

OBSTETRIC NURSING.

— BY OBSTETRICA, M.B.N.A. —

PART I.—MATERNAL.

CHAPTER V.—DUTIES DURING CONVALESCENCE.

(Continued from page 159.)

HAVING enumerated some of the causes that lead to constipation in lying-in women, we will point out some of the measures best calculated to mitigate the trouble, and here the homely virtue of "prevention" far transcends any effort at "cure." I have shown in a previous paper the advantages to be gained by giving an aperient to our patient at the advent of labour, to clear the whole of the intestinal tract, which enables us to defer the administration of any kind of *post-partum* purgative for some days after delivery. The common sense course of treatment indicated for our patients during the important period that intervenes between the completion of parturition and the commencement of lactation, as it bears upon the subject we have just been considering, is careful feeding. Now what should be our guiding principle here? A *maximum* of nutrition with a *minimum* of waste—supporting the system by all means, but in no wise embarrassing it; and we find a solution of the problem in the simple foods to which I have so recently, and I fear somewhat tediously, directed your attention. Strong broths, lightly cooked eggs, farinas, meals, milk and bread, supply the alimentary requirements of the system at this particular period. With respect to milk, I am of opinion that it is better given in combination with other alimentary substances than by itself; better cooked than uncooked; for instance oatmeal that has been thoroughly cooked in water, and in the form of gruel or porridge given with added milk, affords a safer pabulum than the solid constituent of plain milk (casein), as it is apt to occasion intestinal obstruction, which just now we are anxious to avoid. When milk has to be given in large quantities, as in cases of serious *post partum* hæmorrhage, the curd should be pre-digested with a Zymine Peptonizing Powder added to every pint of milk given, or any other of the peptones so easily obtainable. The albumen required for the system can be obtained from strong broths, or the juices extracted from fresh meat, in concentrated form, or the meat essences of commerce (if we have nothing else at hand), which have the advantage over milk in not containing a solid constituent. The great divergence of opinion with respect to feeding recently-delivered women, ranging from water-gruel on the one hand, to beef steaks and

bottled stout on the other, render it necessary that you should have some rational ground of treatment to go upon. "Circumstances are said to alter cases." They cannot alter facts, and Nature must be aided, not thwarted, in her immutable plans. The advocates of the "heroic" viands we have just mentioned are continually telling us "we must support the system." Quite so! But we must still be permitted to doubt if we really are doing that, when we give a sensitive parturient woman the diet of a London coal-heaver, until it has been convincingly proved that the conditions in both cases are identical. Evil is not only "wrought by want of thought," but wrought by thinking wrong. There is no portion of our work in which prudent counsel is more needed than in this matter of diet. Rest, warmth, sleep, pure food, in addition to the other necessary and topical measures described in the *Nursing Record*, all "support the system," and help on the consummation of all our efforts and hopes—good recovery, as we shall point out still more fully in future papers.

We now come to the question, What aperient shall we give?

Taking into consideration the prophylactic measures I have pointed out to you, we may feel sure that we hardly need any drastic drugs, which interfere with the natural action of the colon, and force the weakest part of it, the rectum, which may in itself produce hæmorrhoids, or if they already exist, greatly aggravate them. Possible rectal troubles must always be borne in mind when giving aperients, and as that is the part of the bowel we have to act upon, the modern preparations of Cascara Sagrada are especially valuable. I prefer it in the extract form, combined with pure glycerine, to the tabloids; one drachm of the former to one of the latter, given early in the morning, followed an hour or so afterwards by a cup of tea, generally effects all the relief the bowels require. Of course there are numberless other drugs that are or may be given, and the matter rests in the hands of your Medical chief. Still I tell you what I find suits my patients, and entertain but little doubt that it will yours. In applying the bed slipper observe the directions I have given you in a former paper in the *Nursing Record*. Put a teaspoonful of Condly's Powder, with a little warm water, into it before placing it.

There are mechanical as well as medicinal means for relieving the bowels, that sometimes have to be resorted to, though it is better to avoid them if possible. A simple and effectual purgative enema can be made with common salt, dissolved in warm water; two or three tablespoonfuls of the former to three pints of the latter is a fair rule. You always make more of the solution than you actually

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