

THE ART OF MIDWIFERY—A BILL.

OMAHA, NEB., February 25, 1897.

Editor Western Medical Review: In the last issue of your journal you gave space to the bill now pending in the senate to regulate the practice of medicine in this state. While every fair-minded practitioner is of the opinion that the standard of the physician in general cannot be too high, and the means to eradicate the foul and obnoxious element from the profession cannot be too vigorous and radical, yet this bill, which was introduced by Dr. Grothan, to the astonishment and surprise of a great many, finds opposition in some quarters, and all efforts are used to defeat this measure, which would only save us from the invasion of many ignorant men and charlatans. While I am aware of the fact that petty jealousies and "cliques" are not very uncommon among our brother physicians, yet it appears hardly possible to believe that some would carry the divergence to their own disadvantage, just because others are of the opinion that certain measures ought to be carried out.

I heartily sympathize with Dr. Grothan's bill, and have proven it by introducing a bill in the legislature to regulate the practice of midwifery. We all know what we have to put up with with the "quacks." We all know how poisonous to the mind and body of the ignorant people are their obnoxious ways of doing business, yet a great many are not aware of the great injury and harm that is done to the great mass of poor women who are at the mercy of the ignorant midwife.

Every physician has his tale of woe to tell about how many retained placentas he had to remove a week or ten days after delivery; how many cases of puerperal fevers and a great many mischiefs of all descriptions he has to remedy in cases that were attended by ignorant midwives. Having more opportunity than any other physician to witness and correct all mischiefs and errors of ignorant women who claim to be midwives, I was induced to prepare a bill, which, as you will see, has a tendency to correct the evil as much as possible, and see if the community cannot be saved from that horrible plague, the midwife as she is now.

I have organized a school of midwifery, according to the plans laid down by the State Board of

Health of Illinois, and according to the laws which govern the midwifery schools in Germany, in which I define strictly where the duties of a midwife cease and the duty of a physician commences, and yet I find that some of our beloved brother physicians are opposing this bill just to be contrary. Some of them are even going so far as to suspect selfish motives and schemes in the bill.

Dear doctor, here is the bill as amended in the house committee, and I hope you will give your valuable space to it and let everybody see and judge for himself as to the merits of same.

Respectfully yours, DR. E. HOLOVITCHINER.

The title of the bill referred to by Dr. Holoitchiner is "A bill for an act to regulate the practice of the art of midwifery in the state of Nebraska." Section 1 says that any person who is a graduate in the art of midwifery, and desires to practice the same, must present his or her diploma for verification, and if it is found genuine and from a reputable school the holder, after payment of the fee, shall be entitled to an examination by the State Board of Health, or such other board as may be designated, and if he or she passes the necessary examination the certificate shall be issued to the applicant, entitling him or her to practice midwifery in this state.

Sections 2 and 3 refer to verification of diploma and minor technicalities.

Section 4 is in reference to the filing and recording of the certificate in the office of the clerk of the county, which is about the same as that which applies to the recording of medical certificates.

Sections 5 and 6 are in reference to moving from one county to another, requiring the recording of the certificate in each county, and the county clerk must keep a book especially for recording these certificates.

Section 7. The fee for examination shall be \$5, and shall be paid into the treasury of the board. If an applicant fails to pass, the fee shall be held to his or her credit for a second examination, within a year.

Section 8. Examinations must be made verbally, and shall be made in the following branches: 1. Anatomy of the pelvis and of the generative organs of women. 2. Physiology of menstruation and conception. 3. The signs of pregnancy. 4. Mechanism of labor. 5. Puerperal hygiene and antiseptics. 6. Management of normal labor. 7. Special care of mother and infant in puerperium only.

Section 9. An applicant who desires the examination conducted in any other than the English language may, in the discretion, of the board, furnish an interpreter, at his or her own expense and subject to the approval of the board.

Section 10. Eighty per cent. of correct answers shall be required to pass.

Section 11. The State Board of Health, or such other board as may be designated by law for the

purpose, may refuse to issue the certificate to individuals guilty of unprofessional or dishonorable conduct, and it may revoke such certificate for like causes.

Section 12. Definition of Practicing Midwife.—Every person shall be regarded as practicing midwifery, within the meaning of this act, who shall deliver a pregnant woman, at the expiration of her full term, in the vertex presentation, with its four positions, as follows, viz., 1, left occipito anterior; 2, right occipito anterior; 3, right occipito posterior; 4, left occipito posterior; and no person except a regularly qualified and practicing physician shall deliver a pregnant woman in any other position than named in this section, under the penalties provided for a violation of this act.

Section 13. It shall be the duty of every practicing midwife to immediately call a regularly qualified and practicing physician to his or her assistance upon discovery of any abnormal presentation, such as breech, face, and transverse positions, under the penalties provided in section 19 of this act.

Section 14. No midwife shall treat, operate, or prescribe for any physical ailment of another or a woman in puerperium, or infant, nor shall such midwife administer at any time, to any one, any drug, nostrum, ointment, or appliance of any kind intended for the treatment of disease or injury, except such remedies as carbolic acid, or any other antiseptic for use in the art of midwifery for disinfecting purposes.

Section 15. It shall be the duty of every practicing midwife, in every case of any disturbance in or after a natural delivery, such as post-partum hemorrhages, placenta previa, or puerperal fever, to call at once, on discovery of such condition, a regularly qualified and practicing physician.

Section 16. Nothing in this act shall operate to require further examination of any midwife who is now qualified for the practice of the art of midwifery in this state, by reason of holding a diploma from a reputable school of midwifery, or institution in good standing. All holders of such diplomas must present them, together with an affidavit that he or she is the lawful possessor of the same, to the State Board of Health, or such other board as may be designated by law for the purpose, within six months after the passage of this act, to obtain a certificate from said board to entitle them to practice the art of midwifery in this state; Provided, That said board shall receive a fee of two (\$2) dollars for such certificate.

Section 17. Penalty.—Any person not possessing the qualifications for the practice of the art of midwifery required by the provisions of this act, or any person who has not complied with the provisions of this act, who shall engage in the practice of the art of midwifery in this state, shall be deemed guilty of misdemeanor, and on conviction thereof shall be fined in any sum not less than fifty (\$50) dollars, nor more than one hundred

{§100) dollars, and the cost of prosecution, for each offense, and shall stand committed until such fine and costs are paid.

Section 18. Any person filing, or attempting to file, as his or her own, the diplomas or certificates of another, or a forged affidavit of identification, shall be deemed guilty of a felony, and upon conviction thereof shall be subject to such fine and imprisonment as are made and provided by the statutes of this state for the crime of forgery.