

built among boulders. Every hut has stones around the fireplace to which the sheets may be tied and plenty of posts to which a tie could be made. But I have never seen or heard of the use of any kind of "pullers". A banana-fibre rope would be thought of in primitive days when all births—as many now—took place in the banana shambe next to each hut. The use of chain "pullers" (made of auto mud chains) in the native hospital was not very popular among the patients nor among the native attendants. The patients much prefer to flex their knees and pull against their own ankles.

The primitive native birth customs here are not very physiological. When labour sets in the woman keeps the information to herself as long as possible, probably to obviate attention from the inevitable mass of villagers who attend the affair. The custom of the old women is to encourage pains and not to let the woman rest between pains. Even in the first stage the woman is encouraged and forced to bear down by beating, holding hands over the nose and mouth, etc. The result frequently is that the patient is tired out before the second stage is passed and those pains are weakened. Then an injection of pituitrin or terminal forceps is extremely useful after she is brought to the hospital.

When left to herself with severe pains the woman will crawl around the banana shambe on her all fours with her pendulous abdomen hanging half a foot below the outlet. The same stunt will take place in the delivery room if she is unwatched.

As with the Eskimos the actual birth takes place in a squatting position. An attendant sits behind the patient and grasps her arms around the patient below the latter's arms and squeezes hard over the fundus. Another attendant squats in front between the patient's legs, and throws cold water over the vulva or plasters it with cow dung, etc., if the labour is too prolonged. The cord is tied with a banana fibre and cut with it or a blade of grass. The baby is dashed over with cold water and laid aside uncovered even if the weather is damp or cool. No attempt is ever made to deliver the placenta. The cord is never pulled on nor the abdomen squeezed. This is inconvenient, as many times we are called for adherent placentas when they would fall out if the woman had merely stood up!

R. B. MICHENER

P.S.—Boys average 7 lbs. and the girls $6\frac{3}{4}$ lbs.
Friends Hospital,
Kaimosi, P.O. Kisumu,
Kenya, East Africa.
August 3, 1936.

Letters, Notes and Queries

Obstetrics in Equatorial Africa

To the Editor:

Dr. Rabinowitch's account of the Canadian Eskimos was extremely interesting. Practising among a Bantu people of equatorial Africa, I found his account of the birth of a child doubly interesting and a comparison of the two primitive methods may be instructive.

The dating of the obstetrical use of the bed-sheet to the Stone Age may be questioned from observations here. Many of the huts here are

Answers to questions appearing in this column should be sent to the Editor, 3640 University Street, Montreal.