

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

NAME SOME OF THE CAUSES OF THE GREAT MORTALITY IN INFANTS AND HOW TO PREVENT THEM.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss Catharine Wright, Dryden Road, Bush Hill Park, Enfield.

PRIZE PAPER.

The great infant mortality of to-day arises from various causes, some more remote than others.

One of the chief causes of this mortality is due to disease: syphilis in one or both parents, which is not always apparent, but which has such disastrous effects on the mother and child.

Another cause is that of premature births, caused by disease, overwork, debility, or shock to the mother, resulting in the untimely arrival of a puny, frail infant, whose hold on life is so slight that, even given good conditions, this hold is easily relinquished in a few hours, days, or weeks.

Other causes are artificial feeding; unsuitable, wrongly prepared, or unclean food, given in too large and irregular feeds, causing digestive disturbances, followed by mal-nutrition, pain, sickness, and collapse.

Summer diarrhoea is a very grave menace to our infant life; it spreads with rapidity, especially in large towns with a dense population, and unless prompt measures are at hand, the result is fatal to many babies.

The epidemic diseases of measles and scarlet fever claim a great many lives of the infants, or leave (if the children survive) grave affections which very much reduce health in later life.

All these causes are largely remedial, and much expert scientific and philanthropic knowledge is brought to bear intelligently on the subject, resulting in agencies which are a great asset in the education of the women and mothers of to-day, but there is yet much to learn and to teach, and it is in the hands of nurses and midwives to give this teaching, in a way that will bring this knowledge in a simple, direct manner to the public at large and to the mothers themselves, now and in the future.

The expectant mother must be encouraged to book at an early date with her nurse-midwife, who will teach her how to obtain the best hygienic conditions for herself and the future child, and if there is any predisposition to disease, this can be treated in the early stages by a medical practitioner, who will prescribe treatment, with the best results.

Breast-feeding must be insisted upon, unless it is quite certain that other conditions are advisable. In the early stages of pregnancy the breasts must be cared for, with that end in view, and, as a rule, with splendid results to both mother and child.

Weaning should be avoided in the very hot weather; better to breast-feed the infant a little longer than run the risks of artificial feeding and its dangers.

Food for the mother is of vital importance, and the communal kitchens of to-day supply a great need by giving, cheaply and in a well-cooked way, suitable and nourishing food.

If artificial feeding is employed, then the source of the milk supply must be pure and clean; all utensils used kept scrupulously clean and covered from contamination by dust or flies.

The housing arrangements and sanitary fittings should be in good order and of the simple kind, easily cleaned; there must be an ample water supply, good ventilation and drainage.

Every infant should have its own basket or cradle, which can be placed out of doors in suitable weather during the day, and at night placed in a suitable position, thereby avoiding any danger of suffocation.

Attendance at the school for mothers cannot fail to be of use and of benefit to mother and child. Here early defects can be remedied, and the child's general health kept under supervision. Later the crèche, where the working mother can leave her baby, is simply splendid, the babies having the best of food and air, regulated to their requirements.

The senior girls in the schools are the future mothers; they can be taught, by simple demonstrations, a hygienic care of themselves, resulting in a higher standard of morality, which will be of inestimable value to themselves in after life and to the children who are to follow.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss J. G. Gilchrist, Miss L. C. Cooper, Miss J. E. Taylor, Miss A. Phipps, Miss Dora Vine, Miss M. Robinson, Miss M. B. Browne, Miss M. M. G. Bielby.

Many of the papers sent in this week were admirable.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What are the incubation periods of measles, scarlet fever, whooping-cough, enteric fever, and typhus fever? Also state the common length of the diseases, and the length of the period of infection.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)