

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT ARE THE MOST IMPORTANT THINGS TO OBSERVE (a) IN BRINGING UP A CHILD FROM BIRTH UNTIL IT IS A YEAR OLD, (b) FROM A YEAR TO FIVE YEARS OLD?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss J. G. Gilchrist, Gillespie Crescent, Edinburgh.

PRIZE PAPER.

(a) During the first year of life the most important things to observe are the claims of the bodily needs of the helpless little infant, the building up of a healthy mind and body on hygienic lines, and the development and systematic education of regular habits in regard to the relative functions of the body.

The respiratory system demands pure fresh air day and night for the proper development of heart and lungs; the baby should be accustomed to daily outing in open air, avoidance of hot, stuffy rooms, and sleep out of doors as much as possible, screened from sun and wind. A room, though warmed in cold weather, must be well ventilated, and the baby protected from draughts.

The circulatory system requires the body to be equally warmly clothed; clothes should be porous, light, and loose, allowing freedom of movement; tight bands round abdomen should be avoided. The feet should be kept warm and the head cool. The cutaneous system must be kept in good order by daily bathing of the whole body, using a simple curd soap; gentle rubbing and thorough drying is essential. Important point is to avoid chill by having everything ready for the bath beforehand, and screening off draughts.

The digestive alimentary system demands wholesome, nourishing food to build up brain, bone, and muscle. Milk is, of course, the complete form of food for an infant. Should the child require to be artificially fed, humanised milk should be used, the feeds graduated to its needs. Much depends on the regularity of feeds given. Punctuality is essential in building up a healthy digestion, over and under feeding being carefully watched for and corrected. The baby should be weighed regularly.

Feeding-bottles should be of the Allenbury type, easily kept clean; the teats should be properly fitting, and turned outside in after use for cleaning purposes. Dummy teats should never be introduced into an infant's mouth.

If it is getting proper nourishment there will be no craving for sucking anything between meals. The bowels should be trained to act properly without aperients, and the child trained in cleanly, regular habits at stated intervals. Constipation and diarrhoea should receive immediate attention.

Food must be fresh and kept free of fly infection, and rendered germ-free by sterilizing when necessary. An infant should be weaned when nine months old, and dry, solid food gradually introduced till the twelfth month, when the child will rely on such foods entirely.

The muscular system demands free play for the limbs and body movement. The child should be encouraged to roll about, kick, squeal, and crow. A thick rug or blanket on the floor out of a draught is useful, and as the child becomes more lively a play pen is the safest place; as the child gets older, too, the jaws and teeth should be exercised on hard crusts. Avoid cramping the child in a sitting position for any length of time. Careful handling of a very young baby is essential; the lying down position should be maintained mostly. If propped up the spine must be well supported with pillows till the child's strength asserts itself.

The nervous system is a very important one, and it must be remembered that even very young children have temperament. It is essential that baby should sleep as much as possible in quietness and pure atmosphere, should have cradle or bed for itself, and be trained from the first to sleep alone naturally without rocking, or sucking any foreign substance, such as an empty teat. A young baby should not be handled overmuch, especially by strangers; made excited by being forced to crow or laugh, and be danced about, nor subjected to sudden or startling noises or bright lights. With careful attention and absolute regularity of habits a normal healthy baby should grow contented in mind and strong in wind and limb. Should a baby be ill, the doctor should be at once consulted, as it very quickly succumbs, and, happily, as quickly survives hostile influences if promptly and expertly treated.

(b) From a year to five years old the constitutional habits established in the first year should be carefully maintained. Character training, right ideals and impressions are essentials of this period, training of the special senses, direction in self-control, and useful activities. One of the important points to observe in the *second* year is that of suitable diet. The thorough mastication of food, use of

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