

## THE HYGIENE OF CHILDBEARING

(placenta) and membranes. It should not take over half-an-hour.

At the beginning of labor the child lies in a thin, closed, membranous sac usually called "the membranes." In this sac surrounding the child is the amniotic fluid, or "birth-water." The amount of this varies from a pint to several quarts. When the uterus contracts during a pain the pressure on this water forces a little pouch of membranes through the mouth of the womb, thus acting as a dilator to open it. This pouch is called the "bag of waters." At the end of the first stage when the womb is fully open the bag of waters usually gives way, and the water comes away with a gush. Sometimes the water breaks earlier, even at the beginning of labor. This condition was formerly called "a dry labor," and was regarded as a misfortune. It was thought that the labor would be hard and long. But better observation has taught us that the so-called "dry" labors average up just as well as the others. The cause of hard labors lies in other conditions.

When the membranes fail to rupture at the proper time the child may be born enclosed in the sac. This is being born with a "caul" or a "veil." The infant must be instantly released or it will die. Among the ignorant this "veil" is dried and carefully preserved. There is a superstitious belief that the possessor of it cannot die from drowning.

During the first stage of labor the patient may be up and about. The pains are usually more active when she is up than when lying down. There is a certain amount