

The Midwife.

Management of Twins.

BY MACK ALL.

The management of twin babies is one of the things that most nurses have to deal with at some time or other in their practice. Twins—fortunately for all concerned—do not come often enough for either parents or nurses to get accustomed to them. If one has had little experience, it is rather difficult to know how to advise a mother, so that both babies start with an equal chance of life.

Twin babies are usually smaller and less robust than infants that come singly. They require more care during the first year or two of their lives than other babies, but there is no reason why both should not grow up strong and healthy.

Properly managed twins give less trouble than one spoiled child, but a mother is often at her wits' end to know how to properly manage a pair of babies when one has always seemed enough.

FOOD.

The first question is one of food. Few, if any, mothers of to-day are equal to providing nourishment for two infants. A wet nurse may suggest itself as a way out of the difficulty, and if a healthy young woman, whose baby has died, can be obtained to act as a foster-mother to one of the twins, their upbringing is simplified. However, as it is not very probable that such a person will be found, the question of a wet nurse resolves itself into a moral one. Should one ever recommend a poor mother to take the food that Nature has provided for her own offspring, and, as a means of livelihood, give it to the child of wealthy parents, who could have provided proper hand-feeding, while in all probability the child of the wet-nurse will be handed over to the tender mercies of a baby farmer? There are exceptional cases, but, as a general rule, a wet nurse is not to be desired. It is seldom that a good mother will sell her baby's future welfare and health for money, and mothers do not want any but the best women to suckle their babies.

Having dismissed the question of a wet nurse, the best thing to do, if both babies are equally healthy, is to divide the breast milk between the babies, giving bottles alternately. (In this article we are not dealing with the best substitutes for mother's milk.) It is a

good plan to choose one baby to attend to first; this may be the elder, and the following is a rough sketch of how to manage meals and baths:—

Twin No. 1.—8.30 a.m., bath and breast; 10.30 a.m., bottle, and so on, giving breast and bottle alternately every two hours until 6.30, when baby should have his evening bath or sponge, and, after a bottle feed, be put in his cot for the night. He should be waked up in two hours for a meal, and afterwards only fed every four hours until his bath time next morning.

Twin No. 2 is treated exactly in the same way, except that baths and meals are thirty minutes later than the first baby's.

It will be seen from the above that twins are fed more frequently than other babies, but this will only be necessary for a few months. The same baby should not always be nursed at one side, but changed every 24 hours, as the stronger child may get more than its fair share of nourishment.

If both children are not equal in weight, the stronger child should be breast-fed once after each bath and once in the night, the delicate infant having a bottle at these times only. If at six weeks of age one baby is puny and weak and the other robust, the delicate infant can have the breast milk and the stronger be brought up by hand. It is best to get twin babies accustomed to bottles early in life, or they will object to them later on.

MASSAGE AND CLOTHES.

It is a good plan to rub a little cod liver oil into delicate babies once or twice a day. In the case of twins this is generally necessary, and will answer the same purpose as additional fat in their food. In a saucer, after the evening bath, have some cod liver oil (luke warm in winter), and with the palm of the hand dipped in this rub baby's stomach and abdomen, and afterwards his limbs and back. Put on a vest and loose knitted band kept for the purpose, and, if baby's health is the first consideration, the rubbing process may be carried out in the same way after the morning bath. If cod liver oil is much objected to, olive oil can be used, or the stomach and abdomen alone be treated. A good method of giving cod liver oil to very young children is on the forefinger, which should be scrupulously clean and dipped in a little oil. In this way the most delicate baby can have a few drops of oil after each meal.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)