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EDITORIAL

DO AWAY WITH THE MIDWIFE.

Ziegler contributes an interesting paper on this subject to the Journal of the A. M. A. He considers the midwife an unnecessary evil and not excusable on any grounds of poor obstetric work by physicians. He is opposed to educating and licensing midwives, first, because he considers it unnecessary, and a plan can be evolved by which good medical attendance can be assured to every parturient woman; and second, because he does not believe it possible to train women of a type of even the best class of midwives to practice obstetrics satisfactorily. There is a great deal more in obstetrics than merely assisting the forces of Nature. Each case should be studied beforehand, and accidents and the abnormal possibilities of the mother and child need the educated eye of the physician. It will never be known, perhaps, how many thousands of babies are sacrificed by the lack of this. Another very pertinent objection to giving 50 per cent of the cases to midwives, as at present, is that they contribute nothing to our knowledge of the subject. The cases they treat should be available for the training of future physicians, which is at the present time almost impracticable. On the other hand, it is plain that every woman has a right to demand such care during and following childbirth, as is needed for her welfare and that of the child.

Ziegler criticizes the present method of administering medical charities as unjust and inefficient. Any system that does not give the most economical service consistent with essential efficiency is wrong, and physicians ought not to be obliged to bear the burden that should be assumed by the individual or the state. The remedy, as far as obstetrics is concerned, can be brought about through the establishment of obstetric charities, consisting of maternity hospitals and maternity dispensaries with all that they imply. Where medical schools exist these may be directly effective. But in the rural dis-

tricts he agrees with Professor Prichett of the Carnegie Foundation that "a sanitary service, subsidized by the state, will alone render efficient relief in backward districts without demoralizing the profession." He believes that every student graduating should have had experience with at least fifty cases, and he gives results of inquiries as to how near this is approached in the various medical centers.