

FOUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

STATE WHAT YOU KNOW ABOUT THE CARE OF THE NEW-BORN BABE.

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Mrs. Firth Scott, 231, Ladbroke Grove, W.10.

PRIZE PAPER.

There are special points which require particular care if the newly born child is to have a fair start in life.

THE CARE OF THE EYES.—Directly the head is born, and before the eyelids have opened, the nurse or midwife should gently cleanse away any mucus, &c., from the outside of the eyes and the cheeks. The best way to do this is to have two bowls, one with sterile wool pads in a lotion of biniodide of mercury (1-4000), the other with sterile wool pads in boracic lotion. The mercurial solution is used first, and afterwards the lids are bathed with boracic. When bathing the child this process is repeated. If there is reason to think the eyes are infected, then argyrol, or a solution of silver nitrate (10 grs. to ʒi.) may be ordered by the doctor; two drops in each eye. Any indication of ophthalmia neonatorum must be reported by the nurse or midwife immediately to a registered medical practitioner.

CARE OF THE UMBILICAL CORD.—When the umbilical cord becomes flabby and ceases to pulsate, usually after two or three minutes, it must be ligatured and cut. The ligatures and a pair of blunt-pointed scissors should be kept in an enamel bowl in the water in which they were boiled, or in biniodide of mercury (1-2000). It is important that they are sterile, also the hands of the midwife, or when she cuts the cord, germs may be introduced which may result in (a) inflammation around the umbilicus, (b) septic jaundice. A ligature is placed round the cord about two inches from the umbilicus, and a second one about two inches from the first; both are tied carefully to prevent any bleeding from the stump. The midwife should dress the stump carefully after bathing the child until the shrivelled remnant of cord drops off and leaves a dry scar, usually after eight or ten days. Sterile gauze, wool, or linen rag, and a mixture of zinc and boracic powder are in general use for this purpose. If umbilical hernia is present, medical advice must be sought immediately.

BATHING THE NEWLY BORN requires much care and thoroughness. If the child is born covered with vernix caseosa, olive oil or vaseline should first be smeared over it. Then wash well with a soft flannel and pure soap, and

immerse the child in a bath of water at 98°F., taking care to support its head and back. Then dry quickly with warm towels, and powder in all creases. See that the nose, ears and mouth are clean, as well as the eyes. Note the weight, size and general condition of the infant, also if the apertures of the body are normal; if it has any malformation or sign of disease, report at once to a doctor.

CLOTHES should be warm, light and simple. Flannel binders only should be used—the stiff linen variety of our grandmothers are undesirable.

FOOD for the newly born should be that with which nature has endowed the mother. Unless there is a very grave reason to the contrary all babies should be nursed by their mothers up to the age of six to nine months. If artificial feeding is necessary the circumstances of the case will guide the choice of a food. Probably cow's milk, diluted, with the addition of cream and sugar of milk is as suitable as most foods. All food prepared artificially should be pasteurised, and the glass boat-shaped feeding bottle and rubber teat and valve sterilised. Before and after suckling the infant's mouth should be cleansed with a piece of soft linen or wool and boracic lotion, also the mother's nipples. Thrush is the result of neglecting these precautions. The white spots in the mouth characteristic of this disease are caused by a fungoid growth, the "oïdium albicans." Glycerine and borax will relieve this condition.

Punctuality, regularity, cleanliness, plenty of sleep, fresh air, natural food, and simple clothes—these ought to be the birthright of every baby. There would then be fewer "wastrels and degenerates" in our midst.

HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention: Miss Ména M. G. Bielby, Miss Harding, Miss C. Wilson, Miss J. Robinson, Miss M. James.

Miss Ména M. G. Bielby writes: It should be realised that the ideal conditions for the new-born babe approximate, during the first month of life, to the conditions *in utero*, apart from the establishing of respiration and the inception of digestion. The underlying principles of the scientific care of the infant therefore demand warmth, freedom from thirst, hunger, pain and discomfort, quiet, adequate sleep, pure air, and protection by strict cleanliness against injurious micro-organisms.

QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK.

What is Surface Nursing? How would you care for the skin, hair, mouth and nails of a helpless patient?

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