

walls with flaming straw or heather, which was the usual way of disinfecting houses at the time. It did sometimes result in the house being burned down, to the very real 'skaith' of the neighbours, whose own houses might easily be included in the holocaust.

Compared with some early legislation on plague the Scots 'Rule' shows a definite advance. It does at least recognize that the unfortunate sufferers have some rights and that the governing bodies have some duties toward them. The Ordinances of Barnardo Visconti, for example, which were made in 1374 are concerned only with isolation of the infected, quarantine of contacts, notification (*sub poena ignis*) by priests, and such-like matters. They throw all responsibility on the patient and his friends, the authorities are required only to enforce the rules.

Crude and incomplete as it was, the Rule was the foundation of all later Scots anti-plague legislation while outbreaks of the disease continued to occur in the country. Even when, in 1720, the great epidemic at Marseilles was causing the governments of most western countries to devise precautions in case of a possible recrudescence of plague in Europe the Scottish Convention of Burghs, when advising its constituents, drew their attention to the Rule of the Pestilence. It was evidently regarded as still giving useful guidance, though it had been drawn up 264 years before.

Edinburgh

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## MRS. JANE SHARP'S ADVICE TO MIDWIVES

THE first English midwife to attempt to enlighten her sister practitioners by publishing a book on Midwifery was Mrs. Jane Sharp of London. Her duodecimo volume of 418 pages was printed in 1671 'for Simon Miller, at the Star at the West End of St. Pauls'. Its title must be one of the longest on record for it includes a description in detail of the six books. Essentially it is called *The Midwives Book or the whole Art of Midwifery discovered. Directing Childbearing Women how to behave themselves in their Conception, Breeding, Bearing and Nursing of Children*.

Mrs. Sharp, who describes herself as 'Practitioner in the Art of Midwifery above thirty years', dedicates her book with becoming modesty 'to her much esteemed and ever honoured friend the Lady Ellenour Talbutt be these my Poor and Weak Endeavours Humbly Presented by Madam, and Admirer of your Vertue and Piety —Jane Sharp.

The Preface is addressed to the Midwives of England:

Sisters. I have often sate down sad in the consideration of the many miseries women endure in the hands of unskilful Midwives; many possessing the Art (without any skill in anatomy which is the principal part effectually necessary for a Midwife) merely for Lucre sake. I have been at great cost in translations for all books either French, Dutch or Italian of this kind. All which I offer with my own experience humbly begging the assistance of Almighty God to aid you in this great work.

Much of the text is sensible. Some of it quaint for she refers discretely to the seeds, the stones within the cods and the man's yard.

There are six parts in Men that are fitted for generation. 1. The Vessels that prepare the matter to make the seed, called the preparing Vessels. 2. There is that part or Vessel which works this matter or transmutes the blood with the real desire for seed. 3. The stones that

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make the Seed fructify. 4. There are Vessels that convey the Seed back again from the Stones when they have concocted it. 5. There are the seminal or Seed-Vessels that keep or retain the Seed concocted. 6. The Yard, that from these containing vessels, casts the seed prepared into the Matrix.

But amongst the sense she has been unable to refrain from including old wives' tales and even astrology. She tells us that she has not been able to find an astrological table 'concerning this business to have any truth'. So far so good, but unfortunately she constructs an astrological table of her own on which complete reliance can be laid.

Elsewhere she includes the following advice:

*Signs that a woman is conceived with Child, and whether it is a Son or a Daughter.*

If you keep her water three days close stopt in a glass, and then strain it through a fine linnen cloth, you will find live worms in the cloth.

Also a needle laid twentyfour hours in her urine, will be full of red spots if she have conceived, or otherwise it will be black or dark coloured.

To know whether the Infant conceived be male or female I refer you to Hippocrates, Aphor. 48. for it is a very hard thing to discover. (The aphorism was: a male foetus inclines to the right, a female to the left.)

If it is a boy she is better coloured, her right Breast will swell more, for males lye most on the right side, and her belly especially on that side lieth rounder and more tumified, and the Child will be first felt to move on that side, the woman is more cheerful and in better health, her pains are not so often nor so great, the right breast is harder and more plump, the nipple a more clear red, and the whole visage clear not swarthy.

If the marks before mentioned be more apparent on the left side it is a Girle that she goes with all.

If when she riseth from the place she sits on, she move her right foot first, and is more ready to lean on her right hand when she reposes, all signifies a boy.

