whatever advance has been made in the scientific practice of midwifery. You must not suppose, however, that Germany, France, and England are the only countries whose sons have toiled for the advancement of obstetric art. In Holland there are names scarcely, if at all, inferior to any I have mentioned. The names of Deventer, of Ruisch, and of Roonhuysen, are as familiar to the student of midwifery as any that can be named in England.

Now, in a matter so purely mechanical as is the ordinary process of labour, it seems a mere truism to say that, just as the difficulties and complications which attend that process are due to interference with the ordinary mechanical laws, so the means of combating those difficulties will be more or less perfect and successful in proportion as the mechanism of the process is understood. It follows, too, from this, that a truer appreciation of that mechanism must result in improved methods of treatment, especially in regard to operative midwifery, and hence the explanation of the great advance made in this respect during the last century. In like manner the study of physiology, which may be said to be almost the product of the present century, has been the foundation of our more perfect knowledge of pathology; and hence, again, our intimate acquaintance with the various morbid processes incidental to child-bearing. In illustration of the former, it is sufficient to note the strongly conservative tendency of the two great obstetric operations which have been elaborated during the past century—viz., the induction of premature labour, and the application of the forceps. These two operations, which were introduced within a few years of each other, have probably done more for the saving of human life than any other operations that can be named; and it is not, I think, too much to say that they could or would never have been originated by women. Indeed, the fact is indisputable, that the science and practice of midwifery owes literally nothing to women, who, nevertheless, monopolised it for at least 3000 years; but, on the contrary, every single improvement that has been made in this department has originated with the stronger sex.

If time permitted I could amuse you with many curious illustrations of the superstitions connected with pregnancy and delivery. Among all nations and classes of society sterility has ever been a cause of reproach among women,

and absurdly fanciful have been the remedies suggested for it; the most sublime being devout invocations to various gods and goddesses, according to the sex required; and the most ridiculous, the inhalation of various odours, whose reputed efficacy seemed to be in direct proportion to their nastiness. On the other hand, in some countries, philoprogenitiveness was encouraged in every possible way; for instance, among the Lacedæmonians women who had more than three children were exempted from certain charges on the ground that they had rendered signal service to the state by such increase of the population. Among the Romans the same law was observed.

In actual labour whenever any difficulty arose prayer to certain gods or goddesses was the recognised and customary resort of the faithful; and it must be confessed that, while such a practice testified to the simplicity and earnestness of their faith, it witnessed also the utter ignorance of their attendants in all that related to the scientific performance of their duties. The Greeks probably surpassed the Romans in their superstitious beliefs; for instance, if a child was borne without eyes they attributed it entirely to the mother's having eaten too much salt; on the other hand, the Romans believed that in cases of tedious labour delivery would surely be hastened by placing upon the abdomen of the mother a small vesical calculus!

But superstitions of this kind were by no means confined to the classical countries of Greece and Rome. Among the Brazilians in former times, and even until recent times among the Caribbeans and other savage tribes of America, it was the custom immediately after the woman was delivered for her to get up and perform her usual household duties, while the husband took to bed, and remained there, the reason assigned for this being that it was necessary for him to recruit his health and strength after he had become a father! Among the Malaccas there was a common belief that if a woman ate double fruits during her pregnancy she would have twins. In some parts of Russia, even in the present day, it is held that if the labour be difficult and tedious, and much pain is endured, the reason is that the woman has been unfaithful, and that the suffering entailed is the consequence of her sin which has to be endured. In short I could go on relating instances of this sort almost *ad infinitum*, for there is no limit to the capacity of the human mind for credulity of this sort, when once it quits the region of positive knowledge. Ignorance and superstition we may be quite sure, will go hand in hand, and be in direct proportion the one to the other; indeed, if I were to formulate the term superstition, I might describe it as neither more nor less than cultivated ignorance, and we cannot wonder that such was the state of obstetric medicine seeing in whose hands it was practically vested for so many centuries. In the following lectures I shall hope to show you how different it is in the present day; how large a basis of fact we have to work upon; and how substantial are the conclusions upon which our present practice is founded. The greater part of this, remember, is the work of the last two centuries; indeed, as regards operative midwifery, that by which we are enabled to meet and combat successfully, in a spirit of true conservatism, the emergencies which are to a great extent the direct result of advanced civilisation, this is the work of little more than a century; for the vectis, the forceps, the induction of premature labour, and, I might almost add, the operation of turning, have all been born, as it were, in the past century, and we may say that their birth was almost simultaneous, for their public recognition and adoption took place within a few years of each other. What they have done in the saving of human life it would be impossible to estimate; but you will be able to form some idea at least when you know the difficulties they are intended to avert.

In conclusion, let me impress upon you, and especially those of you who intend to enter upon general practice, the great importance of attention to these lectures, and to the rules which I shall lay down for your guidance in the many emergencies to which you may be called; for not only will your success in life be very largely dependent upon the way in which you conduct your obstetric department, but, unless you are careful about this, you will find yourselves insensibly drawn into one of the great snares which especially beset the members of a profession such as ours—namely, the danger of undervaluing human life. There are times, as we shall see, when, in the exercise of our high calling, we

are bound to sacrifice one human being in order to save another. It is a terrible responsibility which is thus cast upon us, and we can only exercise that trust with a clear conscience when we have perfected our knowledge of all the means at our disposal. Remember that the existence of ignorance where knowledge is possible does not avail to screen us from the consequences of our neglect, and acts done in wilful ignorance are scarcely less culpable than those deliberately planned. Viewed in this light the study of midwifery in its operative aspects demands your very careful attention, and I trust you will give it all that is required.

...and, but in so doing observe the signs of the principles upon which they are employed. Now for practical purposes, as regards therapeutics, I think diseases of the skin may be conveniently grouped under three heads:—

1. Those which are purely local.
2. Those which, though mainly local in their origin, are yet influenced or modified by different conditions of the

every prospect of their healing nature. We do not act with the same certainty in cutaneous medicine, but dermatologists neglect to make themselves acquainted with the natural causes of the diseases they treat.

I will now proceed to some more particular remarks touching the three groups into which I have divided diseases of the skin.

employed to overcome them. Henry\* says of the women amongst the ancient Britons that when a birth was attended with any difficulty they put certain girdles made for that purpose about the women in labour. These girdles, which were believed to facilitate the birth of heroes, are reckoned in the poems of Ossian among the treasures of kings. Such girdles were kept with care till very lately in many families in the Highlands of Scotland. They were impressed with several mystic figures, and the ceremony of binding them about the woman's waist was accompanied with words and gestures, which showed the custom to have been of great antiquity and to have come originally from the Druids.

In "Pierce the Ploughman's Crede" the friars are accused of

"Maken wymmen to wenen,  
That the lace of oure ladye smok lighteth hem of children."

Among the articles of a visitation in 1559 the following inquiry is made: "Whether you knowe anye that doe use charmes, sorcery, enchauntments, invocations, circles, witchcrafts, southsayings, or any like crafts or imaginations invented by the Devyl, and specially in the tyme of women's travayle."

In John Bale's "Comedye concernynge thre Lawes," A.D. 1538, "Idolatry" is made to speak as follows:—

"Yea, but now yeh am a she,  
And a good mydwylfe perde;  
Yonge chyldren can I charme,  
With whysperynge and whys-saynges,  
With crosseynge and with kryssynge,  
With blasynge and with blessynge,  
That sprites do them no harme."

One of the injunctions at the visitation of Bishop Bonner (1554) was the following: "A mydwylfe shal not use or exercise any witchcrafte, charmes, sorcerie, invocations, or prayers, other than suche as be allowable and may stand with the lawes and ordinances of the Catholike Churche."

In the articles to be inquired into in the province of Canterbury in the sixteenth century, we find the following questions were asked relating to midwives:—"Whether any use charmes or unlawful prayers, or invocations, in Latin or otherwise, and namely, midwives in the tyme of woman's travail with child?" † "Whether parsons, vicars, or curates be diligent in teaching the midwives how to christen children in tyme of necessity according to the canons of the church or no?" ‡

In another diocese we find the question asked by the bishop:—"Do any undertake the office of midwife without licence?" §

From the foregoing quotations it is evident that the church at this early period recognised the importance of the office of midwife. In urgent cases she was frequently called upon to baptize the newly-born child. As early as the seventh century this was permitted, for we find in the "Liber penitentialis" of Theodore, Archbishop of Canterbury—"Mulier baptizare non presumat, nisi cogenti necessitate maxima." || Many entries are to be found in parish registers; one example may interest the reader:—"St. Mary's, Lichfield, Oct. 12, 1591. Margaret, dr. of Walter Henningham de Pypehall, baptized by the mydwylfe, and, as yet not broughte to ye churche to be there examined and testified by them that were present." ¶

In some registers ancient injunctions to the clergy by the Archbishop of York are found as follows:—"Item. All curates must openly in the church teach and instruct the mydwifewies of the very words and form of baptisme to thentents that they may use them perfectly and none oder."\*\*

In these days it was generally believed that baptism was necessary to salvation, and as it was often impossible for a weakly or dying child to be taken to the priest or he to come to it before its death, there was no other alternative than to allow the midwife to baptize. The conveyance of a delicate child along miles of bad roads, through cold and storm, would have frequently proved fatal. It was often as much as the midwife could do to reach the labouring woman; perhaps on a pillion at the back of the messenger,

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### CHAPTER I.—SIXTEENTH CENTURY.

