

OBSTETRIC NURSING.

— BY OBSTETRICA, M.R.B.N.A. —

PART II.—INFANTILE.

CHAPTER III.—DUTIES AFTER BIRTH.

(Continued from page 316.)

At their completion, this Course of Lectures will be published as one of the Series of "Nursing Record Text Books and Manuals."

YOU have placed baby in his cot; how did you do this? It may seem a simple matter, but a great deal depends upon it. I have told you in a recent paper that the head is the heaviest part of the infant's body, poised on a slender neck. One result of this physical fact is that all babies are apt to fall on their faces; they would do so at birth if allowed to have their own way. The thoughtless habit of putting an infant's head on to the edge of a bolster or pillow is much to be deprecated; he slumbers, and the heavy head slides off the pillow, and on to his face baby falls, and if unperceived, very serious and sometimes *fatal* effects have, to my knowledge, more than once ensued. To avoid this undesirable contingency the infant should be placed almost on his back, and slightly inclined towards the *right* side. The head *should be low*, and well on the pillow, *not at the edge of it*. The pillow should be but *slightly* raised above the mattress. The square should be *loosely* placed over the head and shoulders, the arms left perfectly free; never pinion them down. When awake, the infant is constantly moving them about, mostly in the direction of his mouth. It is only in slumber that the arms are still; and one of the signs of waking up is that baby first begins to fight with his arms, and then to cry. Observe the directions I have given you the whole time you are on duty, for they are just if not more important last as first.

Infants do not, as a rule, sleep much for the first twelve hours after birth, and have to be watched. Sometimes there is a good deal of crying. Three troubles may also be looked for—vomiting, purging, and flatulency. Soon after birth a bilious vomit, orange colour, is frequently ejected. I suppose it is some of the bile from the liver getting into the stomach. It is a matter of no consequence, unless it persists, when you must tell the Doctor of it. Warm bland drink to rinse out the stomach is about all that is required. It is one of the rare occasions on which a few tea-

spoonfuls of *thin* milk gruel may be given in the way I have recently mentioned.

Purging.—One of the characteristics of the newly-born is the familiar "black motions," or meconium, a fanciful name given from its supposed resemblance to the inspissated juice of the poppy. This singular substance is secreted from the liver as early as the fifth month of foetal life, passes into the intestinal canal, and is subsequently collected into the gall bladder. The bile, mixed with the mucous secretion of the intestinal tract, forms the meconium, which is contained in the intestines of the foetus, and collects in them during the whole period of intra-uterine life. It is a thickish, tenacious, greenish substance. It is voided during birth, immediately after, or some hours may elapse, and in some rare instances twenty-four or forty-eight hours may intervene before the first motion is passed. These last are unusual intervals, and give rise to some anxiety. This perfectly natural secretion has been, and alas! still is, made the occasion for the most unnecessary and *mischievous* medication at the hands of ignorant and thoughtless women, who have thereby inflicted untold woes upon hapless infancy. The prevailing fallacy being that cleansing (?) measures were called for to free the intestine from the meconium, *purgatives* were resorted to, castor-oil being in high favour, combined at times with such *delightful* adjuncts as syrup of rhubarb or buckthorn—worse even than these was *rue*, a bitter nauseous herb, greatly in favour amongst rural midwives, rubbed up in butter and crammed down baby's throat as though he were a young chick! A palliation of this drastic treatment was found in butter and sugar instead of rue, given in precisely the same manner. A good old-fashioned Nurse told me not long since that she always gave the babies a teaspoonful (!) of castor-oil as soon as they were washed and dressed—it "cleared" them out. I am strongly of opinion a good many of them were "cleared off" by the process! not alone in her hands, but in others of her way of thinking. If meconium is voided at birth, or soon after the bath (which is often the case), that is, before the infant is placed in his cot, there is no need to attend to this matter for some four or five hours, when you will have to change the napkin for the first time, doing this in the way I told you of. You will require *warm* water with a little soap, and a piece of soft flannel to cleanse the buttocks; sometimes them eonium being very viscid, sticks to the skin, and many Nurses have a most repre-

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