

The Midwife.

INFANT EDUCATION.

Dr. Eric Pritchard's book on "Infant Education," of which the second edition (price 6s. net) has just been published by Mr. Henry Kimpton, 263, High Holborn, W.C.1, is extraordinarily interesting, and further, we venture to think, an important, and in some ways unique contribution to current literature dealing with the care of infants.

AUTOMATIC SELF-HELP.

Dr. Alex. Wynter Blyth, M.R.C.S., late Medical Officer of Health, St. Marylebone, points out in his introduction to the first edition that "it is not enough, from an hygienic point of view, to preserve infantile life; this might be accomplished by means giving as a result an army of sickly weaklings, likely to add in the future to the burdens of the community; the infants must not only live their lives but must be healthy and vigorous; their internal organs, muscular systems, and senses must be trained to resist ordinary influences detrimental to health—they must acquire the power themselves of helping themselves. Dr. Pritchard, in the following pages, teaches this lesson in forcible language, the lesson of automatic self-help."

Dr. Pritchard discusses the question of Infant Education under the following headings:—"Ante-Natal Hygiene, or The Mother's Duties to the Unborn Child"; "The Education at Birth and Care of the New-Born Child"; "The Feeding of Infants (1) Certain General Principles, (2) Certain Practical Details"; "Principles and Details of Feeding at and after Weaning"; "The Formation of Habits, Good and Bad"; "Rickets: Its Causation, Symptoms, and Treatment"; and "The Examination of the Infant in the Home."

EARLY FOUNDATIONS.

The author emphasises the fact that the correct feeding of infants is much more important than the correct feeding of older children or grown-up individuals, because during infancy you are adding to the foundations on which the permanence and durability of the whole superstructure depends. But further, that even before infancy a very considerable part and a very important part of the foundations have been already prepared, partly during the development or the growth of the embryo in its mother's womb, and partly even before that time.

He points out also that "no indiscretion or breach of the laws of hygiene which operates adversely on our own health can be committed with impunity to the health of those germs within us on which depend the perpetuation and survival of our future representatives.

"Some of us who ponder on these questions and presume to question why, may well ask what right have our parents to jeopardise our health and happiness by selfish indulgence, and by the contravention of the laws of hygiene? In its ultimate effects it would have been a far greater sin against you or me if your mother, or my mother, had indulged in alcoholic excesses or drug habits during the period immediately preceding our birth than if she had given us gin or opium immediately afterwards to keep us quiet and insure her own repose; for the younger the child, or the more immature the stage of development of the foetus, the more far-reaching are the consequences of nerve poisons or other factors in the environment which interfere with normal growth and nutrition."

THE DIET OF THE EXPECTANT MOTHER.

Dr. Pritchard gives the following reason why the expectant mother should avoid stimulating beverages and highly seasoned and spiced dishes. "If the foetus has been accustomed to a stimulating dietary during its term of intra-uterine development, if it has been nourished on a blood loaded with the products of rich living, the change to a simple bland diet of milk and water, such as is usually supplied after birth, is acutely felt."

CONCERNING EDUCATION.

Education, the author tells us, has been defined as "the provision of an environment, the function of which is to prepare for complete living," a definition which applies accurately to the education of the stomach or gastric education. It requires no small skill to teach an infant which has lived a protected life *in utero*, to adjust its methods of living to the outer world. Success in this direction proves the competence of the teacher.

HABITS.

Concerning habits, we read: "Habits, though frequently so described, are not, strictly speaking, man's second nature; they are his essential nature. Some habits are so firmly engrafted in our organic constitution that we do not usually regard them in the light of habits at all. They constitute, in fact, man's first nature. Others, not absolutely indispensable for life but more or less essential for a complete and healthy life, have to be learned, and acquired independently by every new-born infant. These constitute man's so-called second nature. The problem of infant education is to discover how to surround the infant with the best possible environment, and thus produce the best possible habits."

Study Dr. Pritchard's book on "Infant Education." It will go far towards putting your feet on the right road.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)