VERY little is known of the early history of the English Midwife, or "with-woman." † It is certain, however, that she was a person of inferior education. Her opportunities of obtaining written or oral instruction in midwifery were very few, and consequently nearly the whole of her information must have been gained by experience—often, it is to be feared, at the expense of the poor women whom she sought to succour. No book in the vulgar tongue had yet been published upon the subject; and in cases of difficulty, relics, charms, and incantations were the methods

\* See the paper in the *Edinburgh Medical Journal* for a longer explanation on this head.

† The Spanish and Portuguese word *comadre*, or Latin *cum-mater*, is exactly analogous to the English word "midwife."

\* History of Great Britain, vol. i., p. 459.

† Grisdal Rom. Park Soc., Soc. 174-55.

‡ Documentary Annals by Ed. Cardwell, D.D., vol. i., p. 171.

§ N. and Q., first series, vol. iii., p. 29.

|| Monumenta Ecclesiastica. De reliquiis sanctorum vel ritu sacerdotum at diaconorum laicorum que in ecclesia, xlviii.

¶ Burn's History of Parish Registers.

\*\* Ibid., p. 81.

after travelling for hours through dark, narrow, packhorse roads, or knee-deep passes which could scarcely be called roads. To return with her frail, dying burden, perhaps to find the priest from home, was more than could be expected. What then was to be done at night? The *Maitresse Sage-femme*, Madame Condray, says:—"Il y a ordinairement du danger à porter les enfans au baptême pendant la nuit, surtout dans les paroisses de la campagne; les mauvais chemins, les fossés, les planches, les sautoirs, les glaces, les mauvais temps, les rencontres des chiens, &c., tous ces inconvéniens, dont on peut se parer le jour, ne permettent pas qu'on y expose la nuit un dépôt si précieux; un faux pas de celui ou celle qui porte l'enfant, peut lui faire perdre la vie sans baptême."<sup>2</sup>

The practice of baptising by the midwife was continued in England till the beginning of the seventeenth century. Bishop Burnet gives the following account of its discontinuance:—"The necessity of the sacrament (baptism) and the invalidity of ecclesiastical functions, when performed by persons who were not episcopally ordained, were entertained by many. This struck even at the baptism by midwives in the Church of Rome, which was practised and connived at here in England, till it was objected to in the Conference held at Hampton Court soon after King James the First's accession to the crown, and baptism was not till then limited to persons in orders."<sup>3</sup>

This statement is corroborated by the fact that in the oath taken by the midwife in the sixteenth century she swears that she will use, in the ministration of the sacrament of baptism, the apt and accustomed words of the same sacrament; but in the seventeenth century the oath runs as follows: "You shall not be privy, or consent, that any priest, or other party, shall of your knowledge or sufferance baptise any child by any mass, Latin service, or prayers, than such as are appointed by the laws of the Church of England, &c." Both Burnet<sup>4</sup> and Burns<sup>5</sup> believed that this exercise of the office of baptising by midwives was the beginning of their being licensed by the Bishops. Mrs. Culler<sup>6</sup> says that Bishop Bonner was the first who granted these licences, and that the form of the first licence was drawn up by him. It is certain that in the time of Elizabeth these licences were being granted, for Strype<sup>7</sup> writes: "There is one thing more I shall observe under this year (1567)—namely, a licence the Archbishop of Canterbury granted to Eleonor Pead to be a midwife, with the oath she took, whereby it may be perceived what were the disorderly practices of midwives in those days—as laying suppositious children in place of the true natural ones, using sorceries and enchantments, hurting the child, or destroying it, or cutting or pulling off the head, or dismembering it; baptising the infant new born, in case of necessity, with odd and profane words, and using sweet water or water perfumed. But behold the oath this woman took. 'I, Eleonor Pead, admitted to the office and occupation of a midwife, will faithfully and diligently exercise the said office according to such cunning and knowledge as God hath given me, and that I will be ready to help and aid as well poor as rich women being in labour and travail of child, and will always be ready both to poor and rich in exercising and executing of my said office. Also I will not permit or suffer that any woman being in labour or travail shall name any other to be the father of her child, than only he who is the right and true father thereof; and that I will not suffer any other body's child to be set, brought, or laid before any woman delivered of child in the place of her natural child, so far forth as I can know and understand. Also I will not use any kind of sorcery or incantation in the time of the travail of any woman; and that I will not destroy the child born of any

woman, nor cut, nor pull off the head thereof, or otherwise dismember or hurt the same, or suffer it to be hurt or dismembered by any manner of way or means. Also that at the ministration of the sacrament of baptism in the time of necessity, I will use apt and accustomed words of the same sacrament—that is to say, these words following, or the like in effect: *I christen thee in the name of the Father the Son, and the Holy Ghost*, and none other profane words. And that in such time of necessity, in baptising any infant born, and pouring water upon the head of the same infant I will use pure and clean water, and not any rose or damask water, or water made of any confection or mixture; and that I will certify the curate of the parish church of every such baptising."

We must leave the subject of midwives' licences for the present. Further information respecting them will be given in a future chapter.

In the middle of the sixteenth century it would appear that English women became dissatisfied with their midwives, alive to their ignorance and impressed with the necessity of educating them. But this was not an easy task, as there were no female midwifery practitioners capable of performing it. It was also difficult to overcome the prejudices of the ignorant, who, from a false modesty, objected to the printing in the mother tongue of midwifery details.<sup>8</sup> Men, from whom the desired help was destined ultimately to come, were deterred from undertaking the business of midwifery from the fear of being looked upon as magicians,† or as almost attempting the virtue and honour of the female sex. "A certain studious and diligent clerke," whose name was probably Jonas,‡ however, in 1537, "at the request and desire of diverse honest and sad matrons, being of his acquaintance, did translate out of Latine into English a great part of the booke *De Partu Humani*—that is to say, of the Birth of Mankynde." This translation of Rhodion's work was immediately after revised from "top to toe," and published by Dr. Raynald under the title of "The Woman's Booke." He speaks, in his second edition 1540, of the success of this work as follows: "There be since the first setting forth of this booke, right many honourable ladyes, and other worshipful gentewomen, which have not disdaind the oftener by occasion of this booke, to frequent and haunt women in their labours, carrying with them this booke in their hands, and causing such part of it as doth chiefly concern the same purpose to be read before the midwife and the rest of the women there being present, whereby oft-times, they all have bene put in remembrance of that wherewith the labouring women hath bene greatly comforted and alleviated of her throngs and travail; whose laudable example and doings would God that many proud midwives would ensue and follow."<sup>9</sup>

This work of Rhodion was translated into nearly every European language, and during the century following its publication was almost the sole book from which midwives gained any knowledge of their art. Its influence upon English midwifery must have been most beneficial, for Raynald doubtless spoke the truth when he said of the midwives of his day that, "As there be many right, expert, diligent, wise, circumspect, and tender, about such businesse as appertaineth to their office; so be there again many woeful indiscreet, unreasonable, churlish, and through whose rudenesse and rashnesse only, I doubt not but that a great number of women in their labour speede worse then needed otherwise."

It is deplorable to think of the universal ignorance which existed at this time in those who practised midwifery, for if Dr. Raynald, whose book is full of the grossest blunders, was the wisest professor of the art, what must have been the benighted condition of those whom he professed to teach. When we think of the fomentations, bathings, fumigations, anointments, suppositories, pessaries, and the constant and cruel manipulations which poor women had

\* Abridgé de l'Art des Accouchemens.  
† History of his own time, vol. vi. See the ninth section of the third book of the Apostolical Institutions: "Quod non oportet mulieres baptizare, esse enim implum est a doctrinâ Christi alienum." See also Collin's Ecclesiastical History, vol. vi., p. 550. Among the articles for the regulation of the clergy agreed to by Convocation, and afterwards subscribed by both Houses in 1570, was this: "Twelfthly, that private baptism, in case of necessity, is only to be ministered by a lawful minister or deacon called to be present for that purpose, and by none others. All other persons shall be inhibited to intermeddle with the ministering of baptism privately, it being no part of their vocation." This earlier inhibition seems not to have been enforced in the case of midwives.

‡ In Hamburg, in 1521, one Veltes was condemned for this offence to the same.

§ The manuscript copy of this work presented to Catherine, Queen of Henry VIII., bore this signature.

¶ The Birth of Mankynde, Prologue.

‡ Strype's Annals, vol. I., part II., chapter 50.

then to undergo in cases of natural labour, and the still more frightful mutilations which they had to suffer when any complication retarding the birth of the child took place, we cannot but regret that this most important branch of the healing art had not been earlier taken up and studied by such master minds as those which pursued it so energetically, and so immensely improved it, in the succeeding century.

Old Andrew Boorde, in his "Breviary of Health,"\* writing in the latter part of the sixteenth century, alludes to the miseries which may result from an "unexpert mydwife," and adds: "In my tyme, as well here in Englonde as in other regions, and of olde antiquitie, every mydwife shulde be presented with honest women of great grante to the Byshop, and that they shulde testify for her that they do present, shulde be a sadde woman, wyse and discrete, havynge experience, and worthy to have the office of a mydwyfe. Then the Byshoppe, with the consent of a doctor of physick, ought to examine her, and to instructe her in that thyng that she is ignorant; and thus proved and admitted, is a laudable thyng; for and this were used in Englonde there shulde not haife so many women mysary, nor so many chyldren perish in every place in Englonde as there be. The Byshop ought to loke on this matter." This passage is remarkable, inasmuch as it contains the first expression in England of a conviction often reiterated, and now and again vehemently urged—namely, that it is necessary to give instruction to midwives, and a guarantee of their skill to the public.

