

speaks well for the general standard of practical common sense that so few calamities occur.

Another factor which has delayed the provision of adequate teaching in obstetrics, not only in England, but probably in other countries, is the old ingrained idea that the process of labor is a simple function of Nature, requiring for the most part a competent nurse only, and that the practitioners of obstetrics, although recognized in theory as of equal standing, are to be looked down upon in comparison with their colleagues in the other great branches of medicine and surgery. As the result of this, both in teaching and in examinations, the study of obstetrics has been relegated to a position totally unworthy of its immense importance to the practitioner and to the national welfare.

As shown in the report of a Committee of the General Medical Council, just published, it is still common in many places for students to be permitted or even encouraged to attend their maternity cases before they have had any adequate instruction in those general principles of medicine and surgery upon which the whole practice of obstetrics is based.

Another defect in the teaching is due to the fact that the lecturers frequently have had little experience in the practice of obstetrics. It is considered essential for the lecturer on medicine, surgery, or, indeed, any other special subject, to be a man of wide clinical experience, and to be in charge of wards devoted to the care of patients suffering from those particular diseases upon which it is his duty to lecture.

In obstetrics it is otherwise; the lecturer presides over no obstetric clinic and has often had but little experience. He is an obstetrician in name, not in practice. He probably does not attend twenty cases in a year. His obstetric practice is limited to the few special cases to which he may be called in consultation, and his teaching is necessarily of the book, not controlled by that wide personal experience only to be acquired by the constant observation of large numbers of cases such as falls to the surgeon, the physician, or to himself as a gynaeecologist in the course of their daily work. They, however, aim at and attain a high standard of theoretical teaching, and all credit is due to the men who under these very imperfect conditions have done such admirable work as teachers and investigators.

In many of the provincial schools the lecturer is a successful general practitioner, to whom the Fates have given a large obstetric experience, but whose scientific training for this work and whose experience as a teacher may have been quite inadequate.