

When attended by students who have had the necessary preliminary clinical teaching, these extern maternities provide the most important and valuable training that any medical student can obtain, for, as in private practice, he is then placed almost entirely on his own resources. At any time he may have to deal with one of the sudden emergencies of midwifery, and so he begins to acquire that feeling of personal responsibility for the direction and management of the case which it is so difficult to arouse in the student while at work within the hospital, where every important detail is supervised by the responsible officers. Thus invaluable training is at hand for every student in the maternity districts, and their responsibilities in degree and in value are not exceeded by those of any house-surgeon or house-physician, offices which can only be held by a small minority of the best students.

Another fact 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 Dr. Dakin pointed out in his excellent inaugural address before the Obstetrical Society of London last year, if only the scourge of puerperal septicaemia can be removed childbirth will be robbed of one of its principal terrors, and this long-desired consummation will be nearer its accomplishment when our students are taught practically in the lying-in wards the application to midwifery of the general principles of antiseptis.

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