The names of a few of our early English midwives have been preserved.

*Margaret Cobbe.*

This Royal midwife had a salary of £10 per annum granted her by the Crown on April 15th, 1469. She attended Elizabeth Woodville, Queen of Edward IV., when she was delivered of Edward V. in the gloomy sanctuary of Westminster. This took place on Nov. 1st, 1470, and Margaret Cobbe still held her office in 1473, for we find in the Rolls of Parliament the following:—"Provided alway, that this Acte or any other Acte made or to be made in this present Parliament, extend not nor in any wise be prejudicial to Margery Cobbe, late wyf of John Cobbe, beyng midwyf to oure best beloved wyf, Elizabeth, Queen of England, unto or for any graunte by us by our letters patentes beryng date the 15th day of April, the 9th yere of oure reigne, made to the seid John and Margery, of £10 by yere, duryng the lyf of the said Margery."—13 Edward IV.

*Alice Massy.*

This was another Royal midwife. We learn from the privy purse expenses of Elizabeth of York, Queen of Henry VII., that in March, 1503, Alice Massy received her salary of £10 as Queen's midwife.

*Elizabeth Gaynsforde.*

The following curious history relating to this midwife is to be found entered in the Consistorial Acts of the diocese of Rochester. Midwives, as has been before stated, were from time to time questioned as to the manner in which they performed the ceremony of baptism. It was at one of these examinations that this dialogue took place. "Anno 1523, Oct. 14.—Eliz. Gaynsforde, obstetrix, examinata dicit in vin juramenti sui sub hac forma verborum. I, the aforesaid Elizabeth, seeing the child of Thomas Everey, late born, in jeopardy of life, by the authority of my office, then beyng midwyfe, did christen the same child under this manner. In the name of the Fader, the Son, and the Holy Ghost, I christen thee Denys; effundat meram squam super caput infantul. Interrogata erat, whether the childe was born and delivered from the wyfe of the said Thomas; whereto she answereth and sayth, that the childe was not born, for she saw nothing of the childe but the hedde, and for perell the childe was in, and in that time of nede, she christened as is aforesaid, and caste water with her hand on the childe's hedde; after which the childe was born, and was had to the church, where the prieste gave to it that chrystenden that it lakkyd, and the child is yet alive."†

\* The Extravagantes, chap. 51.

† Archaeologia, London, vol. xi., p. 124.

*Johane Hammulden.*

"Here's the midwife's name to 't, one Mistress Taleporter."  
Winter's Tale, Act iv., Scene 3.

This midwife rendered herself notorious by divulging a remark, made by a woman she had delivered, relating to the conjugal proceedings of Henry VIII.; and so jealous was the King of any discussion upon these matters, that her information led to an investigation before a quorum of justices at Reading.\* The depositions were taken before Sir Walter Stonor, at Watlington, in Oxfordshire, on the 14th of June, 26 Henry VIII., when one John Dawson said that "Oon Johane Hammulden, wyff unto Walter Hammulden, of Watlyngton afore said, in the presens of the said John Dawson, Willm. Goode, constable of the said town of Watlynton, Thomas Dawson, and John Awood, said that she was sent for to oon Burgyn's wyff, in Watlynton, when she was in labor with chylde, which was abowte Whittsontyde was a twelvemonth: And the said Burgyn's wyff said to the said Johane Hammulden that for her honestie and her conyng that she hadd, she might be mydwyff unto the Queene of England yf hitt wer Quene Kateryn; and yff hitt wer Quene Anne she was to goode to be her mydwyff, for she was a hore and a herlott of her lyvyng." Mrs. Hammulden maintained before the justices that Mrs. Burgyn had spoken these words, and added further, "that upon her faythe she wolde never have uttryd the words had not the said Burgyn's wyff said upon a tyme that she wolde burne the said Johane Hammulden tayle, and doo her other displeasura." Mrs. Burgyn denied that she had ever spoken such words, but reported that "Oon Dollfyn's wyff had said that hitt was never merry in Ingldon sythens there was iii Queens in hitt. And then the said Johane Hammulden said there wolde be ffewer shortly, which words the said Johane Hammulden denyth." These depositions were sent up to Thomas Cromwell, asking what was to be done with the prisoners, "for they remayne in the Constable's warde."

*Jane Scavistrycke.*

She was a "Papist midwife in West Derby," and received a licence to practise in the diocese of Chester from Bishop Chadderton in 1578. He required of her that she should not refuse to attend "Any woman laboring of childe, being married and professing the reformed faith, whether the wife of a minister or otherwise," on pain of not having her licence renewed the following year.†

Among the interrogatories and demands of the people or parishioners, and their conversation to be required and known by the parsons, vicars, and curates, given in the later writings of Bishop Hooper is the following:—xii. item, whether any midwife refuse to come to any woman labouring of child for religion's sake, or because she is wife unto a minister of the church that hath married and doth marry both by God's law and the king's."‡

Some idea of the presents given by sponsors to midwives at christenings during this century may be gathered from the privy purse expenses of Henry VIII. and of the Princess Mary. In 1530 we find the former granting to the "nurse (nurse) and midwif of my Ladye of Worcestre, by way of rewarde, £4; and in 1532, to the nurse and the mydwyf of Sir Nicholas Harvy cheilde £3 6s. 8d." The entries relating to the gifts of the Princess Mary to midwives are very numerous, the sums varying, according to the rank of the parents, from five to fifteen shillings. In 1537 we find she "payed for a bonnet and a frontlet, and the same given to Maistre's mydwyfe, 2s." Queen Elizabeth, in 1562, gave, at the christening of "Atkinson the scrivener his childe," to the nurse and midwife £4. In 1565 she gave at the christening of the child of the Lady Cecilia of Sweden a gratuity of £20; but at the christenings of all her other godchildren the amount of the present this queen gave to the nurse and midwife was £5.§

Sometimes midwives received presents of jewellery and plate; and they also obtained gifts of money from others who were present at the baptism of the infant besides sponsors, for Popys writes in his journal, after having been to a christening—"I did give the midwife 10s."

Some curious entries relating to the fees of an ordinary

\* Sir Henry Ellis's Original Letters, Third Series, Letter 236.

† The Derby Household Books, Chetham Soc.

‡ Parker Society, Cam., 1852, p. 141.

§ Accounts of the Treasurer of the Chamber.

midwife may be found in the Steward's accounts of the Shuttleworths, &c., in the county of Lancaster\* :—" Spente by Will'm Woode and Cooke, wiffe and twos horses, when they wente for the midwiffe of Wigan, being a day and a night away, 4s. Spente by Richard Stones when he brought the Wigan wiffe home, and a night away, 22d. ; to the midwiffe, 12d." Then again we find at page 198 :—" Given to the midwiffe which helped cowe that could not calve, 2s. 6d."

Smyth mentions a midwife who was fetched in 1558 from Cheddar, in Somersetshire, to London to attend a lady in her confinement, and received at her departure 6s. 8d.†

it occurred to me to  
instruments in their rectums were correct, it might be possible to pass the hand into the bowel ; so, after explaining the matter to the patient and her husband, and having obtained permission to do as I liked, I proceeded as follows :—

species ; but as the remarkable similarity between the brain of man and that of the ape cannot be disputed, if the seat of human speech could be positively traced to any particular part of the brain, the Darwinian could say that, although

\* Chatham Soc., p. 194.

† Berkeley MSS.

\* Abstract of paper read at the Victoria Institute, March 18th, 1872.

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### CHAPTER II.—SEVENTEENTH CENTURY.

EARLY in this century a surgeon practising in London, Peter Chamberlen, the first of several generations of distinguished men-midwives, observing the incapacity of the women professing midwifery with whom he came in contact, was moved in his conscience to represent to King James I. in 1616 the following humane and reasonable proposition: "*That some order may be settled by the State for the instruction and civil government of midwives.*"\* Had this proposal been carried out at that time, England would have been in the van of the movement which has been going on in Europe since Peter Chamberlen's days, instead of in the rear; our midwives would have been for more than

\* A Voice in Rhama.

two centuries properly instructed and controlled, and we should have been saved the humiliation of being pointed at by our continental neighbours as a nation which does not care so much for the lives of its mothers as to induce it to secure for them efficient help in their times of jeopardy.

In the first year of this century Peter Chamberlen had a son, who was destined to grow up and obtain such an extended reputation as almost to eclipse and hide from our view the useful work accomplished by his father. "Ere nineteen summers" he graduated as doctor of medicine at Padua, and afterwards at Oxford and Cambridge. He became a Fellow of the College of Physicians in 1628, and was Physician-in-Ordinary to three Kings and Queens of England and to some foreign Princes. "Fame begot me envy," he says, "and secret enemies, which mightily increased when my father added to me the knowledge of deliveries and cures of women. They cunningly allow me a transcendancy in the particular of deliveries that they may the more securely deny me my due in physick, as if the one were privitive or destructive of the other." His midwifery practice must have been very extensive; for he says, "The burthen of all the midwives in and about London lay only on my shoulders," and his opportunities of ascertaining the amount of knowledge possessed by these women must have been equally great. We know the opinion he formed from the lamentation which he made that "Ignorant women, whom either extreme povertie hath necessitated, or hard-heartedness presumed, or the game of Venus intruded into the calling of midwifery (to have the issues of life and death of two or three at one time in their hands, beside the consequence of health and strength of the whole nation) should neither be sufficiently instructed in doing good, nor restrained from doing evil." With these thoughts it is not surprising that he should have attempted, in 1633, to provide for the instruction and government of midwives—a task which, we have seen, his father had seventeen years before failed to accomplish.

