

# The Midwife.

## THE INFANT.\*

### NUTRITION AND MANAGEMENT.

Dr. Eric Pritchard, Physician to the Queen's Hospital for Children, Hackney Road, E., &c., has contributed to the literature concerning children a book of real value on their nutrition and management, as was to be expected from so able an exponent on the subject, who has devoted so much time and thought to scientific and practical work amongst young children.

In his preface the author tells us "those who read this little book in the expectation of finding a full description of the methods of feeding infants will be disappointed, for according to the views herein set forth each case must be regarded as an individual problem, which is to be solved by the practical application of certain general principles.

"I believe one of the chief reasons why fixed methods of feeding babies so often fail is because the manner in which any particular baby responds to any particular line of treatment depends more on its past experiences than on any other factor, and each infant has its own past."

On the subject of breast feeding Dr. Pritchard urges at the outset that "if one tithe of the human ingenuity which, of recent years, has been lavished on the artificial method had been bestowed on studying improvements in the breast feeding of infants, comparatively few infants would even now, in these so-called degenerate days, be relegated to the bottle." "A very large number of infants are weaned during the first three weeks of life on the advice of doctors, nurses, and friends." We may point out that this is a subject on which a nurse should never advise. She should always refer the patient to the medical attendant.

The author says: "It is quite impossible to determine at first whether a young mother—and more particularly a primipara—will eventually prove a good nurse or not. . . . The nervous and glandular mechanisms concerned in the secretion of milk are extremely complicated, and most of the difficulties which arise in connection with breast-feeding are concerned with setting the machinery as a whole in motion. I believe that it is never justifiable to wean an infant during the first three weeks of life simply on the ground that the breast remains dry. I have known many instances in which the breasts remained refractory for three weeks or longer, and then have afforded satisfactory supplies of milk."

Dr. Pritchard does not approve of the usual plan of hardening and preparing the nipples by treating them with astringents. "The indications are not so much to render the superficial epithelium

hard and cornified as to make it thoroughly elastic, and to accustom it to the sort of treatment to which it will be exposed when the infant is put to the breast. The best means of preparing the surface of the nipple is to massage it daily with lanoline or some other emollient."

In regard to constipation in infants Dr. Pritchard quotes a colleague who says: "I know of no drug which is responsible for more chronic constipation in infancy than castor oil." He goes further and says, "I know of no series of doses of purgative medicine which are responsible for so much constipation at any time of life as the *single dose of castor oil* which clears out meconium from the bowel of the new-born infant."

In regard to the use of petroleum the author writes: "The success which attended my early experiences with petroleum as an intestinal lubricant for infants was so encouraging that in a very short time I practically abandoned all other forms of aperient medicine; and it speaks well for the method that this practice has been so widely adopted in the treatment of constipation in older subjects. . . .

"One of the most valuable uses of petroleum is in the treatment of thread-worms in children. This subject, however, hardly comes within the compass of this discussion, but I refer to it because I believe that its almost specific action as a vermifuge in such cases is dependent, not so much on its lethal influence on the parasites, or their eggs, as upon its direct influence on the mucous membrane."

Midwives and nurses will find much valuable information in this book.

### A NEW MATERNITY HOME.

The Professional Classes War Relief Council which has been formed to give assistance to men and women of the professional classes who have been severely embarrassed by the War has established a maternity nursing home at 13, Prince's Gate, in a beautiful house kindly lent for the purpose by Mr. J. Pierpoint Morgan. It has a voluntary staff of medical practitioners and certificated nurses. It also proposes to supply free maternity nurses and medical attendance. The chairman of the Committee is Mrs. Scharlieb, M.D.

At the meeting of the London County Council on Tuesday, November 10th, the Midwives' Act Committee reported that legal proceedings had been instituted against Mrs. Harriet Powde, of 19, Cairns Road, Battersea, S.W., for practising as a midwife within the administrative County of London without being certified by the Central Midwives' Board. The case was heard at the South Western Police Court, and the defendant fined 5s. and £1 rs. costs.

\* Edward Arnold, 41 and 43, Maddox Street, London, W.

*previous page*

*next page*