

## Why Cannot Babies Digest Mother's Milk?

Miss Ada E. Chappell, Plunket Nurse at Auckland, New Zealand, contributes an interesting and practical article to *Kai Tiaki*, on the above subject, in the course of which she says that in a number of cases the nurses and mothers have battled bravely through the difficulties of undeveloped, inverted, or sore nipples. In other cases there is sufficient milk for the baby, but it does not agree. The motions are first curdy and then green, and very frequent. The baby is fretful, unsatisfied, and sleeps little night or day, and always seems ravenously hungry, no matter how much or how often it is fed. As there is a cause for every effect, Miss Chappell endeavoured to discover the cause, and eventually decided to reduce the length of time a baby feeds from the mother. In the case of a baby a few weeks old, where the milk did not agree, the motions were curdy and green, and the baby looking old and careworn. Miss Chappell was sent for to explain how humanised milk should be made, as the mother had not sufficient milk. She found that the baby was allowed to drink until she stopped of her own accord, and asked for the drinks to be limited to fifteen minutes, and the breast last nursed to be massaged gently. The baby then had three feeds per day of graded humanised milk, and the mother took milk-forming food. As the milk supply improved, and the baby was unable to digest a feed of fifteen minutes' duration this was reduced to ten. Then the mother found she had sufficient milk to nurse the baby entirely. The infant's motions became nearly normal, it was sleeping better, and gaining in flesh. The feed was then extended to twelve and a half minutes. This brought a return of indigestion indicated by curdy and green motions, colicky pains, sleeplessness, and crying. When the time of feeding was reduced to ten minutes the indigestion disappeared. After some days the length of feeding was increased by one minute, and again there was indigestion, though of less severity. A return to the feed of ten minutes duration brought once more a contented baby, sleeping a normal amount.

Other cases gave similar results, tending to show that reducing the quantity usually enables a baby to digest its mother's milk. Miss Chappell says that she has not yet found a baby unable to digest such milk when the quantity has been reduced to the baby's digestive capability. She does not by this mean to imply that all mothers' milk will nourish a baby. It may be deficient in the necessary constituents, or they may not be present in the proper proportions, and babies may suffer from malnutrition and marasmus even though fed on mother's milk, but they are the exception, not the rule.

Miss Chappell is of opinion that the indigestion is started by the very first feed, and thinks that if the baby were allowed to drink for only five minutes at the first feed, and within six hours of its birth, it would be better. Sometimes the baby is not put to the breast till the third day because "the

milk has not come in," yet nature has provided a weaker milk for the first three days to help to prepare the little stomach for the harder work it will have on the third day.

We should, says the writer, keep before us the fact that it is only the amount of food digested (whether mother's milk or humanised) that nourishes the baby. If it were otherwise why are the over-fed children the most like skeletons? What an immense gain we have given to each infant when we have secured the natural food for its use, and have taught the mother the A.B.C. of feeding according to the digestion of the individual infant.

## The 'Right Spirit.

A midwife who took a high place in the list when she entered for the examination of midwives in Cape Colony, writes from South Africa:—"I thirst for more knowledge," and would like details of interesting cases of midwifery. She says: "I feel as if I don't know enough; I have never come across a mole or any very particularly interesting cases." It is the common experience of those who are most thorough and conscientious in their work to feel the need of more knowledge. It is only the ignorant and dull who are satisfied with their present attainments. Our correspondent adds: "I am keenly interested in the 'Congress of Nurses,' and am quite eager for my journal every week."

## A Baby Exhumed.

Once more the far too prevalent custom of certifying infants as stillborn when they have actually been born alive was exemplified in the case of an infant daughter of a labourer at Greenwich, whose body was exhumed by order of the Greenwich Coroner. By the advice of a midwife, the body of the child was taken to an undertaker and buried as stillborn. At the inquest a verdict of "accidentally suffocated" was returned, and the Coroner said that a very serious offence had been committed in deceiving the registrar.

## A Worthy Object.

Miss Caroline March, the President of the Leeds Maternity Hospital, opened a sale at Hayfield House, Leeds, recently, on its behalf, and said the object in view was very dear to her heart. The task before the Committee was great, for a large sum—£10,000—had to be raised for the new hospital. There was an enthusiastic Committee, and every member intended to do all that was possible to raise the funds required.

Mrs. Robert Hudson, one of the hon. secretaries, moved a vote of thanks to Mrs. Turton, and outlined the movement which had culminated in the effort to provide the hospital. The Committee had, she said, worked steadily, and they believed that the new hospital would be of the greatest benefit to the city. They must have £10,000, towards which about £2,230 had been already subscribed.