

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

IN WHAT WAY AND IN WHAT RESPECTS CAN THE NUTRITION OF THE INFANT BE IMPROVED BY ANTE-NATAL SUPERVISION OF THE MOTHER?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Mrs. J. E. Taylor, Bramshot Avenue, Charlton, S.E.

PRIZE PAPER.

The ante-natal supervision of the mother should help in the production of healthy offspring. It is important to give the baby a good start in life, as regards fitness, and this is accomplished by thinking of its nutrition before it is born.

There are so many things done in ignorance, which influence the after life of the child. A great thing is to teach the mother hygiene, and how to keep herself fit and healthy during pregnancy; to teach the value of fresh air and suitable clothing.

It seems only commonsense to know that tight-lacing must injure the foetus, and yet mothers will be found wearing tight corsets, presumably to make their condition less obvious. Care must be taken in the ordinary mode of life; for instance, a woman who is pregnant, and jumps off and on buses, cars, &c., may cause a small hæmorrhage to occur which may result in a clot forming in the placenta, preventing an adequate supply of nutrition to the foetus. Sometimes as much as 20 per cent. of the area may be cut off. All extraordinary exercise will cause extra movement of the foetus, which increases the possibility of malformations. The cord may get twisted round a limb and actually amputate it.

Often women of the wealthy class are apt to continue strenuous outdoor sport, regardless of the condition of pregnancy. This is most injurious to the baby. On the other hand, insufficient exercise will cause constipation, and toxins will circulate in the blood of the mother. The blood should be kept pure if proper nutrition is to go on.

Falls and injuries should be reported, because immediate attention may minimize the possibility of injury to the foetus.

Eugenists maintain that the state of mind of the mother during pregnancy has the greatest effect on the baby. This is undoubtedly true. At the "Mothers' Welcomes" and other admirable societies maintained for the benefit of mothers, the endeavour is to teach them the importance of the care of their own health, and to idealize the state of "Motherhood."

It is not easy to teach a woman to be happy in the privilege of expectant motherhood when she has, perhaps, several children, and the knowledge that an extra mouth to feed will cause an increase in the strenuous effort of making "two ends meet"; but tact goes such a long way, and a suggestion that if the mother looks after herself, and does not give way to fretfulness or irritation, a healthy baby will probably result who will not be so much trouble to her, because it will only want ordinary attention, seems to be an argument that will appeal to all mothers, rich and poor. To educate the mothers by giving them sound, commonsense advice, should be the aim of everyone interested in the welfare of our infants.

Drugs.—The taking of patent medicines, with the exception of necessary aperients, during pregnancy should be discouraged, as these will probably have a bad effect on the baby.

Alcohol should be strictly forbidden unless ordered by the doctor. Mothers seem to think that a stimulant should be taken, but if they lead healthy, normal lives, and take plenty of nourishing food, this is decidedly not necessary.

It is to be deplored that women of the poorer classes have to work so hard when pregnant, and very little can be done to alleviate the evils resulting from this, but even then, if the mothers *know* how to look after themselves, less harm is done to the unborn infants.

Teeth.—It is an important thing that women should be taught the value of good teeth, and how to look after them. So many illnesses are caused by bad teeth. Indigestion occurs, and the nutrition of the foetus is impaired. The mothers must be taught *how* this affects their general health, and when they are fit, they should be encouraged to have old stumps removed and new teeth put in if necessary.

It is the best thing to get the confidence of the mothers, and the work of supervision will become easier and the best results gained. This is not an easy task, because there are always "grannies" with their advice, and a prejudice against anything, unless the way is made plain and simple by tactful explanations.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Catherine Wright, Miss Edith Hooker, Miss M. Simpson, Miss J. Collins.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What is an empyema? What operations are undertaken for its relief, and what have you to say about the after-nursing?

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