

The Midwife.

The Treatment of Infantile Malnutrition.

Dr. Vincent prefaced his fourth lecture of this session at the Infants' Hospital, Vincent Square, S.W., on "The Treatment of Infantile Malnutrition," with some remarks on bread. He said that pure white flour made into bread, together with butter, contained nearly everything desirable for food. Referring to the question of the nutriment in the germ of wheat apart from the berry, he said that the purpose of the material around the berry is to protect what is inside. There is very little nourishment in it at all, and what there is is extremely indigestible, and very bad for young children. The whiteness of the best flour is obtained by sifting it, and cleansing it from dirty matter.

Passing on to the subject of Infantile Malnutrition, Dr. Vincent said that the length of an infant at birth was of great significance. anything below 21 inches showing defect.

He showed an infant, now convalescent, admitted for malnutrition, which was the result of a complete breakdown of the digestion. Its weight had been falling heavily, the motions white and offensive, indicating absence of digestive secretion, and that putrefactive organisms were at work in the lower part of the intestine. The infant was so restless that bromide had to be administered. Such cases outside the hospital were frequently diagnosed as tuberculosis or as meningitis.

The next infant shown was a case of ileocolitis on admittance. Age 9 months. Weight 14 lbs. 8 oz. Swollen, pot bellied, sweating, beaded ribs. The colon was regularly irrigated, and for more than a month the child was fed on the following prescription: Fat 0.50, dextrose 6.00, whey proteins 0.50, caseinogen 0.50. The weight chart showed a V curve, indicating a great drop owing to its reformed diet, and then gradually ascending as its tissues were rationally built up.

Dr. Vincent said that when an infant had once lost the power of fat digestion, it was very difficult to get it back. Atrophic enteritis from too much fat was much more difficult to cure than protein indigestion. An infant had been known to die from fat intoxication in twenty-four hours. He instanced the case of an infant to which he was called in consultation, diagnosed as tubercular meningitis, which had

been fed on cream containing 16 per cent. of fat. It was suffering from severe intestinal toxæmia, quite unconscious, with its eyes turned up. The child was treated with a large dose of castor oil, and a diet of sugar and water.

He next showed a case of extreme atrophy. The history showed the child had been fed on patent food; it was sleeping badly, was very nervous, and screamed a great deal. After admission this infant gained the extraordinary amount of 1 lb. in the first week. Its tissues simply acted as a sponge. It was now gaining weight slowly.

The last case shown was a baby which was one of twins. Though it was under 21 inches at birth this was not of such significance as if it had been a single child. The lecturer concluded his remarks by adding that owing to the careful instruction of the mothers, and continued supervision in the out-patient department, infants after their discharge from the hospital continue to do very well indeed. The invariable rule as to food was *raw milk*, with the addition of a prescribed amount of water.

Radiography of the Fetus in Utero

The *British Medical Journal* observes that the radiography of the fetus *in utero* has been attempted ever since Roentgen's discovery, but until quite recently it was only the eye of faith which could discern in a radiograph more than an image of the fragment of the fetal skeleton in the living mother. Fabre, Barjon, and Trillat, of Lyons, now come forward to say that many of the difficulties have been surmounted, and that fetal radiography is ready to enter the domain of practice. Radiographs have been obtained at the Hôpital de la Charité in which the fetal skeleton has been reproduced with great clearness in the larger number of its details. The fetal head is obvious; it is even possible in some cases to discern the orbits and the inferior maxillae. The cervical, dorsal, and lumbar vertebrae, with the ribs, are easily to be made out; the iliac bones are visible, and the lower extremities are rendered with special distinctness. Altogether, the image of the whole fetus is obtained, clearly detached from the image of the maternal pelvis, and in such a manner that the presentation and position may be readily determined.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)