

## The Midwife.

### A WORLD-FAMOUS INSTITUTION.

London will lose a world-famous institution (says the *Liverpool Courier*) if, as is expected, the University of London acquires the site of the Foundling Hospital for its new premises. "Sunday morning at the Foundling," listening to the sweet-voiced children, has been a regular recreation of Londoners and country visitors for close upon 200 years. Dickens enjoyed many a Sabbath heart-warming there, and during the reigns of the Georges the gallants in their brocaded silks used the fine stretch of greensward in front of the building as a fashionable morning lounge. It is a splendid show place, too, apart from its appealing human interest. Paintings by Hogarth, Reynolds, and Gainsborough may be seen there, presented by the artists themselves. Hogarth's "March of the Guards" dominates a collection of Georgian pictures that can hardly be rivalled elsewhere, and other great treasures are the organ which Handel gave to the chapel and the full score of his "Messiah." The institution never had a greater friend than Handel, who often conducted the "Messiah" and other oratorios for the benefit of the charity. Nowadays there are usually about 400 boys and girls at the "Foundling," the boys in dark brown coats and trousers and waist-coats, the girls, like demure little Quakeresses, in brown frocks with white caps and aprons. Admission to the institution is a more delicate affair to-day than it was in the middle of the eighteenth century, when all that was necessary was to deposit a child in a basket hung outside the gates and ring the bell.

### BORAX AND HONEY FOR BOTTLE TEATS.

The practice of applying a diluted mixture of borax and glycerine, or borax and honey, to the mouths of young infants, after each cleansing, as a preventive against thrush, is a routine practice in many maternity hospitals, and of many midwives and monthly nurses, who follow the traditions of their school after leaving it. The following details of a case sent by Mr. A. S. McNeil, L.R.C.P., to the *British Medical Journal* should therefore be carefully studied, for few midwives or nurses would, we believe, have supposed this danger to exist:—

On April 23rd a male infant, aged three months, fed naturally from birth, was brought to me for treatment. It had all the signs of gastro-intestinal trouble, and, as the mother did not appear in the

best of health, I advised her to wean the child and put it on an artificial diet which I prescribed. Two days afterwards it was brought again suffering from "fits" in addition to the bowel trouble. On this occasion I made a more minute examination and discovered that the child had a long ulcerated foreskin, with retained smegma. After this had been thoroughly cleaned up and the mother instructed how to look after it, I thought this would put an end to the "fits." In spite of repeated and most careful examinations, however, both fits and the slimy offensive diarrhoea got worse. I made changes in the diet, gave bismuth and grey powders, and later morphine, but all to no purpose. From the character of the motions and the rapid wasting I now suspected tuberculous trouble, but I could not account for the very frequent fits, and it struck me that the parents were giving the child something other than I had told them. I questioned them closely and frequently on this point without result. It was not until five weeks after the child was first brought to me that the father, in showing me a jar of virol I had advised him to get for the child, casually showed me also a tin of "borax and honey" to put on the child's soothing teat. It struck me at once, when he admitted that they had been using this all along, that this was the cause of the fits, so I put the box in the waste bucket. The father was incredulous, but I warned him to get no more. The child was having as many as thirty fits in the twenty-four hours, and was at the point of death, but the fits now rapidly diminished in numbers and severity, until in a few days it was quite free from both fits and gastro-intestinal disturbance, and is now perfectly well.

I think it proper to publish this case because the habit of giving this mixture of borax, honey, and glycerine to children in this improper manner is becoming so widespread that chemists get large quantities of cheap honey from California for this purpose and issue the mixture in special tin boxes with "Borax and Honey" printed on the lids. I may say that the child was taken to two hospitals for further advice on different occasions during the time I was attending it. At one hospital the mother was given some pills "like flour" which made the child much worse, so she stopped giving them and brought him to me again. It is possible these pills were made of boric acid, with the idea of disinfecting the bowels. At the other hospital the child had a series of violent fits in the out-patients' room necessitating the attentions of the doctor and nurses. The mother told me that she dipped the child's teat in the borax and honey in front of the doctor and gave it to the child. She told me this to justify herself in giving the mixture, as she quite refused at first to believe it was the cause of the illness. I should say that it was their first child, and both the parents were

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