Lastly, Drop some drops of breast Milk into a Bason of water, if it swim on the top it is a Boy, if it sink in round drops judge the contrary.

*Of the Sympathy between the womb and other parts and how it is wrought upon by them.*

Further you may know the Child if it be a Boy to be three months old, and if a Girle to be about four moneths old, if you find Milk in the Mothers breasts, for at those times the Child first moves, and then is there Milk found in the breasts of the Mother.

If the right breast swell and strut out the Boy is well, if it flag it is a sign of miscarriage, judge the same of the Girle by the left breast, when it is sunk, or round and hard, the first signifies abortion be near, the other health and safety both of Mother and the Child.

#### *The Eagle-stone*

[The eagle-stone was a hollow shell of clay-ironstone containing within it a loose body of variable composition. It was said to be found in eagles nests, carried there to assist in the hatching of eggs.]

The Eagle stone, I have seen abundance of them every day to be sold in Hamburgh, and they are to be had in London, but they are of four kinds, the best is brought from Africa, and is taken out of an Eagles nest, for the Eagle some write, cannot lay her eggs if she want these stones by her; it hath the name from hence, and it is called from the likeness it hath with it, a stone with child: it is but a small stone with another stone that shakes and sounds within it, it is but of a small body and easily beaten to powder; some say there is a male Eagle stone and this is a female, I think there is both male and female in stones and Plants. There is a second and that is called the male Eagle stone and it comes from Arabia, it is as hard as a gall, or a dark red colour and hard to be powdered; the third is brought from Cyprus, not unlike

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that of Africa, but it is much bigger. The fourth brought from a place called Taphimsius is so denominated also, it is round and white, and another stone within it, it is found in Rivers, this is held to be the worst, but in some respects very good, and the best of all the four for it is used for some occasions: but herein must we needs admire the works of God, for I have proved it to be true, that this stone hanged about a womans neck, and so as to touch her skin when she is with child, will preserve her safe from Abortion, and will cause her to be safe delivered when the time comes.

The Eagle stone held near the privy parts will draw forth the Child, as the Loadstone draws Iron, but be sure so soon as the Child and afterburthen are come away, that you hold the stone no longer, for fear of danger.

*What must be done after the woman is delivered.*

It will be profitable when a woman hath had sore travel, to wrap her back with a sheep-skin newly flead off, and let her ly in it, and to a Hare-skin, rub'd over with Hares blood newly prepared, to her belly; let these things be worn two hours in winter, and but one hour in Summer, for these will close up the parts too much dilated by the childs birth, and will expel all ill melancholly blood from those parts.

Her closing words are these:

Thus by the blessing of Almighty God, I have with great pains and endeavour run through all the parts of the Midwives Duty; and what is required both for the Mother, the Nurse and the Infant; desiring that it may be as useful for the end I have written it, to profit others, as I have found it beneficial to Me in my long Practice of Midwifery. To God alone be all Praise and Glory. Amen.

W. BROCKBANK

### ANOTHER SMELLIE CERTIFICATE

THE publication of the Certificate of Attendance at William Smellie's lectures in 1757 by Dr. James Nankivell, in the July 1957 issue of *Medical History*, served to recall that a similar certificate was in the Boston Medical Library, issued to James Lloyd on the fourth day of March 1752, five years before the one issued to Dr. Nankivell's ancestor. Lloyd (1728–1810), a pioneer obstetrician and surgeon, was a descendant of another James Lloyd who emigrated to Boston about 1670 from Somersetshire, England, and became an important colonial merchant. As a young man Lloyd was apprenticed in medicine for five years to Dr. William Clark, one of the leading practitioners in Boston, and subsequently went to England where he spent two years in London attending the lectures on midwifery by William Smellie, and the demonstrations of William Cheselden, then at the height of his career. Lloyd also acted as 'a dresser' at Guy's Hospital and may have attended the lectures of William and John Hunter. Returning to Boston in 1752 after he had received his certificate from Smellie, he practised surgery, and particularly obstetrics, with considerable success, and was the first in America to put obstetrics on a scientific basis. Although he made no contributions to medical literature, for he was eminently a practitioner and not a scholar, he trained many pupils, including the young men who were to take an active part in the American Revolution in 1775. Greatly to his credit he remained in Boston during the entire Revolution, serving as a physician to the English until they evacuated the city, and later the Patriots, many of whom were led by his former pupils. His large estate on Long Island, New York, inherited from his father, was