

A New Method of Managing the Breasts.

An interesting article is contributed to the *Johns Hopkins Nurses' Alumna Magazine*, describing why bandaging the breasts during the puerperium has been done away in the obstetrical service of the Johns Hopkins Hospital. It will be quite a new idea to many midwives and nurses and one received with a certain amount of reserve and distrust, that nature should be left to its own resources when for any reason it is necessary to dry up the breasts, but the careful perusal of the subjoined article will show that there is much to be said for this method.

From the time the obstetrical ward was opened in 1897 until four years ago, one of the spectacular demonstrations always given by the head nurse to the pupils was the application of the breast bandage and the proper manner of giving massage in cases where it was necessary to check the secretion. We remember that belladonna ointment was first liberally applied, the breast then covered thickly with cotton and pressed firmly against the wall of the thorax by a tightly fitted bandage. The careful fitting of this bandage, the number of pins possible to insert in it, and the mathematical precision with which the distance between each was arranged, was the pride of the Head Nurse and often the despair of the pupil. We also recall that the sufferings of the patient were severe, that in renewing and re-applying these bandages, and the use of massage and of the breast-pump many valuable hours were consumed.

How and why all this has been discontinued Dr. Williams tells his students in one of his ward classes, and in a series of "Don'ts" in one of the lectures on obstetrics now given to the pupil nurses is "Don't massage or bandage the breasts."

This is the history of the change in method. In 1904 Dr. Williams was spending his summer vacation in Rhode Island. In talking with a country doctor of long experience there, he was asked how the Johns Hopkins dealt with this condition. Dr. Williams gave the treatment with prideful detail. Whereupon the country doctor replied that he (Dr. Williams) was away behind the times; that he himself did nothing but give his patients small doses of potassium acetate three times a day, left them alone, and had no further trouble. Dr. Williams made more extensive inquiry, and on his return instituted in the maternity ward this somewhat radical change of method, to the amazement of his staff, and to the scarcely concealed disapproval of the Head Nurse. The new treatment was given a thorough trial, and proved so effective, and of such comfort to the patients, that from that time to the present, pressure bandages and belladonna ointment are unknown in the obstetrical ward. It was supposed at first that the potassium acetate acted as a diuretic, and consequently fluids were limited and purges were given. But after a series of observations, in which a group of patients not nursing received the potassium acetate, another not nursing small doses of sodium chloride, and another group were nursing normally, the conclusion was reached

that the potassium acetate had no action whatever in checking lactation, and that all that was necessary was to give the breasts absolute rest, let nature pursue her own course, and when on the third day the swelling and tenseness appear, put on as she then does, her own restrictive bandage. Reference is also made to a treatise written in 1785 by Dr. Charles White, of Manchester, England, showing that this idea of leaving nature alone had been advocated before.

"If the patient does not suckle her child, no method should be used either to recall the milk or to invite it into the breasts, but she should be left absolutely to nature; she should live very abstemiously, little or no animal food, no strong liquor should be allowed her, and the intestinal canal should be left thoroughly open."

The routine now employed in Dr. Williams's service is as follows: When for any reason it is necessary to dry up the breasts, they are left absolutely alone for the days immediately following labour, or after nursing has been discontinued at a later period. About the third day engorgement takes place, often with much pain, but within from twenty-four to thirty-six hours the swelling begins to subside, the secretion grows less and disappears before the end of the week. If the pain is very severe, small doses of morphia or codeia are given, but generally this is not necessary, the application of an ice bag usually giving relief. If the breasts are large and pendulous, they are held in place by a loose bandage, no pressure being exerted. The patient is cautioned against handling the breasts, and massage of any kind and the use of the breast-pump absolutely interdicted. In no instance since this treatment has been used, has a mammary abscess developed, and the discomfort to the patient has been infinitely less than with the old methods. As Dr. Williams remarks, it is probably the very simplicity of this physiological procedure that has prevented its general recognition and acceptance long before.

MASCULINE LOVE OF POWER

Treating of women in municipal affairs, *The Englishwoman* points out that the Women's Local Government Society has constantly urged the Local Government Board to appoint women as inspectors of workhouses, and to encourage Boards of Guardians to appoint women as relieving officers. "The Local Government Board, however, does not seem likely to do so till women can back their demand by the power of the Parliamentary franchise. When a Departmental Committee was appointed to consider the working of the Midwives' Act, the Privy Council did not place upon it a single certified midwife, while in only seventeen English counties and seven county boroughs have women been appointed to a Midwives' Committee. The proper provision for birth and infancy is so essentially a woman's question, that the idea of men attempting to deal with it by themselves is palpably absurd. It is hard to realise that masculine love of power and office is so strong that it clings to membership of a Midwives' Committee, refusing to appoint even one woman to assist in their deliberations. It is difficult, also, to understand how women could ever have allowed men to dominate control of such matters."

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