

The Midwife.

ALBULACTIN FOR BREAST-FED INFANTS.

An acute problem for midwives and district nurses is that of the supply of a satisfactory food for infants where the mother's milk fails or does not suit the child. It is manifestly impossible for a labourer's wife, having several children, and an income of less than a pound a week, to purchase any of the various foods for infants, or good fresh milk in sufficient quantity.

A case recently brought to my notice was that of the fourth child of a cottager, now forty-five, the first child having been born when she was thirty-eight. The family income is sixteen shillings a week, of which four shillings goes for rent. The mother is unselfish and conscientious, taking all possible care with her own diet and health. She has nursed each child with the same result: continuous flatulence, colic, sickness, restlessness, and screaming throughout the nine months. They were all small at birth, about 5 lb., gained weight very slowly, and were pale, pinched and ill-nourished in appearance. At about the age of two years each child began to improve and to attain an average degree of health.

At the age of three months the latest infant developed a severe chest cold, and was obviously losing weight. The mother was in despair, as the prospect of artificial feeding was very serious to her. So I ventured on an experiment with albulactin. We began to give the baby, *immediately* before each breast feed, 5 grains of albulactin dissolved in 3 teaspoonfuls of warm barley water, made with Robinson's patent barley, and sweetened. At the end of twenty-four hours there was a marked improvement; the flatus was diminished, the screaming stopped, the child slept quietly after each feed, and its expression became contented. The cold and cough disappeared in five days.

The same treatment has been continued for six weeks, and the change in the child is so great that the parents say they "don't know him for the same baby." He has gained steadily, but I have no opportunity of weighing him. The limbs are now firm and healthy, the eyes have lost the staring, anxious expression they had, there is colour in the cheeks, and the

baby now sleeps quietly between each feed in a well-ventilated bedroom upstairs—an important factor in the improvement. When awake, he lies contentedly and plays with his fingers.

The mother intends to continue this method of feeding, difficult though she finds it to provide the cost of the albulactin. An important point in this case is that both parents have extremely delicate digestions, and cannot take many ordinary articles of diet.

In the case of a larger infant, 5 grains of albulactin would probably not be enough. My object in giving the albulactin just *before* each feed is to ensure its being mixed with the mother's milk in the stomach. If given at the end of a feed, there would be danger of the albulactin being returned. Possibly in some cases it might prove more successful to administer the albulactin when halfway through the breast feed.

To those midwives who urge their patients to persevere with the breast feeding even when their milk causes gastric disturbance in the child, as being the lesser of two evils, this experiment may suggest a way out of a prevailing difficulty.

HEALTH MISSIONER.

VOMITING IN INFANCY.

The *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* says that vomiting in breast-fed infants is probably due almost always to a too high percentage of fat, caused by overfeeding and lack of exercise on the part of the mother. Her daily life should be regulated and the milk diluted if necessary. In bottle-fed babies some cases result from giving too strong a formula at the time of weaning. Too frequent feedings and too high fat percentage may also be the cause.

PREVENTION OF OPHTHALMIA NEONATORUM.

A German medical journal recommends the use of argenticum aceticum for the eyes of infants instead of the 2 per cent. solution of nitrate of silver commonly employed. The acetic silver solution 1-100, or 1 per cent., remains unchanged for a very long time, is much safer than the nitrate of silver, and the reaction following its use is much less.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)