

OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

HOW WOULD YOU BRING UP A BABY WHICH WEIGHED 4 LBS. AT BIRTH?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss E. O. Walford, Colchester.

PRIZE PAPER.

The great essentials in bringing up a baby weighing 4 lbs. at birth are to keep it warm, to handle it as little as possible, and to feed it regularly with a suitable food.

The cord should be dressed in the ordinary way, but instead of being bathed the baby should be gently rubbed all over with warm olive oil, the surplus being removed with swabs of warm cotton wool. This will keep the skin soft and clean, without exhausting the infant, and at the same time some of the oil will be absorbed through the skin and help to nourish her. After being oiled, the baby should be wrapped in warm cotton wool, and finally in warm flannel, and then placed in her cot between two warm blankets.

A separate hood for the head may be made with gamgee tissue. No attempt must be made to clothe the baby in ordinary garments, as the process is much too exhausting, and necessitates more handling and loss of heat. The cot must be well padded, and there should be a plentiful supply of hot bottles, which, of course, must be carefully protected with covers, and must not be placed too near the baby. If these are placed one on either side and one at the foot of the cot, and are changed alternately, never more than one at a time, an even temperature will be maintained. The baby should be covered with light, warm bedclothes, and the cot placed on a chair near the fire, with a screen round to protect it from draughts. The temperature in the cot should be 88° to 90° F., and in the room not less than 70° F.

When it is absolutely necessary to take the baby out of her cot, the space round the fire should be screened off, and the baby received on to a warm blanket.

If possible, the baby should be breast-fed, and if she is too feeble to suck, the mother's milk must be drawn off with a breast-pump and given to her every hour, either with a spoon or a pipette or fountain-pen filler. If for any reason the mother's milk is not available, and the baby has to be artificially fed, she may have whey and cream, or diluted cow's milk, $\frac{3}{4}$ ss. every hour, gradually increasing the quantity of the feed and the interval between each feed, if the baby takes and digests it well.

If cream and whey are given, one-sixth of a teaspoonful of cream and the same quantity of

lactose are added to each half-ounce feed of whey. Diluted milk is given in the proportion of one part of sterilized milk to three parts of sterilized water to start with, gradually lessening the amount of water and increasing the milk; this mixture may also be sweetened with lactose. If baby should be constipated, a little Virol may be added to three feeds each day, or olive oil $\frac{3}{4}$ ss. given each morning will relieve the constipation and also help to nourish the baby. If the baby is bottle-fed, an excellent little bottle specially made for premature babies may be obtained. This bottle resembles the funnel of a glass wound-syringe, and holds $\frac{3}{4}$ i. to $\frac{3}{4}$ ii.

The baby must not be treated as normal till it has reached the normal birth-weight.

N.B.—A baby under my care, who weighed rather less than 4 lbs., whose mother died at its birth, was brought up on the principles given above (dilute milk, sweetened with lactose; daily rubbing with olive oil; and at the end of three weeks olive oil and Virol daily). Her weight-chart showed a steady gain, and at the end of five weeks, when she was being fed $2\frac{1}{2}$ -hourly in the day and 4-hourly in the night on $1\frac{1}{2}$ -ounce feeds of milk and water, equal parts, she had gained just over 2 lbs.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss Alice M. Burns, Miss J. Hopkins, Miss A. Johnson, Miss F. Robinson.

Miss F. Robinson writes:—

It must be remembered in regard to an infant weighing 4 lb. at birth that it is certainly premature; that being so, its organs are not fully developed, and have not the powers of those of a child born at full term.

Take the digestive system for instance. It is immature, and milk mixture suitable for a child born at full term would be unsuitable for a weakly and premature baby, such as is indicated by a 4 lb. weight at birth. If such a baby is hand-fed, therefore, I should give very diluted milk, and if the original mixture appeared too strong, should go on diluting it, remembering what nurses too often forget in relation to infants as well as adults, that it is not what is taken but what is digested that is important.

Another important point is to keep the infant very warm, and to disturb it as little as possible. Its heat must in every way be conserved, for loss of heat to a weakly infant means a lowering of the vitality, in which it is already deficient.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

Describe the management of cases of heart disease.

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