

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

GIVE THREE ESSENTIALS IN THE NURSING CARE OF THE MOTHER DURING THE FIRST WEEK OF THE PUERPERIUM.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Mena M. G. Bielby, Cranford, Middlesex.

PRIZE PAPER.

Those in charge of such cases realise the importance of strict cleanliness, so that need not be insisted on here. Of equal importance are rest, good feeding, and fresh air.

Rest.—It should be realised that even in the simplest cases of parturition the system of the mother has undergone a prolonged strain, culminating in a period of great pain. All the muscles of the pelvis, more especially the broad ligaments, have for some months been taxed to their utmost. Therefore, for perfect recuperation, adequate rest is essential. Medical science asserts that it takes three years for a woman's system to recover wholly from the strain of having borne a child. Seeing that the period of involution is from six to eight weeks, it is a pity that it is customary for the majority of mothers to limit the lying-in to a fortnight. Strong women, and those whose circumstances render over-fatigue avoidable, may do this with less risk, but undoubtedly the practice of resuming the ordinary life at the end of ten or fourteen days is responsible for a very large proportion of those cases which fill the hospitals for women. It must also have an injurious effect on subsequent offspring. I once knew a mother of ten fine children. She was then forty-five, and her youthful appearance was so remarkable as to compel comment. She explained that at the birth of each of her children she remained in bed exactly a month, and to this she attributed her renewed vigour.

For the first three days the mother should not be raised into the sitting position, as this might cause fainting, flooding, or sudden death. In most cases the doctor in attendance decides how long the recumbent position must be maintained—usually until the ninth day.

The most valuable form of rest is sleep. The mother should be settled for the night by 10 p.m., and not be disturbed before 7 a.m., except when necessary to put the baby to the breast, the latest teaching being that it is in the interests of both mother and child to reduce the number of feeds to one only between these hours. The baby's cot should always be placed in the nurse's room when possible, so as to secure unbroken quiet to the mother. The latter should also be settled for sleep from 2 to 4 p.m., and left alone in a darkened room.

It should be arranged beforehand that no

visitors be allowed during the first week, as emotion of any kind acts injuriously to the patient. All sounds in and near the house should be reduced to a minimum; no worry allowed to approach the mother, and an atmosphere of peace and comfort should surround her.

Good Feeding.—The diet may be ordered by the medical attendant, but when a trained nurse is in charge and the case is normal, he usually leaves this to her. For the first forty-eight hours the diet should be light—chiefly milk foods. Benger's and Allenburys' foods are useful. Barley water is valuable, as it is slightly laxative and increases the action of the kidneys. Beef tea, chicken, mutton or veal broth, cocoa, steamed custard, rice and oatmeal gruel, are all allowed, with bread and butter or toast. On the third day, if the bowels have acted, light solid food may be given. No stimulants of any sort should be given. Tea does not promote sleep or digestion. It should not be infused longer than four minutes. By careful feeding, aperients are often made unnecessary.

Fresh Air.—The desirable atmosphere is that which most nearly approximates to that out of doors, maintaining a temperature of 60°. Windows should be wide open day and night to ensure continuous supply of the life-giving oxygen. Screens should be used to prevent draughts.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Lucy C. Cooper, Miss Gladys Tatham, Miss A. M. Harding, Miss Henrietta Ballard, Miss Lizzie Bullivant, Miss S. Simpson, Miss Kathleen A. Roberts, Miss T. O'Brien.

Miss Lucy C. Cooper writes:—"Three essentials in the nursing care of the mother during the first week of the puerperium come under the headings—(1) Cleanliness, (2) Rest, (3) Diet. Cleanliness, thorough and surgical in every detail, comes first. The health of the mother—even reason and life itself—depending upon the right observance of this important duty. After the birth of the child and the expulsion of the placenta, the parts must be thoroughly cleansed with swabs wrung out of some antiseptic lotion, and an aseptic pad applied which should be changed frequently, and the parts swabbed each time of changing. All soiled pads should be burnt immediately, all soiled linen should be removed from bed and taken right out of the room."

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Describe the disease known as black measles, and how to nurse it.

Will competitors kindly remember to write on one side of the paper only?

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)