

NORMAL LABOUR.*

BY

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The subject of normal labour in general practice is more important than has generally been recognized. My object is, therefore, to outline the subject briefly, with the hope of bringing out some important discussion on the whole subject of obstetrical practice.

At the outset I desire to say that if the laity were better informed with regard to the great importance of the proper management and treatment of the patient during gestation, as well as during her delivery and after treatment, it is my firm belief that the oft resultant wrecking of the mother's health would be materially minimized, and the manifold operations and treatment of the ambitious gynaecologist would be considerably diminished. It is not my desire, however, to depreciate the good offices of the gynaecologist, but rather to chide ourselves, the general practitioners, for our many failures in the past to bring our patient successfully through her gestation and puerperium.

Lest I might be considered pessimistic, let me say at the outset, from observation, that I believe the results obtained at present in the management and treatment, especially of the puerperal state, are much better than the results obtained by ourselves and our predecessors ten or fifteen years ago. For this improvement, much credit is probably due to the more general understanding by the profession of asepsis and antisepsis as applied to labour and the puerperal state. There is yet much room for advancement, however, and we, as physicians, should not be satisfied till we are able, even in abnormal and difficult cases, to guide our patient through her oft-dreaded and all important event, without any lacerations or complications of any kind.

Now, what is the physician's duty with regard to a patient in the early stages of gestation, who engages him for her confinement, and who may or may not draw his attention to any of the various ills to which she may be subject at this time? Some women there are who are so healthy, or who from instinct or acquired knowledge, so regulate their habits by an obedience to Nature's laws, that they require little or no advice during this period. Many, however, stand greatly in need of special treatment or advice to guide them aright in this important era.

Who can estimate the importance of a woman's environment, as well as that of her general health, in its effect upon her expected offspring

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