In 1646 he wrote a celebrated little book entitled "A Voice in Rhama, or the Crie of Women and Children echoed forth in the Compassions of Peter Chamberlen." In this he deploras that his scheme has not been carried out, and pours forth in his own eccentric but eloquent manner all the ardent and conflicting feelings with which he was filled.\*

"Bloud (which polutes a land and cries aloud to Heaven) runs yet fresh from the innocent veins of women and children for want of some charitable Samaritaines to bind up the wounds which ignorance and disorder amongst some uncontrolled femal-arbiters of life and death and others daily make. The conscience whereof, as formerly it moved my pious father to represent it to King James, so hath it me to move it since unto the king my master, who (by mediation of that true-hearted honour of nobilitie, the Earl of Pembroke and Mountgomery) read the petition, and vouchsafed a gracious reference; and it received the test and approbation of those two learned columnes of our facultie, Sr. Theodore de Mayerne and Sr. Matthew Lister. The benefit being computed (over and above the bettering of health and strength to parents and children) to the saving of above three thousand lives a year in and about London, beside the rest of England, and all other parts where the same order might have been propagated. A design (I thought) so full of pietie that no man would—so full of innocencie that no man could—so full of importance and general concernment that no man durst have opposed. What discredit had it been for a profession which lies under common disgrace and contempt to attain to the gravity and honour of order and government? What burden had it been for a calling which requires knowledge to be made more knowing and full of experience? What losse had it been to increase the number of living, which cannot but be an increase of employment to all sorts of trades and professions whatsoever—yes, to the very grave-maker, had he but patience to suspend his harvest till the young grew up to increase and multiply (not untimely, but) more and larger graves? My duty is to do good for evil, and to enthroned each member of our Facultie in the true orb it

ought to shine in, were they as willing to accept as I to offer my endeavours. For (alas!) it is too grievous to think what a deluge of blood lies on their graves or consciences since these thirty years that my father attempted this charitie, and thirteen years since I, in his example, revived it. Why may not the State resent a proposition of public good from me as from another? And if from me, then this proposition I do yet recommend that some order may be settled by the State for the instruction and civil government of midwives. Shall want of president be here objected? Yet this hath president in some foreign examples. The objection infers thus much: Because there was never any order for instructing and governing midwives, therefore there never must be; because multitudes have perished, therefore they still must perish; because our forefathers have provided no remedie, nor knew any, therefore we must provide none, though we know it. It may be, when bishops are restored again, their ordinaries will come in to plead their care. Of what? Truly, that none shall do good without their leave; that none shall have leave but such as will take their oath and pay money; that taking this oath and paying their money, with the testimonie of two or three gossips, any may have leave to be ignorant, if not as cruel as themselves; and that none shall have the privilege to be so certainly forsworn as these who swear impossibilities. But of instruction or order amongst the midwives not one word. The mighty God of compassions blesse this public information to his glory. Amen."

The life of Dr. Peter Chamberlen has yet to be written. When it is it will be seen that he was a man of great talent and wide celebrity, energetic and eccentric, but at the same time highly practical. During the time he practised in London he made several proposals for the public good; that of establishing baths shared the same fate as the one we have now been considering. He was far in advance of the time in which he lived, and consequently experienced the usual fate of being misunderstood and abused by those who should have encouraged and assisted him. English midwives, however, should always remember that the two Peter Chamberlens were their first champions; and that to them they owe the first proposal made to place them in a position which would have been satisfactory to themselves and advantageous to the public.

Thus another half century passed and still no original work on midwifery, written by an English hand, appeared.

In 1637 Ruoff's book, "De Conceptu et Generatione Hominis," was translated into English anonymously. The prejudice against printing this class of works in the mother tongue, complained of by Dr. Raynald in the preceding century, was not yet extinguished. We find in the preface to "The Expert Midwife," which was the title given to this translation, the following sensible remarks:—"Some (nicely precise) say it is unfit that such matters as these should be published in a vulgar tongue, for young heads to pry into. True, but the danger being great and manifold, whether it is better that millions should perish for want of helpe and knowledge, or that such means, which though lawful in themselves, yet may by some be abused, should be had and used? But young and raw heads, idle serving men, prophane filders, scoffers, jesters, rogues; avault, pack hence! I neither meant it to you, neither is it fit for you." This, the first and most absurd of the many retarding influences which have obstructed the development and improvement of the art of midwifery, was soon, however, destined to disappear like a thin, unsubstantial mist before the strong bright intellects which were about to arise and consume it for ever.

The history of midwives during the fifty years we are now considering would scarcely be complete were we not to mention the existence of a remarkable document entitled, "The Midwives' just complaint, and divers other wel-affected gentlewomen both in city and country, shewing to the whole Christian world the just cause of their long-sufferings in these distracted times for want of trading, and their great fear of the continuance of it." Which sad complaint was tendered to the House on Tuesday, September 22nd, 1646.\* It is too long to print in these pages, but the following extracts will give the reader an idea of its character:—"Humbly shewing, That whereas many miseries doe attend upon civil war, &c. We were formerly well paid and highly respected in our parishes for

\* Dr. Chamberlen was extensively engaged in the practice of midwifery, and at one time attempted, in direct opposition to the wishes of the College of Physicians, to obtain from the Crown authority to organise the female practitioners in that department into a company, with himself at their head as president and examiner.—Dr. Munk's Roll of the College of Physicians, vol. i., p. 151.

\* London: printed for T. S. 1646.

our great skil and midnight industry; but now our art doth fail us, and little gettings have we in this age, barren of all natural joyes, and only fruitful in bloody calamities. We desire, therefore, for the better propagation of our owne benefit, and the general good of all women, wives may no longer spare their husbands to be devoured by the sword. We have with much horror and astonishment heard of Kenton Bataille, the Batailles at Newbury, the Battle of Marston-more, the Battle of Naseby, wherein many worthy members and men of great ability were lost to the number of many thousands, which doth make us humbly to complain that blood may not hereafter be shed in such manner, for many men, hopeful to have begot a race of soldiers, were there killed on a sudden, before they had performed anything to the benefit of midwives." This not very decently worded complaint may be found in a collection of pamphlets presented to the British Museum by George III.

*Alice Dennis.*

This royal midwife attended Anne of Denmark, Queen of James I., when she was confined with the Princess Mary in 1605, for we find by writ dated May 28th the following order: "To Alice Dennis, midwife, the sum of £100 for her pains and attendance upon the Queen, as of his Highness's free gift and reward, without account, imprest, or other charge to be set on her for the same." A short time before her confinement the King and Queen were at Newmarket, and Sir Dudley Carlton writes to Mr. Winwood: "Here is much adoe about the Queen's lying down, and great suit made for offices of carrying the white staff, holding the back of the chair, door-keeping, cradle-rocking, and such-like gossips' tricks." Soon after this they were at Whitehall, and Samuel Calvert writes to Winwood: "The King and Queen are all now at Court; the Queen expects delivery within a month. There is great preparation of nurses, midwives, rockers, and other officers, to the number of forty or more." For her confinement the Queen retired to Greenwich, and Calvert again writes to Winwood: "The Queen expects her delivery every hour, and prayers are dayly said everywhere for her safety. There is great preparation for the christening chamber, and costly furniture provided for performance of other ceremonies." These must indeed have been carried out on a magnificent scale, for we find amongst his Majesty's extraordinary disbursements, "The Queen's child-bed and other necessary provisions for that time £52,542."† Upon the same day Winwood receives another letter from John Packer, who says: "The Queen is not yet delivered, but is come to the end of her reckoning. The midwives are here attending, but she will not speak with any of them till she hath need of their help, neither will she yet signify which of them she will employ until the easyness or hardness of her travaile doth urge her to it." We have seen that Alice Dennis was the one at length selected.

How much better off was this Queen than Henrietta Maria, wife of Charles I., who, when delivered in this same palace of Prince Charles James in 1628, "Had neither physician nor other professional aid near her; and when her terrified attendants brought the good old woman who usually officiated at Greenwich, that functionary, overcome by the idea of the exalted rank of her patient, swooned away with fear the moment she approached the Queen, and was obliged to be carried out of the royal chamber."‡

By writ of Privy Seal, dated August 6th, it appears that Alice Dennis was present and officiated at the birth of the Princess Sophia. The order for her payment is dated September 3rd, 1606. "To Alice Dennis, Midwife to the Queen, the sum of £100."

*Margaret Mercer.*

By writ dated December 10th, 1603, this midwife was ordered to repair to Heidelberg, there to attend the delivery of "His Majesty's dearest daughter the Princess Electress Palatine," and by order dated January, 1616, she was paid the sum of £34 4s. "in full payment and discharge of the charge of her said journey, and six other persons attending and accompanying her from London to Heidelberg and back again, appearing by her bill of particulars, subscribed and allowed by us according to the tenour of the said Privy Seal."

\* Winwood Memorials, vol. ii., p. 56.

† Truth brought to Light, &c. 1652.

‡ Strickland's Queens of England, vol. iv., p. 182.

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AND PROSPECTS.

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CHAPTER III.—SEVENTEENTH CENTURY (*continued*).

AT length a period arrived in the history of English midwifery which all who are interested in this branch of medical practice must look upon with unfeigned pleasure and pride. Harvey, the simple and trusting servant of nature—Harvey, honoured by king and country, and justly considered by English physicians as their proudest ornament, practised at this time as a man-midwife, and wrote upon ovology, obstetrics, and gynaecology with so much originality and force that his instructions and observations may still be read with advantage and interest.

