

Lectures on Anatomy and Physiology as Applied to Practical Nursing.*

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There are various diseases to which bones are prone, but one which especially concerns nurses, is the affection popularly known as "Rickets." The peculiarity of this disease is abnormal softness of the bone tissue, and from what has been already said, it will be easily understood that it is due chemically, to a deficiency of the earthy salts. It is frequently traceable to a deficiency of these constituents

mothers had suffered from exhaustion, either from frequent pregnancies or from disease. If the bone trouble goes on, there is found more or less enlargement of the ends of the long bones and great tenderness to touch. Sometimes the joints are so thickened and hardened that the bones cannot grow, and so the child remains a dwarf all its life. Sometimes the spine becomes crooked, and the head falling forward, the condition known as hump-back is produced.

The inevitable result of the softness of the bones is that the weight of the body bends them, and these uncared-for children are usually permitted to walk, while happier children are still prevented from crawling; the *tibia* and *fibula* curve out, and the condition known as "bow-legs" is produced; the ends of these



Fig. 10.—Curvature of the spine and thighs from Rickets.



Fig. 11.—Same child showing curvature of the legs and small grooved chest.

in the child's food, and is almost invariably found amongst children who have been improperly or insufficiently fed. In hospital out-patient practice in large towns, these causes are often found combined, and the history of the diet of the child is almost identical in every case. Instead of milk—that is to say, the natural food which Nature has intended that infants should have—it has been fed upon "anything going"—including gin—and suffers, in consequence, from bone-starvation. It is noteworthy that "Rickets" is very rarely found in children who have been breast-fed, unless their

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bones become enlarged and thickened, and when they are examined it is found that the tissue is often of unhealthy quality, besides showing the deficiency of earthy matter to which allusion has already been made. The three illustrations given here, which are copied from the standard work on the Diseases of Infancy and Childhood, by Dr. Dawson Williams, show the typical appearance of the "Rickety" infant and of the leg bones.

What may the trained nurse when called upon to take charge of such an infant, either in a hospital ward or private house, expect to observe? Let us remember that the child is essentially suffering from malnutrition. Not only its bones, but its whole condition is weak.

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