

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHAT CARE WOULD YOU GIVE MOTHER AND CHILD FOR FIRST FIVE DAYS AFTER BIRTH?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss S. Simpson, Niederwald Road, Sydenham, S.E.

PRIZE PAPER.

The great essentials of the management of the puerperium are rest and cleanliness, in attention to which the secret of success chiefly lies. The nurse should sleep within call of the patient, in an adjoining room; give no medicine without instructions, and tell the doctor at once if there is anything abnormal, but must never alarm the patient. The room should be kept well ventilated, and not kept too warm, a temperature of 60° F. to 65° F. being ample. The vulva and surrounding skin must be kept cleansed with lysol, soap, and water four or five times in the twenty-four hours, or oftener. The skin must always be cleansed after a motion or passing urine. Absorbent pads should be placed on the vulva to receive the lochia, and changed as often as is necessary. During the first two days a fresh pad will be required every two or three hours, while later on three or four pads in the day will be sufficient. Soiled linen should be at once removed from the room. The patient should be washed and made comfortable morning and evening from the first, and sponged all over on and after the third day, only a small portion of the body being done at a time. The temperature and pulse should be taken night and morning.

The temperature, if above 100° F., should at once arouse suspicion, especially if associated with a quick pulse. The pulse is a useful indication of the patient's condition.

The diet cannot be laid down in definite form, as it must be regulated very much according to the patient's wish, liquid form usually sufficing for the first two days. If the bowels do not act spontaneously within forty-eight hours, a purge should be given. Attention to the voidance of urine is very essential, special care being taken that this takes place within eight hours of delivery, and every eight hours subsequently.

The lochia should be almost pure blood for the first two days, becoming gradually paler; there should be no foetid odour at any time during the puerperium. In addition to her night's rest, the patient should sleep for an hour or two every afternoon. There should be no tenderness or pressure over the uterus. The uterus is pushed up by a full bladder or rectum. Breasts should be carefully attended to. The

nipples should be cleansed with boracic acid solution before and after each application of the child to the breast.

The child's eyes and eyelids should be bathed regularly with warm boracic acid solution. He should be bathed once a day; temperature of bath not lower than 97° F. or higher than 100° F. A bath thermometer should always be used. The skin should be dried with a soft warm towel by dabbing, not rubbing. The cord should be dried carefully and well powdered with boracic acid, especially where it joins the umbilicus, and wrapped in a square of sterilized linen, gauze, or boracic lint. If it is not kept clean and dry it may smell offensively, and leave an unhealthy ulcer when it separates. For the first two days the child passes meconium, a thick, dark green fluid resembling poppy juice. It is well to grease the buttocks with olive oil or a little vaseline, as the meconium is sometimes rather difficult to remove. If the buttocks are oiled the meconium comes off easily, and chafing is avoided. After the second day the infant's stools become semi-solid. Three or four motions should be passed in the twenty-four hours. Urine should be passed many times during the day. Napkins should be changed frequently, or the skin of the buttocks will become excoriated. The child should be allowed to lie peacefully in its cot, except when it is being fed, washed, and dressed. The infant usually loses two or three ounces in weight during the first two days, as it is passing water and meconium, and getting little nourishment. By the end of the first week, however, the weight ought to be as much, or a little more, than it was at birth.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Dora Vine, Miss Mina Bielby, Miss Lucy C. Cooper, Mrs. M. Mackenzie, Miss H. M. Springbett, Miss J. Hutchison, Miss P. Walters.

Miss Springbett writes that the uterus should be treated as an open wound.

The patient should be sponged all over every day and kept thoroughly clean.

The suggestion that a douche of 1 in 5,000 perchloride of mercury should be given daily is open to question. In the first place, the routine douche in normal cases is now seldom given; and, secondly, nothing below 1 in 4,000 is a germicide.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What is meant by (a) public hygiene, (b) personal hygiene, (c) mental hygiene, (d) sanitation?

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