Obstetricians of both sexes may well exult in the fact that the immortal Harvey was the first to rescue English midwifery from its age of darkness. Is it not characteristic

of the great master-mind of Harvey that he should have chosen to earn his bread by practising the branch of his profession which at that time was most despised? It was a grand, broad intellect which could at the same time teach the profoundest physicians and the most ignorant midwives, without a feeling of pride in the former or of condescension in the latter. To Harvey Nature was paramount; and, whether it were in the king's chamber or the peasant's cottage, her works were to him equally noble and interesting. The obstetrical writings of this father of English midwifery were translated into our own language, in 1653, by his faithful and admiring friend Sir George Ent; and their beneficial influence upon the practice of this country can scarcely be over-estimated. He did not content himself with serving up in a new form the traditions of the ancients, but sought and obtained new information from the immediate study of Nature. "About the secrets of Nature," his translator says, "it was his choice to consult Nature herself." The influence of his method is distinctly traceable in the writings of Dr. Percival Willughby, a distinguished man-midwife, who was a contemporary and friend of Harvey.\* He, in his "Country Midwife's Opusculum," acknowledges how much he is indebted to his honoured good friend Dr. Harvey in the following well-deserved eulogy: "I knew none but Dr. Harvey's directions and method, the which I wish all midwives to observe and follow, and oft to read over and over again; and in so doing they will better observe and understand and remember the sayings and doings of that most worthy, good, and learned Doctor, whose memory ought to be had for ever in great esteem with midwives and child-bearing women."

Dr. Harvey denounces the meddling midwifery of his time, and rebukes "The younger, more giddy, and officious midwives, who mightily bestirre themselves and provoke the expulsive faculty, and who, persuading poor women to their three-legged stool before the time, do weary them out and bring them in danger of their lives."

In the "Country Midwife's Opusculum," † may be found graphic descriptions of the midwife of this period. Dr. Willughby practised as a man-midwife both in Derby and London. He was the son of Sir Percival Willughby of Wollaton, and his writings prove him to have been a skilful, kind, and honest gentleman. He finds the same fault with midwives as Harvey. They were too officious, and would not sufficiently trust to the workings of nature. He speaks of "high and lofty, conceited midwives, yt will leave nothing unattempted to save their credits and cloak their ignorances"; of their using "pothooks, pack-needles, silver spoons, thatchers' hooks, and knives, to show their imagined skills." He tells of a midwife who, in Threadneedle-street, caused several women perforce to hold her patient by the middle whilst that she with others pulled the child by the limbs one way, and the women her body the other way; of another who had her patient tossed in a blanket, "hoping yt this violent motion would force the child out of her body;" also of a patient he was called to whom he found "very pale and faint, having a dying countenance, and her midwife not attending her work, but pulling her by the nose to keep life in her."

If such terrible doings as these were common, and all writers of this period concur in saying that they were, we cannot wonder at the effort which was made at this time to improve the education of midwives. The natural process of labour was rendered frightful by the incessant and violent interferences of these ignorant women. Willughby tells us of a woman who had been so cruelly tortured by her midwife that she determined never more to employ one; "and ever since the woman, so soon as she perceiveth her labour approaching, shee causeth a fire to be made in her chamber, and her husband bringeth her into the chamber, and after the taking of their leaves one of ye other, hee, with her desire and consent, locketh her in the roome, and cometh no more unto her until she knocketh, which is the signe of her delivery to him and such women as be in the house." Dr. Willughby was sincerely interested in the im-

provement of midwives, and never lost the opportunity of impressing upon them the necessity and advantage of leaving cases of natural labour to the safe conduct of "the invisible midwife, Dame Nature." He says: "I desire that all midwives may gain a good repute, and have a happy success in all their undertakings; and that their knowledge, charity, patience, with tender compassion, may manifest their worths among their women, and give their women just cause to love, honour, and to esteem them. The midwife's duty in a natural birth is no more but to attend and wait on Nature, and to receive the child, and (if need require) to help to fetch the after-birth, and her best care will be to see that the woman and child be fittingly and decently ordered with necessary conveniences. And let midwives know that they be Nature's servants. Let them always remember that gentle proceedings (with moderate warm keeping, and having their endeavours dulcified with sweet words) will best ease and relieve and soonest deliver their labouring women." What a blessing for English women that such a benign teacher existed at this early period!

Dr. William Sermon, another distinguished physician and man-midwife of this period, also wrote a book,\* his motive for doing which he describes as follows:—"The serious consideration of the intolerable misery that many women are daily incident to, occasioned chiefly by breeding and bringing forth children; and the want of help in such deplorable conditions, by reason of the unskillfulness of some which pretend the art of midwifery, &c., yet not in the least acquainted with the various diseases which frequently afflict the female sex in such times, hath been one principal motive to me at this time to undertake the publication of this treatise." His first chapter is upon "the antiquity of midwives and what manner of women they ought to be." He says, "Amongst those that have practised physick, there are many that have applied themselves most of all to deliver women; and that they might be distinguished from others, they were frequently called cunning women, or otherwise caused themselves to be so called; for women are of such a disposition (especially in these days) that they desire to excel men, or at least would seem to go beyond them; whereby it may be easily known that there have been some women that have practised physick, and others that were employed in the delivery of women. And these last took upon them three things. The first was to make (there be too many of that trade now) and to joyn the husband and wife; likewise to pass their judgment whether they were fit and capable, or else unable, and so insufficient to have issue or beget children.† The second was, to be present at the delivery of women, which work was committed to none but such that have had children. (As Plato saith) one cannot be so apt and skilful in exercising a work not known, as they which have had the perfect knowledge and experience thereof: neither did the said midwives attempt this art till they were past childbearing, because Diana (patroness of women in child-bearing) was barren: and also a woman that beareth children is over-much troubled, so they are more unfit to labour in such a great worke. The third was to diagnose pregnancy, virginity, &c." He thus describes what manner of women midwives ought to be. "As concerning their persons, they must be neither too young nor too old, but of an indifferent age, between both; well composed, not being subject to diseases, nor deformed in any part of their body; comely and neat in their apparell, their hands small and fingers long, not thick, but clean, their nails pared very close; they ought to be very chearfull, pleasant, and of a good discourse; strong, not idle, but accustomed to exercise, that they may be the more able (if need require) to watch, &c. Touching their department, they must be mild, gentle, courteous, sober, chaste, and patient; not quarrelsome nor cholericke; neither must they be covetous, nor report anything whatsoever they hear or see in secret, in the person or house of whom they deliver; for, as one saith (sic), it is not fit to commit her into the hands of rash and drunken women, that is in travel of her first child. As concerning their

\* "There came into my house at Darby my honoured good friend Dr. Harvey (1653).—Opusculum.

† The writer possesses the two MS. copies of it mentioned by Dr. Denman in his "Introduction to Midwifery." One belonged, a short time since, to the late Mr. Blenkinsop of Warwick, who printed 100 copies of it; it had never before been published in England, but was translated and printed at Leyden in 1764, with the title "Voeldkundige Armerkingen." A still earlier and less complete MS. than the two mentioned is in the British Museum, Sloane MSS., 529, De Puerperio Tractatus.

\* The Ladies' Companion, or the English Midwife. London, 1671.

† "In times past before women came to the marriage bed, they were first searched by the midwife; and such only which she allows: of as fruitful, were admitted." The Sick Woman's Private Looking-glass. By Dr. Sadler, of Norwich. London, 1636. See also N. Bocheus De Morbis Mul., cap. 20.

minds, they must be wise and discreet; able to flatter and speak many fair words, to no other end but only to deceive the apprehensive women, which is a commendable deceit, and allowed, when it is done, for the good of the person in distress."

Dr. Sermon makes the same complaint of midwives as Harvey and Willughby. "Some," he says, "there are (not wanting in ignorance), being over-hasty to busie themselves in matters they know not, destroy poor women, by tearing the membrane with their nails, and so let forth the water (at least) to the great danger and hurt not only of the woman, but of the child, which remains dry, the water being sent forth before the time appointed, and sometimes before the child is well turned, which hath been the death of many women and children too." The impatience of midwives seems to have been their greatest fault, for he says again, in chap. 23—"Above all things, let not the midwife presume to force the woman to labour before her due time."

What a contrast to the conscientious writers already alluded to was that clever, canting charlatan, Nicholas Culpeper, "student in physic and astrologie," who about this time published a "Directory for Midwives," whom he addresses thus:—"Worthy Matrons,—You are of the number of those whom my soul loveth, and of whom I make daily mention in my prayers. If you please to make experience of my rules, they are very plain and easie enough, neither are they so many that they will burden your brain, nor so few that they will be insufficient for your necessity. If you make use of them, you will find your work easie, you need not call for the help of a man-midwife, which is a disparagement, not only to yourselves, but also to your profession." What gross flattery is here, and what mischievous advice. His book, despicable then\* as it is now, is, as one might expect, barren of all useful information, and his intention in writing it must have been to obtain practice from the midwives in return for his fulsome adulation. The following is his dedication: "To the Midwives of England Nich. Culpeper wisheth success in their office in this world, and a crown of glory in that to come."

Before closing this chapter, let us consider for a moment what manner of men these were who undertook to enlighten midwives, and to raise their art from the depths of superstition and ignorance in which it lay.

Nicholas Culpeper did nothing for the improvement of midwifery, and need not be further noticed.

