

The Midwife.

THE CARE OF PREMATURE INFANTS.

III.

THE INCUBATOR.

If a premature baby is very small—*i.e.*, under 4 lb.—it is sometimes advisable to put it in an incubator. One advantage in the use of an incubator is that the baby is kept in an even and high temperature, and another is that it is unnecessary to put on more than the binder and gamgee dress, thus giving the child liberty to kick.

The baby should lie on its side on a blanket, having another *light* blanket thrown loosely over it. Mucous invariably collects in the child's throat, and in this position it can either trickle or be wiped out of the mouth. If there should be mucous interfering with the breathing and too low down to be reached by the finger with a swab of wool, a mucous catheter should be used, great care being taken, as the vocal chords are easily damaged.

The baby will sometimes have a "bad turn"—*i.e.*, a fainting fit—while out of the incubator, and should the breathing be irregular or stop altogether, it should at once be put into a hot bath; if this does not revive it, it should be wrapped in a hot blanket and artificial respiration done at intervals; the hand made as hot as possible at the fire, and placed over the heart helps to stimulate its action without the risk of burning. As soon as natural breathing really begins, the baby should be allowed to rest, but closely watched, and the treatment repeated if necessary.

A premature infant should not be bathed every day, but each part gently sponged when necessary, so as not to tire it. Everything should, of course, be prepared before the child is taken out of the incubator for feeding, &c., so as to get it back as quickly as possible.

Some people think it is better not to put the baby in an incubator, and certainly those who are reared without the help of this invention suffer less shock from sudden changes of temperature. If the baby could be kept in the incubator *all* the time this change of temperature could be avoided, and probably it would not have the fainting fits so common with incubator babies.

If the baby is put on a pillow in the way described in the first of these articles, and kept in a cot in a warm room by the fire, the shock given to the infant in attending to it is minimised.

The bowels can usually be regulated by means of hot water given by mouth; and, if the stools become green, it should be remembered that this is probably due to the fact that the nurse has not been careful enough as to the cleanliness of the food or vessels used to prepare or give it; a dose of castor oil will probably cure it. Green stools produce scalded buttocks and groins, and in the early stages of this the sore parts should be washed with milk, and the best ointment to use is zinc, made soft with castor oil. If very persistent and hard to cure, the raw places may be touched with picric acid solution twice a day.

If the doctor finds the baby is able to take it, cod liver oil may be ordered, Minims iii to begin with, and gradually increased, will greatly help the progress of the infant.

R. M. B.

INFANT MORTALITY.

Mrs. Wilbur C. Phillips, in a paper published in the *Dietetic and Hygienic Gazette*, says:—

The burden of infant mortality falls not upon the milkdealer, not upon the physician, not upon the nurse or social worker, not upon the mother or the "little mother," not upon the wage-earner, but upon the State which permits each year the spectacle of the sacrifice of the babies to pass unnoticed, while it gives its attention and allocates large sums of money to street paving, commercial improvements, public buildings and the prevention of hog cholera.

It is not for philanthropy to trifle with this important municipal problem; it is too vast, too serious, to be approached in the manner of the lady or gentleman bountiful, or to be studied by the amateur.

This problem can only be solved by a municipal plan which takes into full reckoning the efforts of all institutions, hospitals, societies and agencies working with mothers and babies, and which directs an organized movement to prevent the wholesale waste of its future citizens.

Careful study should be made by our cities of the means for the care of sick babies in hospitals and dispensaries; for the adequate confinement of mothers, and for the care of the babies of those unfortunate women who are without husbands or who are prevented by the ruthless hand of society from nursing their own babies, being forced to hand them over to some

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