

### OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

WHY IS THE DIET OF A PREGNANT WOMAN SPECIALLY IMPORTANT? WHAT GENERAL RULES IN REGARD TO IT WOULD YOU ADVISE HER TO OBSERVE, AND WHAT PRECAUTIONS WOULD YOU SUGGEST TO HER?

We have pleasure in awarding the prize this week to Miss A. M. Burns, Parkside Maternity Hospital, Hammersmith, W.

#### PRIZE PAPER.

The diet of a pregnant woman is specially important, because it is the raw material which goes to feed and build two persons—the mother and the child. Without right food for expectant mothers we cannot hope to have good homes or future generations reared to fitness. Nature tends always to provide for the new at the expense of the old, and imposes too great a strain on the system of the badly nourished woman. Her child may be born at full time, looking little the worse; but the mother will invariably be overstrained, debilitated, disheartened, and unfit to perform her duties. Others in her family will get less care, and their health will suffer, most probably, and thus a vicious circle be formed. When lactation is established, though the supply of milk may be only the poorer by the absence of a few fat globules, the strain may become unbearable, making the woman melancholy, or causing recourse to hand-feeding.

During her labour, too, an under-nourished condition may be the underlying cause of a complicated labour, causing the loss of both mother and child.

General debility, arising from malnutrition, will predispose to albuminuria, which may in its turn give rise to threatened or inevitable abortion. But if the woman go to full time, her labour will probably be lingering, increasing the risk of sepsis and post-partum hæmorrhage. Starvation, whether due to privation or to unwise selection of foods, will almost certainly result in primary or secondary uterine inertia, and chloroform and forceps may be necessary in what should have been a normal labour.

*General Rules to be Observed.*—To a woman who usually enjoys good health and consumes a well-balanced diet, we should say: "There is little need to depart from your normal habits. Eat that which you enjoy—in moderation." To a less fortunate woman we should advise that meat be not eaten more than once a day, because of the strain thrown on the kidneys; that the bowels should be encouraged to act regularly, by the liberal consumption of fruit. Dates, figs and prunes are very useful in this respect, and their price is within the reach of all. Those foods which leave a large residue

are indicated, as boiled cabbage, brown bread (especially made with added bran), and green vegetables of all descriptions. Treacle and honey are to be recommended on account of their laxative action. The diet should be light, simple and nourishing, and should embrace all the food elements.

1. Proteins—substances which contain nitrogen. Animal proteins are found in meat, fish and eggs in the form of albumin. Vegetable proteins—gluten of wheat and legumen of peas and beans. *Functions.*—(1) Build up the body; (2) repair tissue waste.

2. Fats—containing carbon, hydrogen, oxygen. Animal fats—butter, cream, cod liver oil. *Functions.*—Maintain the body temperature.

3. Carbo-hydrates, or sugars and starches, as grape sugar, cane sugar, starch in potatoes and cereals. *Functions.*—Producers of muscular and nervous energy.

4. Salts, organic and inorganic.

5. Water, found in all our food.

6. Vitamines.

We should advise an expectant mother to specially avoid those things which ordinarily give rise to indigestion, as pickles, pastry, and highly seasoned dishes. She should also refrain from alcohol.

#### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss M. Ramsey, Miss M. James, Miss P. Thompson.

Miss M. Ramsey writes:—"There are certain substances essential to growth called 'accessory food factors,' one of which is found in certain fats (fat soluble), another in water and whey (water soluble), and the third (the anti-scorbutic) is the factor which prevents scurvy, and is necessary for the development of the child. Breast milk is the best food for infants, because the accessory food factors are present in the right amount; the mother has no specific power of producing these food factors, but gets them out of the food she takes. If the mother is not to suffer, she must have suitable food, for the child will draw upon any reserves which she may have stored up in her blood or tissues. Such foods are butter, cream, beef and mutton fat, which contain fat-soluble in different degrees, butter being the richest. Fresh meat provides proteid in the most digestible form, lean beef and mutton contain the water-soluble and anti-scorbutic factors, so that meat containing fat and lean is an ideal food. Liver, heart and kidney are especially rich in growth-producing factors; also sweetbread and brains."

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