Dr. Peter Chamberlen was a Doctor of Medicine of Padua, Oxford, and Cambridge, a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London, and Physician in Ordinary to three Kings and Queens of England.

Dr. William Harvey was a Doctor of Medicine of Padua, Cambridge, and Oxford, a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians of London, Physician Extraordinary to James I., and Physician in Ordinary to Charles I.

Dr. Percival Willughby was a son of Sir Percival Willughby, of Wollaton, and grandson of Sir Francis, so famous in the time of Queen Elizabeth. He married Elizabeth, daughter of Sir Francis Coke, of Trusley. He was a B.A. of Oxford, and an Extra-Licentiate of the Royal College of Physicians of London.

Dr. William Sermon was a Doctor of Medicine, and one of the Physicians in Ordinary to Charles II.

Independently of their genius and learning, it will be observed that these self-constituted instructors of midwives were men of high social and medical position. Had they considered the study and practice of midwifery beneath their dignity, how disastrous would it have been to English mothers, and who can say how much longer the dark ages of midwifery would have continued in this country.

\* "The Directory for Midwives is the most desperately deficient. Except he (Culpeper) writ it for necessity, he could certainly have never been so sinful to have exposed it to the light." (The Compleat Midwife's Practice, enlarged; Lond. 1659).

## ENGLISH MIDWIVES; THEIR HISTORY AND PROSPECTS.

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### CHAPTER IV.—SEVENTEENTH CENTURY (continued).

*Mrs. Jane Sharp.*

THE first English midwife who attempted to enlighten her sister practitioners, by publishing a book upon midwifery, was Mrs. Jane Sharp, of London. She dedicated her work to Lady Ellenour Talbutt; and it was published by Simon Miller, at the Star, at the west end of St. Paul's, in 1671, under the title of "The Midwives Book, or the whole art of Midwifery discovered; directing child-bearing women how to behave themselves." Mrs. Jane Sharp describes herself as "a practitioner in the art of midwifery above thirty years." She begins her volume with an address to the midwives of England:—

"Sisters,—I have often sate down sad in consideration of the many miseries women endure in the hands of unskilful midwives; many professing the art (without any skill in anatomy, which is the principal part effectually necessary for a midwife,) merely for lucre's sake. I have been at great cost in translations for all books, either French, Dutch, or Italian, of the kind. All which I offer with my own experience; humbly begging Almighty God to aid you in this great work; and am your affectionate friend,

JANE SHARP."

After this follows an introduction upon the necessity and usefulness of the art of midwifery.

"The art of midwifery," she says, "is doubtless one of the most useful and necessary of all arts for the being and well-being of mankind, and therefore it is extremely requisite that a midwife be both fearing God and faithful, and exceeding well experienced in that profession. Her fidelity should find not only a reward here from man, but God hath given a special example of it in Exod. i. in the midwives of Israel, who were so faithful to their trust that the command of a king could not make them depart from it—viz.: 'But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt commanded them, but saved the men-children alive. Therefore God dealt well with the midwives; and because they feared God he made them houses.'

"As for their knowledge, it must be twofold, speculative and practical. She that wants the knowledge of speculation is like to one that is blind, or wants her sight; she that wants the practice is like one that is lame, and wants her legs. The lame may see, but they cannot walk; the blind may walk, but they cannot see. Such is the condition of those midwives that are not well versed in both these. Some perhaps may think that then it is not proper for women to be of this profession, because they cannot attain so rarely to the knowledge of things as men may, who are bred up in universities, schools of learning, or serve their apprenticeships for that end and purpose, where anatomy lectures being frequently read, the situation of the parts both of men and women, and other things of great consequence, are often made plain to them. But that objection is easily answered by the former example of the midwives among the Israelites; for though we women cannot deny that men in some things may come to a greater perfection of knowledge than women ordinarily can, by reason of the former helps that women want, yet the Holy Scriptures hath recorded midwives to the perpetual honour of the female sex. There being not so much as one word concerning men-midwives mentioned there that we can find, it

being the natural propriety of women to be much-seeing in that art; and though nature be not alone sufficient to the perfection of it, yet farther knowledge may be gained by a long and diligent practice, and be communicated to others by our own sex. I cannot deny the honour due to able physicians and chyrurgions, when occasion is; yet we find even that amongst the Indians, and all barbarous people, where there is no men of learning, the women are sufficient to perform this duty; and even in our own nation, that we need go no further, the poor country people, where there are none but women to assist (unless it be those that are exceedingly poor, and in a starving condition, and then they have more need of meat than midwives), the women are fruitful, and as safe and well delivered, if not much more fruitful, and better commonly in childbed, than the greatest ladies of the land.

"It is not hard words that perform the work, as if none understood the art that cannot understand Greek. Words are but the shell that we oftentimes break our teeth with them to come at the kernel—I mean our brains to know what is the meaning of them; but to have the same in our mother tongue would save us a great deal of needless labour. It is commendable for men to employ their spare time in some things of deeper speculation than is required of the female sex; but the art of midwifery chiefly concerns us, which even the best learned men will grant, yielding something of their own to us when they are forced to borrow from us the very name they practise by, and to call themselves man-midwives.

"But to avoid long preambles in a matter so clear and evident, I shall proceed to set down such rules and method concerning this art as I think needful, and that as plainly and briefly as I possibly can, and with as much modesty in words as the matter will bear; and because it is commonly maintained that the masculine gender is more worthy than the feminine, though perhaps where men have need of us they will yield the priority to us, that I may not forsake the ordinary method, I shall begin with men, and treat last of my own sex, so as to be understood by the meanest capacity, desiring the courteous reader to use as much modesty in the perusal of it as I have endeavoured to do in the writing of it, considering that such an art as this cannot be set forth but that young men and maids will have much just cause to blush sometimes, and be ashamed of their own follies, as I wish they may if they shall chance to read it, that they may not convert that into evil that is really intended for a general good."

Mrs. Sharp's book is a 12mo of 418 pages, in six books. Each book contains chapters varying in number from six to eighteen. A few extracts from it will show some of the peculiarities of her practice.

"The eagle stone held near the privy parts will draw forth the child as the loadstone draws iron, but be sure, so soon as the child and after-burthen are come away, that you hold the stone no longer, for fear of danger."—p. 198.

"It will be profitable, when a woman hath had a sore travel, to wrap her back with a sheepskin, newly lead off, and let her lig in it; and to lay a hareskin, rub'd over with hares blood newly prepared, to her belly."

Mrs. Sharp was a believer and expert in astrology. Speaking of tables for calculating the influence of the planets upon the birth, she says, "I have found no table concerning this business have any truth in it; wherefore I have drawn forth one exactly, which you may rely upon," which extraordinary production may be found at page 149.

A fourth edition of this book, printed after Mrs. Sharp's death, contains the following address from the publisher to the reader:—

"The constant and unwearied industry of this ingenious and well-skilled midwife, Mrs. Jane Sharp, together with her great experience of anatomy and physick, by the many years of her practice in the art of midwifery, hath sufficiently recommended her labours, and made them more than ordinary useful, and much desired by all that either

\* The following passage, translated from Saxton by the Rev. O. Cockayne, in his "Leechdoms &c. of Early England," shows that at a very early period products of the vegetable kingdom were supposed to possess this miraculous power:—"In order that a wife may quickly bring forth, take seed of coriander eleven grains or thirteen, knit them with a thread on a clean linnen cloth; let then a person take them who is a person of maidenhood, a boy or a maiden, and hold them at the left thigh, near the nastera, and so soon as all the parturition be done, remove away the leechdum, lest part of the inwards follow thereafter."—Vol. I. p. 219.

knew her person and experienced her artful skill, or ever read this book, which of late by its scarceness hath been so much enquired after, will, I question not, be so much valued and esteemed by all as to have many after impressions.—I am your well-wisher, J. R."

This edition is embellished with a frontispiece divided into three parts. The first represents a woman in bed after delivery, the midwife sitting beside her and offering a basin with a spoon in it. A woman is standing before the fire warming a towel; another is attending the baby in a cradle. The second part is a christening procession, the midwife walking in front with the child; ladies and gentlemen, arm in arm, follow, the former with fans in their hands. The third delineates a christening feast; the party is sitting round a table having bottles and glasses upon it, the parson in bands and gown being the most prominent figure.

No mention is made of Mrs. Jane Sharp in the biographies of Sue or Delacour, nor is her book much quoted. Willughby, however, severely criticises her method of treating arm-presentations, although he approves of her medical treatment of menorrhagia and convulsions.

#### Miss Willughby.

One of Percivall Willughby's two daughters was instructed by her father in the art of midwifery, and if the account he gives of her be not too partial, we must conclude that she, under his able tuition, became an accomplished midwife. Some idea of the difficulties she had to encounter in obtaining her knowledge may be gathered from the following observation written by her father in 1655: "I was sent for from Stafford to come to a lady beyond Congerton. Her midwife had kept her several days in labour. I took my daughter with mee. Wee travelled all night, and wee were wetted with much rain to our skins. Wee came by break of day to the place. But this lady was dead, undelivered, before our coming."

Soon after this Miss Willughby removed with her father to London, for in 1658 we find her attending a Mrs. Wolaston, a watchmaker's wife, by the Old Exchange, in "Three-needle-street, who had had much tugging and struggling usage" from her midwife in previous labours. Mrs. Wolaston had a happy and speedy delivery, so much so indeed that "shee began to grieve and complain (not imagining the child was born), and to say, 'Now I shall fall into my old paines and sufferings, and perceive that it will be no better with mee.' My daughter smiling (says Willughby), asked her what shee meant, and whether shee had two children, for one was born. Shee scarcely believed it, until that shee heard the child to cry. The after-birth being fetched, and shee laid in her bed, shee took my daughter by the hand, and said to her, 'Surely you have art in these fingers, otherwise so quickly and happily I should not have been delivered.'"

