

the petition of the Nurses' Co-operation to be refused by the Board of Trade. If the society fulfils the conditions laid down by the law we hold that its application should be granted. But we should then hope that the Board of Trade would explain the reasons why it refused to an important and purely professional body a privilege granted to a small business undertaking, formed to carry out one of the chief objects of the Association, and evidently desirous of undertaking others in which the Association is already engaged.

OBSTETRIC NURSING.

— BY OBSTETRICA, M.R.B.N.A. —

PART II.—INFANTILE.

CHAPTER III.—DUTIES AFTER BIRTH.

(Continued from page 76.)

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

I WILL now bring before my young readers some of the measures adopted by ignorant and careless women, which are not only *negatively* fallacious (doing no good), but *destructively* so, leading, in thousands of instances, to irreparable mischief to the infant's eyesight. A course of "incapacity" runs something on these lines: About the third day from birth the infant's eyes are observed to be weak, and the mother is *at once* enjoined to milk her breasts into them night and morning, or oftener. At this period the milk is colostric, and the fatty particles it contains tend to heat and irritate the tender eyes. As an alternative to this process, or often combined with it, is the anointing of the eyes with the mother's *fasting* spittle; these two old delusions are regarded as of equal and sovereign efficacy, and no amount of *failure* appears able to weaken the maternal faith in them. The eyes begin to discharge and look worse; the next move is to get some sort of salve or eye ointment from a popular Mr. or Mrs. Herbalist. These dubious salves are for the most part made up with *rancid* fat and some sort of deleterious ingredient. I have known red oxide of mercury to be one, and acetate of lead another. They are, of course, used without the slightest regard as to *quantity* or cleanliness, and the lid of the box is quite as often off as on. As things do not improve, "washes" are tried, sometimes *vegetable* decoc-

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tions simply, *parsley* water being in favour with country Midwives, and other simples besides. These not proving altogether satisfactory, eye *lotions* are obtained from chemists or herbalists, which frequently contain preparations of copper or lead. These lotions are applied with rags, the eyes being bathed with them. Still the disease goes on, the eyelids are terribly inflamed and full of matter; poultices are made for them in the most careless manner, and applied or renewed as often as may be *convenient*; they are sometimes made with bread and milk, and they soon become stiff and sour, and the *heat* and *weight* of them are oppressive to the tender eye; then, again, *cold* toast and water poultices are put on—better than the former perhaps. The object of these applications is to *cleanse* the eyes and diminish the discharge from them, commonly called *drawing the matter out of them*, when, in fact, they are aggravating the very condition they are supposed to alleviate. The disease is untouched by them, and poultices of any sort are useless. It is one of the characteristics of *true* infantile ophthalmia that it never gets well of itself, as some ailments do, but unless *unchecked*, runs on a fell destructive course, as in the case before us. And *last* of all, instead of *first* of all, the little victim is taken to the "'Orsepital," and in countless cases (especially in country places) one or both eyes are doomed to darkness. I have pointed out to you very recently how muddle leads to trouble in another instance of mismanagement, of comparatively little moment; but here the ruthless hand of error may quench for ever one of the most priceless gifts of God—vision.

One of England's most illustrious poets was blind, and how the sightless bard felt that awful doom he has told us in words more pathetic than any that ever fell from his majestic pen. As they well up from my memory, perhaps Mr. Editor will allow me space to quote them:—

"When I consider how my *light* is spent,
Ere half my days in this *dark* world and wide,
And that one talent, which is *death* to hide,
Lodged with me *useless*; though my soul more bent
To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide;
Doth God exact *day* labour *light* denied?
I fondly ask. But patience, to prevent
That murmur, soon replies: God doth not heed
Either man's work or His own gifts; who best
Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best; His state
Is kingly; thousands at His bidding speed,
And post o'er land and ocean without rest;
They also serve who only stand and wait."*

* NOTE.—I write from memory. I think I am right. It is one of Milton's sonnets most dear to me.—OBSTETRICA.

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