

OBSTETRIC NURSING.

— BY OBSTETRICA, M.R.B.N.A. —

PART II.—INFANTILE.

CHAPTER V.—HAND FEEDING.

(Continued from page 304.)

THE direful question, What shall we put to the milk (and water) to satisfy baby? was asked in millions of homes, with what (oftentimes) distressful results I need not repeat. The new bottle was used to give the food; so far the method was good, the results the reverse.

The subject upon which I am about to enter is most displeasing to my pen; I write against the grain. I have not a particle of faith in any one of the substances I shall bring before your notice as food for the newly-born, but which we all know are daily and hourly thrust down their innocent throats. A knowledge of these widely-spread and mischievous practices is necessary in practical Obstetric Nursing, and to protest against them, the duty of every woman engaged in it; they prevail more amongst our working classes than other grades of society, but they are not absent amongst their social superiors.

We will class these deviations from the path of natural nutrition into (1) substitutes for, and (2) additions to, the milk food that ought never to be displaced, be it hand-given or breast-given. The most prevalent "substitute" is the iniquitous "sop," of which I have said enough in a former paper, and under "sop" I include the biscuits, rusks, "tops and bottoms," and soft cakes, used in lieu of bread, and which as often as not are mixed with water. The next and only "substitute" I shall touch upon is one that to many of my young Nursing readers it may appear quite a misnomer to so classify. I allude to condensed milk, that over twenty years ago was introduced for hand-feeding. At first it was called Swiss condensed milk, made from the curd or casein of goat's milk, mixed with a large quantity of sugar to preserve it—a sort of milk jam—and sold in cans; and to my mind it was the best preparation of the kind we ever had. It possessed so many apparent advantages over cow's milk that it was small wonder it was so largely used in place of it. Among the most obvious points in its favour were regularity of supply, uniformity of quality, perfectly reliable in hot weather (when fresh milk often fails us) ready for

use at any moment, could be taken wherever baby went, easily prepared. Nurse had only to add the hot water and the food (?) was ready at once; and really it almost seemed that in the face of the new preparation, Dame Nature's antiquated arrangements could be dispensed with. Thousands of infants were fed on it, the usual results being (especially in towns) that we had "fatness" without firmness, imperfect development of the bony structures, and "flabbiness" in the muscles that clothed them; the skin was white instead of pink, hot instead of cool, and our baby had a tendency to take a chill on the slightest exposure, and infantile bronchitis but too often befell the little victim, especially amongst the poorer classes of society, by whom the condensed milk is held in much repute, and its present cheapness is of course a great inducement to its use. For a number of years I have protested against its being substituted for cow's milk for newly-born infants; the minimum of harm occurring when it is given in change with breast-milk. Nay, I even have the hardihood to assert that it is not milk in the full sense of the word, and hence not suited for infant nutrition. A very little reflection will show why this is so. The condensed or dessicated milk is prepared from the solid portion of the natural milk of goat or cow, but the most abundant of all its constituents, the aqueous—holding in solution mineral and saline matters of the highest value for consolidating the infant frame—is abstracted from it; nor must we imagine that the water we add to the condensed milk really replaces the water in natural milk; for although whey is to an immense extent water, water is in no sense whey. Then, as to the important fatty constituent of milk cream, what evidence we have of its existence in prepared milks you can judge for yourselves by the following experiment (No. 4): Fill your test-glass with warm water, dissolve in it two teaspoonfuls of your condensed milk, stir it up, and leave it alone for twelve hours at least; then examine the fluid; the cream line reaches just below O. That is next to nothing, yet we mixed it in the proportion required for baby's food, besides which the mixture is intensely sweet. Upon the whole we are worse off than we were with "Mr. Chalk." We may say of condensed milk that it does not fulfil the requirements of infantile feeding, being deficient in the saline, poor in the fatty, and over-abundant in the saccharine constituents of milk.

We will now turn to the additions to the natural aliment of infancy that are given under

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