In this same year we find Miss Willughby attending a lady in her confinement during which an interesting scene took place. It is thus described by her father:—"In Middlesex, anno 1658, my daughter, with my assistance, delivered Sir Tennebs Evanks lady\* of a living daughter. All the morning my daughter was much troubled, and told me that shee feared that ye birth would come by ye buttocks. About seven o'clock that night labour approached. At my daughter's request, unknown to the lady, I crept into the chamber upon my hands and knees, and returned, and it was not perceived by ye lady. My daughter followed mee, and I being deceived through hast to go away, said that it was ye head, but shee affirmed the contrary; however, if it should prove ye buttocks, that shee knew how to deliver her. Her husband's great Oliverian power, with some rash expressions that he uttered, flowing too unhandsomely from his mouth, dismayed my daughter.† Shee could not be quieted until I crept privately again the second time into ye chamber, and then I found her words true. I willed her to bring down a foot, the which shee soon did, but being much disquieted with fear of ensuing danger, shee prayed mee to carry on the rest of the work."

At this period the man-midwife was not employed in ordinary cases, his assistance being only sought when instrumental interference became necessary. A deeply-rooted

prejudice against the male practitioner in midwifery existed at this time, and the midwives themselves, although they were glad enough to have his assistance when in difficulties, were, on all other occasions, more violent than any other class in denouncing him. In the instructions of a famous and dying midwife to her daughter,\* a case is related in which she consented that a chirurgeon should be called in, provided that the patient might not see him, being fearful lest she should die with apprehension and shame. In this instance the midwife persuaded her patient to slide down towards the foot of the bed, and darkened the room on that side where the man-midwife was to come. She would have him perform his work as Willughby did, unknown to the lady, "So that it be concealed from the woman all her life long; nor that shee see the chirurgeon any more."

Little more is known of Miss Willughby except that both she and her sister were married, the one to Mr. Hart, and the other (the younger) to Mr. Burton, of Derby.

#### Mrs. Willughby.

Dr. Willughby describes this lady as "a good kinswoman of mine (Mrs. Willughby) that was a long experimented midwife, of much practice, and of good repute with women, dwelling in Westminster and London. In speaking of the proper method of delivering a woman of twins, he says: "This good woman assured mee that shee had laid severall women of twins, and that shee never forced the second birth by breaking of the waters, and that shee had left these women for six houres or longer, and after her coming again that then shee had delivered them safely of the second child." This plan of treatment, it may be added, however, he did not approve of.

In Willughby's writings the names of many of the midwives with whom he came in contact are to be found. "Goodwife Spencer," "Midwife Heywood," and "Midwife Gretton," all of Derby. "Margaret Kempe, midwife at Abbot's Bramley," "Ann Bradford, at Walton, midwife," "Mrs. Shaw, midwife, of Stafford," "Felice Hollinghurst, midwife at Radgeley in Staffordshire," "Elizabeth Walthur, of Stafford, a butcher's wife," "Elizabeth Korkin," who must have practised in London or its neighbourhood, for by her "strugling, halings, and enforcements," she so injured a woman that she had to be taken to St. Thomas's Hospital in the year 1659. And one Mrs. Shaw, of whom he writes as follows: "There was a scandalous report in London with which an old midwife was spotted; that, through a mistake, instead of the after-birth shee pulled away the womb, of which the woman died. But I will not bee so injurious to old midwives as to give credence to such unworthy reports. Although I know assuredly that some of them do not (as they should) understand their practice and dayly undertakings." In the Sloan MS., after relating the doings of two ignorant midwives, he adds, reiterating the sentiments of Andrew Boord and the two Peter Chamberlens, "I could heartily wish yt some publick good order might be made for ye better educating of all, especially ye younger midwives, for ye helping and saving of mothers and their children. When ye meanness of ye women, not knowing how otherwise to live, for the getting of a shilling or two to sustain their necessities, become ignorant midwives, their travelling women suffer tortures. It would be better to make such midwives nursekeepers, rather than (such as they would be called) midwives."

#### Mrs. Labany.†

This Royal midwife attended Mary of Modena, Queen of James II., when she was delivered, on June 10th, 1687, of James Francis Edward, afterwards called the Pretender. Dr. Hugh Chamberlen was to have been present, but, happening to be away seeing a patient at Chatham, he did not return in time. The Prince was by many believed to be a supposititious child; and Mrs. Labany was accused of having brought the infant into the bed, some said out of a warming-pan, and others through a door at the back of the bed. Dr. Chamberlen, however, in his letter to the Princess Sophia, showed the absurdity of this hypothesis. However much Mrs. Labany may have been blamed for her supposed treachery to the nation, she received from the King,

\* This lady is described in the Sloan MS. as "wife to one of Oliver's creatures."

† From the Sloan MS. we learn that the unhandsome words were these, "What tack had he to be deluded by children and fools."

\* The Complant Midwife's Practice. 1669.

† Or De Labadie. Strickland's Queens, Bohn's Edition, vol. v., p. 46.

‡ Sloan MS., 4107, p. 150.

at the hands of Sidney Lord Godolphin, the enormous fee of 500 guineas\*—a sum more than sufficient to recompense her for her skill and compensate her for any pecuniary losses she may have sustained through her character being misrepresented.

*Mrs. Wilkins.*

This name must be added to the list of Royal midwives; for the Report of the Historical Commission, part i., p. 44, says that among Lord Mostyn's collection of news-letters &c. from 1673 to 1692, is a notice "of the birth of the Prince of Wales (son of James II.), and a fee of 500 guineas to Mrs. Wilkins, the midwife." It will be observed that this is the same sum as that granted to Mrs. Labany. It was not unusual for several midwives to be in attendance, and it would seem that the same fee was granted to all, whether they were actively employed or not.

## ENGLISH MIDWIVES; THEIR HISTORY AND PROSPECTS.

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### CHAPTER V.—SEVENTEENTH CENTURY (continued).

*Elisabeth Cellier.*

THIS celebrated midwife won for herself a place in English history. She was the owner of the tub from which the "meal-tub plot" obtained its name; and for the part she took in this obscure political movement she was, on the 30th of April, 1680, arraigned before Lord Chief-Justice Scroggs for high treason.\* It was then stated that "Elizabeth Cellier and other false traitors at the parish of St. Clement Danes advisedly, devilishly, maliciously, and traitorously assembled, united, and gathered themselves together, and then and there devilishly, advisedly, maliciously, cunningly, and traitorously consulted and agreed to bring the said Lord the King to death and final destruction, and to depose and deprive him of his crown and government, and so introduce and establish the Romish religion in this kingdom." To this charge she pleaded "Not guilty," and during the trial defended herself most ably. The principal witness against her was Dangerfield, whom she proved to be an unpardoned criminal, and consequently incapable of giving trustworthy evidence. Her conduct at this trial is thus alluded to in some lines entitled "To the praise of Mrs. Cellier, the Popish midwife": †

"You taught the judges to interpret laws;  
Shewed Serjeant Maynard how to plead a cause;  
You turned and wound, and rogued 'em at your will:  
'Twas trial, not of life or death, but skill."

The jury returned a verdict of "Not guilty"; and afterwards applied, as was customary, to Mrs. Cellier for a guinea apiece. She wrote to the foreman declining to pay them, and making the following characteristic offer:—"Pray, Sir, accept of and give my most humble service to yourself and all the worthy gentlemen of your pannel, and yours and their several ladies; and if you and they please, I will with no less fidelity serve them in their deliveries than you have done me with justice in mine."

Elated by her success, Mrs. Cellier published a book entitled "Malice Defeated, or a Brief Relation of the Accusation and Deliverance of Elisabeth Cellier, wherein the proceedings both before and during her Confinement are particularly related, and the Mystery of the 'Meal-tub' fully discovered; together with an Abstract of her Arraignment and Tryal, written by herself for the satisfaction of all lovers of undisguised truth. London, printed for Elisabeth Cellier, and are to be sold at her house in Arundel Street, near St. Clement's Church. 1680." ‡ She begins this remarkable work with a short personal history: "I hope it will not seem strange to any honest and loyal person, of what way of religion soever, that I, being born and bred up under Protestant parents, should now openly profess myself of another Church." She next describes her life in prison, and declares that whilst there she heard people being tortured, and that she knew a great many other things, and could say much more "when His Majesty makes it as safe to speak the truth as it is to do the contrary." For the statements made in this work she was again arrested and tried for libel. The charge to the jury ran as follows:

\* State Trials, 32 Charles II.

† British Museum, C. 20, f.

‡ It was believed by some that Gadbury wrote this book. See "Weekly Packet," Friday, April 22nd, 1681.

"You gentlemen that are sworn,—Elizabeth Cellier stands indicted by the name of E. C., wife of Peter Cellier, of the Parish of St. Clement's Danes, in the County of Middlesex, Gent.; for that she, being of the Popish religion, not having the fear of God before her eyes, but being moved and seduced by the instigation of the devil, falsely and maliciously endeavouring and intending Our Sovereign Lord King Charles II. that now is, and the Government of this Kingdom of England by law established, to bring to hatred and contempt &c., did falsely, maliciously and seditiously write and publish a scandalous libel intituled 'Malice Defeated,' &c."

