

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

GIVE SOME INFORMATION ON THE TRAINING OF INFANTS.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss M. K. Steele, Assistant Matron, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Rochester, for the following paper.

PRIZE PAPER.

The training of the young, whether human or otherwise, is an undertaking of great responsibility. All thinking mothers realize this, and it is usually their honest endeavour to obtain a nurse who is patient, painstaking, and thoroughly in earnest to take care of their children.

In hospital the material is very different: there is usually no history of training at all, and a nurse's work is in every sense of the word more arduous than that of the nurse of the well-brought-up children.

It must be kept in mind always that the early training of the infant will remain all through his life—that cleanly habits, good manners, obedience, moral control, however hedged in with misrule and carelessness, can never wholly be forgotten, and therefore are not in vain.

That keynote of our little lives, Habit, is the narrow and straight path which we cannot enter early enough.

Woe to those who diverge from its boundary. Mankind has set up his tables of stone, and we must all perforce bow down and worship. Looking back, what are our very first remembrances? Probably to a great many of us prayer-time at our mothers' knees, or learning to read, or listening to the fairy tales which have coloured all our lives with kindness and whimsey.

And yet there are hundreds of the other details which, though forgotten, still exist in our behaviour to-day.

(i.) *Cleanliness.*—We must presume that Nature intended us to be cleanly in our habits, although the lower orders (with some exceptions) are not so. Fortunately, the young mind is easily moulded, and, with perseverance and method, even a child of one month old may be taught to be clean.

(ii.) *Good health.*—Methodical feeding, proper food and quantities, and the right way of giving same will in most cases insure the best of health in the child. Plenty of exercise and fresh air stands for peaceful nights and happy and contented days. Water and soap are necessary adjuncts to this scheme of fitness,

and the knowledge that garments for the infant must be light, warm, and loose.

(iii.) *Good manners.*—Inasmuch as the young mind is easy to train in the right way, it is also just as easy to pervert in the wrong.

Careless speech, meanness in little things, want of consideration to the elders, bad temper, untruthfulness, disregard for holy things are all to be guarded against and explained. A clever, inquisitive child wants to know, and it remains with his mother and nurse to tell him the reason why for and why not; otherwise he will learn from other sources, and will annex much he should not in the process.

(iv.) *Contentment.*—Under this last heading (for want of space) are grouped all the acquired good qualities of the child.

Teach him to share his pleasures, to help those not so fortunate as himself, to love the outdoor life of the birds and beasts and flowers, to rely upon his own resources—even when very young—and the child will in good time develop into a happy and useful member of that great social scheme of living of which we all produce a share.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss E. Beavis, Miss Mills, Miss Mackenzie, Miss M. Farrow, Miss M. Davis, and Mrs. Robertson.

Miss Mills writes:—

It is very important that infants should be brought up to a life of discipline, and not one which, from its earliest days, has never known self-control.

An infant should always sleep in a cot and not in bed with its mother. Never rock a baby to sleep. Bad habits such as rocking, carrying about, or, worse still, feeding at a time when the meal is not due, must never be commenced.

Infants should be fed regularly, and, if brought up by the bottle, the baby should be fed in a half-reclining position, with its head resting against its mother's arm. From the first, always get the child in the habit of finishing its meal, and then take the bottle away. Do not hurry; from fifteen to twenty minutes should be taken for each meal.

Many children in after life would have reason to thank their parents and guardians were these rules always observed.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What causes vomiting in early pregnancy, and what nursing care can be given to relieve it?

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