

The American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology

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Editorial Comments

An Association of Women's Hospitals

IN STRANGE contrast with older civilized countries, the hospitals in the United States devoted to the treatment of conditions peculiar to women, show a curious lack of uniformity in practice and a lack of unanimity of opinion as to the scope and character of their work. In one hospital nothing is attempted except the care of women in actual childbirth. There is no provision for the treatment of the complications of pregnancy and the complications and consequences of delivery. These conditions must be referred elsewhere, although their management is an essential part of the duty of those who assume the responsibility of managing the process of labor. In another hospital there is provision only for dealing with the diseases of women, five-sixths of which are the consequences of child-bearing and none of which can be adequately dealt with except by a hospital staff familiar with that process. There are all gradations between these extremes.

Fortunately this provincial indifference to the practice of the civilized world is beginning to disappear. There are now on this continent several women's hospitals where all the conditions peculiar to the sex are studied in close correlation. This is really the only way to assure progress in this branch of medical science and practice, and the only way to keep pace with the advance of gynecology. It would appear that the time has come to hasten this movement. There are still too many hospitals of the old type here which retard progress. There is an opportunity now to standardize these institutions in accordance with the principles generally accepted throughout the world, in some such manner as has accomplished so much for the betterment of the general hospitals in the country. Whether this standardization can best be accomplished by such agencies as the American Medical Association,

NOTE.—In response to requests from various sources, the Editors of the Journal are inaugurating in the present issue a department of Editorial Comment, which we trust will meet with the approbation of our readers. Where not signed, the "comments" are by the Editors.

the American College of Surgeons or the individual state boards of licensure is open to question. A suitable preference would be an Association of Women's Hospitals organized by a group of the most modern and best equipped of these institutions. Such an association by example, in the scope and character of its work, by precept and by a certain amount of compulsion through rating and requirements for admission to the Association, could rapidly raise the general level of the hospitals in America devoted to the care of women, so that they might stand comparison with such institutions elsewhere.

—*Barton Cooke Hirst.*