

The Midwife.

CAN EVERY WOMAN NURSE HER BABY?

Of recent years I have been convinced that it is practically possible for every woman to nurse her baby. I use the words "practically possible" advisedly, for even if every pregnant woman received suitable treatment and care sufficiently early to fit her for lactation, in some cases it would not be desirable for her to carry out this duty. She should not attempt it for her own sake if she is in a weak state through phthisis, haemorrhage, &c., or for the sake of the child, if she has any communicable disease, such as syphilis. Given no such contra-indication, however, all midwives should regard breast-feeding as a duty of national importance. I do not propose to dwell on the obvious reasons for this attitude, but rather to say how poor mothers "on the district" may be induced to carry out this natural function. First of all, one must convince such mothers not only of the desirability, but the possibility of breast-feeding, together with its inherent advantages. Many multiparae complacently remark that they never have been able to nurse their infants, and either candidly admit their satisfaction at this fact, or say how they regret their inability to do so, and say they "would if they could, but they can't"—the can't being dependent on various causes. I once had such a patient; not having been engaged before the eighth month, I could not do much in the way of ante-natal preparation. The good lady assured me that she longed to nurse the baby, but her breasts had always been so painful and tender. I said that would yield to treatment. I told her to bathe the nibbles with cold tea on alternate days and I saw that she did it. Then she hedged, and pointed out that she was willing enough to nurse the baby, but her husband absolutely refused to allow it, as she had suffered so much before. Of course, it was clear enough that the poor man was serving as an excuse, so I determined she should be hoist with her own petard, and at any rate, give the baby a fair beginning. So I guilefully promised she should have her wish, and that I felt sure I could induce her husband to consent.

Of course, the good man did as I asked, looking much mystified, and kept his wife up to the mark by seeing she did all I said, taking the linseed, liquorice jelly I recommended recently in these columns. I think the woman was too taken aback to retort then, and the baby—a fine boy—made an excellent start, and when I finished my attendance our health visitor carried on the good work with most excellent results.

This linseed jelly is a safe and sure galactagogue, both before and after the child's birth.

DORA VINE.

[We are by no means sure that every woman can breast-feed her baby, and mental as well as

physical conditions have, on occasion, to be taken into consideration. Anyway, we have known cases in which babies would have starved if artificial methods of feeding had not been resorted to. We should welcome the opinion of experienced midwives and others on this question, which we realize is of paramount importance to the standard of national health.—ED.]

LECTURES FOR MIDWIFERY NURSES IN GLASGOW.

An interesting experiment is about to be tried by the directors and medical staff of the Royal Maternity and Women's Hospital, Glasgow, and a meeting of nurses was recently held in the hospital lecture room to consider the new project. Midwifery nurses whose names are now on the register of the recently formed Central Midwives' Board for Scotland are being invited to attend short courses of special lectures and demonstrations in the hospital, where all the newest ideas and methods will be described and shown, and the conditions of the new Midwives Act fully explained. It is inevitable that at first and for some years many of the nurses on the register should have but an imperfect training, and sometimes no training at all except what they have learned by experience. For these especially it will be an advantage to have the opportunity of seeing the working of a modern hospital and making themselves, to some extent, familiar with the most recent improvements in their special kind of work. It should also be an opportunity for the hospital-trained nurse to ascertain the improvements which have taken place since she received her training.

The Central Midwives Board for Scotland is, we are glad to hear, taking up its work in a very progressive spirit.

THE POOR HOUSE.

Hope went by and peace went by,
And would not enter in;
Youth went by and health went by,
And love that is their kin.
Those within the house shed tears
On their bitter bread;
Some were old and some were mad,
And some were sick abed.
Gray death saw the wretched house,
And even he passed by—
"They have never lived," he said,
"They can wait to die."

SARA TEASDALE.

From "The Survey."

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