Mrs. Cellier was not so happy in her defence during this trial. Pleading for mercy, she said she was only a weak woman, and that she had lost her father and brother both in a day for the King. The truth of this latter statement was, however, called in question by a writer in the "Anti-Roman Pacquet,"\* who says—"We could not but laugh when in her late blessed libel she shammed the world with a story of her families loyalty, father and brother, slain in his late Majesty's service, &c.; whereas we are assured that her native name was Marshal, and her father a brazier (not to dishonour the lady's lineage with the more vulgar name of tinker) in Canterbury, and her brother yet living at Maidstone; neither of them masters of any more loyalty than their neighbours. This brazen pedigree is suitable to her complexion." At length the trial was brought to a close by the question from the clerk of the Crown, "How say you—is Elizabeth Cellier guilty of the writing, printing, and publishing of the libel for which she stands indicted, or not guilty?" Foreman: "Guilty" (at which there was a great shout); and the verdict was recorded.

This trial took place at the Old Bailey on the 11th and 13th of September, 1680, and on the latter day the Recorder gave his judgment thus:—"Mrs. Cellier, the Court doth think fit for example's sake that a fine of one thousand pounds be put upon you; that you be committed in execution till that thousand pounds be paid; and because a pecuniary mulct is not a sufficient recompense to justice which you have offended, the Court doth likewise pronounce against you that you be put on the pillory three several days in three several public places. In the first place, in regard her braided ware received its first impression and vent at her own house, it is thought fit that she stand (as near her own house as conveniently can be) between the hours of twelve and one for an hour's space at the May-pole in the Strand on the most notorious day. I think there is a market near that place; let it be on that day. At another time that she stand at Covent-garden on a publick day the like space of time. A third time that she stand at Charing-cross on the most publick day for the space of an hour. And, in the next place, that she find sureties for her good behaviour during her life. And in every place where she shall stand on the pillory some parcels of her books shall, in her own view, be burnt by the hands of the common hangman, and a paper of the cause to be put upon the pillory." Then the Court charged the sheriff that he take care in every place for a sufficient guard that the peace may be kept, and she was returned to the goal.

When the time arrived for Mrs. Cellier to be placed in the pillory, she feigned sickness, having provided herself with an emetic to assist her in producing suitable symptoms; but as it was expected that she would use some artifice to thwart the execution of her sentence, the precaution had been taken of telling her that her appearance in public would take place the day before the time actually decided upon; and so, as France says, "she took her physic a day too soon." Finding herself beaten at her own weapons (which could not have been an easy task if it be true that "her two cardinal virtues were ambitious impudence and a prodigious knack of counterfeiting"), she devised a still more elaborate scheme whereby she might stay the hands of the law, the history of which is thus related by France:†—"Understanding that she was to stand in good earnest on the morrow, being Saturday, she used another artifice, declaring herself with child. This appeared improbable in a person of her reverend years (fifty odd).

Captain R— sending her up word that she must prepare to go forth to the wooden engine, she, in dying tone, replied that she was not able to stir out of bed. Whereupon he ordered three or four honest women to go up and dress her. They accordingly, with much ado, accoutred her; but then she would not stir a foot, so two men very gingerly brought her down, and would have seated her in a chair, but she tumbled herself all along the floor, and roared out, 'Oh, my back! Hold my back; hold my sides. I am in labour; call some women. For modesty's sake let the men be gone. Use not a woman in my condition more barbarously than heathens, more savagely than Turks and Indians,' &c. At last, after a world of groanings and a thousand bewitching wry faces, an able physician and several discreet women were sent for. They searched her so narrowly that they discovered the whole cheat, and found that the good lady was no more with bearn than the town-bull, but only having over night privately gotten a bladder of blood had used her skill in croaking the necessary symptoms, and, preparing certain clots of it, had put them in her body," &c. This incident is frequently referred to in the broadsides of the times:—

"And Madam Celliers there she stood  
With a bladder which was filled with blood,"\*  
"Tho' she who midwives trade well understood,  
Miscarried with her bladder cram'd with blood,"†

This latter device having failed, Mrs. Cellier passed through her trying ordeal on the 18th of September, 1680. A writer says: "The sentence was executed upon her in the presence of thousands of spectators, who (besides whole volleys of curses spent on her), had it not been for a board that she held in her hand to defend herself with, had certainly brained her before she was taken down; but being by a strong guard at last delivered from the fury of the rabble, she was carried back to prison."‡ In a broadside published on Dec. 20th§ may be seen a picture of Mme. Cellier seated in front of the pillory near the May-pole which appears behind in the Strand, and with a fire burning near. Many men, armed with long staves, stand about the scaffold. She holds a large shield in her hands, and is dressed entirely in black, with a widow's hood on her head. "A satire upon Mme. Cellier's standing in the pillory by a person of quality" is preserved in the British Museum.¶ The character of it may be gathered from the following lines:—

"Poor Cellier, you had better brought to bed,  
Anything, than to have a plot in triumph led,  
And thus to be received into the world's arms  
By dirt and stones and other wadlike arms."

Five days after she appeared again upon the pillory, as we learn from the following notice in a newspaper of that time:—"On the 23rd instant our renowned championess, Cellier, disgraced the pillory at Charing-cross."

Unfortunately for Mrs. Cellier her biography has been written by her enemies. We must therefore give her the benefit of every doubt, and view with suspicion every imputation against her character. Her early history has already been alluded to, in which she is said to have been the daughter of a tinker in Canterbury. Dangerfield,¶ her former friend, but afterwards bitter enemy, says: "The ever memorable Mme. Cellier (that notorious midwife that has brought abundance more lies than ever she did children into the world) was twenty years since wife of a certain merchant of this city. She received into her house an Italian and his negro servant, and fell in love with both, and was delivered soon after of a tawny-faced boy, to the great amazement of all beholders. Her husband, overcome with grief, went to Leghorn, where he ended his days. About twelve years since she lived near Holbourn, and afterwards at Westminster, where she met a second husband, as she says, 'hearing the first was dead,' and by him she had divers children. He also left Mrs. Cellier and went to Barbadoes, where he died. She then removed to the City of London, where she set up and professed the craft of midwifery, and also contrived to insinuate herself into the affections of one Mr. Cellier, a French merchant, and by degrees prevailed with him to marry her. Some time after this she removed

\* The Solemn Mock Procession, Nov. 17th, 1680.

† Commentation on the late wonderful discovery of the new Popish Plot, 1690.

‡ The Anti-roman Pacquet, Friday, Oct. 29th.

§ The Popish Damnable Plot, &c.

¶ The Devil Pursued; or, the Right Saddle laid upon the Right Mare.

‡ Answer to "Malice Defeated," 1690.

\* Friday, Oct. 29th, 1680: Cellier's, the Popish Midwife, her Pedigree, & Mr. France's Answer to Mrs. Cellier's Libel, &c.; to which is added, the Adventure of the Bloody Bladder; a tragic-comical farce, acted with much applause at Newgate by the said Mme. Cellier, on Saturday, Sept. 18th. Faithfully related by an eye- and ear-witness, 1690.

to Arundel-street, where she exercised her skill, and so improved her husband's business as to produce a plentiful livelihood."

The writer of this scrap of biography was introduced to Mrs. Cellier by one Mrs. White, a midwife whom she had rescued, like himself, out of prison by paying her fees. He was employed by Mrs. Cellier ostensibly in collecting her husband's debts, but in reality as a political agent. A characteristic incident which occurred during their friendship, relating to the proposed assassination of Lord Shaftesbury, is mentioned by Mansell.\* Lady Powis and Mrs. Cellier were together when Dangerfield informed them that he could not assassinate Lord Shaftesbury. Lady Powis, annoyed, called him "cow-hearted fellow," and said she would do it herself. Mrs. Cellier answered, "No, madam, that shall never be, for I will make the world know that our sex are braver than they of the masculine; and myself will go and do the work." She went, but Lord Shaftesbury, suspecting mischief, "kept a strict eye upon her, and observing her to be fumbling about her petticoat or pockets, gently laid his hands upon hers, and pleasantly drolled with her until she left." She, however, returned again, as if with fresh resolve, but he laid his hands on hers as before, and "dash'd her out of countenance." In the Luttrell collection in the British Museum is a picture of "Seleir Popish Midwife," holding a dagger behind her back, intended to represent the part she acted in this affair.† The incident is also referred to in the satire before mentioned:—

"But who would think it from the woman fine,  
A thing whom Nature itself has made divine,  
That she should act such horrid barbarous things,  
As to design to stab statesmen, and to murder kings."

To use up all the available materials, and to give a full history of Elizabeth Cellier, would involve entering into the minutest details of the mysterious "meal-tub plot." But as it is more particularly as a midwife we are interested in her, this short sketch of her political life must suffice. Without it it would be impossible to obtain a comprehensive view of her character. She was a fearless, ingenious, unscrupulous, and energetic woman, similar in reputation to Dame Ursula Suddlechop.‡ In testimony of her political eminence we may quote the following lines written by an inimical satirical Protestant poet:—

"Thus have you seen Pope Joan by far outdone,  
Nay, from her-Popes she has the mitre won;  
'Tis hers by merit, who dares argue less,  
When this Pope dies she shall be prelate Bess."

[*Note.*—If any reader of THE LANCET knows of a copy of "The Domestic Midwife," Lond., 12mo, 1795, by Margaret Stephen, or Stevens, I should be glad to have the opportunity of buying or borrowing it. Address, 1, Upper Wimpole-street, W.]

(To be concluded.)