

STUDY OF MIDWIFERY IN FRANCE.

IN one of the Numbers of the Gazette de Santé for March, we find a letter, the writer of which strongly complains of the defective manner in which midwifery is taught in the schools of Paris. We have no occasion to give this letter in detail, as it applies so perfectly to the schools of Great Britain; that every English practitioner, who has not confined his obstetrical studies to British schools, must acknowledge the similarity which, in this respect, obtains between them and the Parisian schools. We hope, however, that we may do some good by giving an abridgment of a letter, which was subsequently sent to the editor of the Gazette de Santé, and which shows, that France possesses at least one good obstetrical school, an exception of which we scarcely can boast:—

“ Sir,—The judicious remarks you have published in the Gazette de Santé, of the 25th of March, on the study of midwifery as pursued at Paris, induce me to describe the method in which this branch of medical science is taught at the University of Strasburgh. Having studied at both schools, I must begin with the confession that I have been struck with, I cannot say the superiority of that of Strasbourg over that of Paris, but with the excellence of the former, and the complete nullity of the latter.

“ The Hospice de la Maternité, of Strasburgh, is on a smaller scale than that of Paris, but, in proportion, it is of no less advantage to the poor; the principal distinction, however, between this establishment and that of Paris, consists in its not being governed according to monasterial statutes, and in the liberal admission of students. The Maternité is part of the town hospital, and contains three wards; in the largest of them, the females are placed previous to, and after delivery; the second, called Salle d'Accouchement, serves for the purpose indicated by its name, and the third is occupied by an experienced and intelligent midwife, who, under the direction of M. Flamant, the professor of midwifery, superintends the obstetrical practice.

“ The obstetrical clinic is held every morning at eight o'clock; every student has free access, but those only who have sufficiently studied the theory of midwifery, and are, for this purpose, divided into classes of twelve, are admitted to practice. The practical exercises are conducted in the following manner:—Every Saturday the females, who, during the preceding week, have entered the obstetrical department of

the Hospital, are submitted to an examination per vaginam; for this purpose, one after the other is shown into the Salle d'Accouchement, where the class "*en service*" is assembled with M. Flamant, who begins and directs the examination. I need hardly dwell upon the advantages of these examinations, under the immediate superintendance of an experienced practitioner; the capacity of deciding many legal questions, of ascertaining whether a female is pregnant, how far she is advanced in pregnancy, &c., can, in fact, be acquired in this manner only.

"According to the various lengths of time that the female remains in the hospital before delivery, she undergoes these examinations more or less repeatedly. To each individual belonging to the practical classes, one pregnant female is particularly confided during her stay in the hospital. As soon as the symptoms of approaching parturition appear, she is removed to the Salle d'Accouchement, and whatever hour of day or night it may be, the student, to whose special care the case has been committed, is instantly sent for; if possible, the pupils of the class "*en service*" are also called. The female is now examined under the superintendance of the house-midwife, whose duty it is to direct the particular attention of the pupils to the different periods of parturition as discernible by examination, &c. If the case is in the least unusual, M. Flamant is sent for to direct its further management in person. In the next clinical lecture, the student, under whose particular care the case has been, gives a verbal report of the delivery, and, after the full termination of the case, his journal is read to the class."

If such a practical course of obstetrical clinic be compared with the method adopted in the schools of Paris, (and we add with those of Great Britain,) it is easily seen which side will preponderate; in fact, in Paris, and in this country, for the most part, there are only theoretical courses, and no practical exercises under the eye of the teacher; and what is obstetrical instruction without the latter? However excellent the former may be, where will the student learn the art of observation? where acquire the capacity of self-acting? The unfortunate patients, in the beginning of his practical career, must supply this want, and how dear must they often pay for it!*

* We refer our readers to a paper by Dr. Kind, on Medical Education in Germany, in No. 220 of THE LANCET, from which it appears, that the method of obstetrical clinic adopted in the school of Strasbourg, is the same which is followed in the German universities.