

The Midwife.

"THE NURSE."

Amongst the gifts of books with which the British College of Nurses has been enriched is a slim little volume, "The Nurse," given at the last Council Meeting to the History of Nursing Section by Miss Bushby.

It is a slim little book bound in dark green calf—a poem by Luigi Tansillo, an Italian—written originally in that language, and translated into English by William Roscoe, with charming woodcuts by Bewick, the third edition, which is the one in the possession of the College, being published in 1804.

The date of the original Italian edition is not known, but the birth of Luigi Tansillo, whose family was of high rank, is supposed to have taken place in the year 1510. The chief part of his life was spent in a military capacity in the service of Don Piero di Toledo, Marquis of Villa-Franca, and Viceroy of Naples, and of Don Garzia his son, afterwards Viceroy of Sicily and Catalonia under Philip the Second. A poet and a soldier, he lived a long, and probably a diversified life.

It is specially interesting as indicating that the avoidance of breast feeding was practised so far back as 1500. The English translation of Canto I runs thus:—

"Accomplished Dames, whose soft consenting minds
The rosy chain of willing Hymen binds!
If e'er one prouder wish my bosom felt
By magic strains the list'ning soul to melt,
(Moved by such strains the woodlands Orpheus drew)
That wish inspires me whilst I sing to you.
—What tho' the pleasing bonds no more I prove,
I own your charms, nor e'er shall cease to love;
Not with such love as feeds a wanton flame,
—Attended close by penitence and shame!
But Love that seeks by nobler arts to please,
True to your honour, happiness and ease."

The denial to an infant of its mother's milk is thus described.

"The meek infant spreads its searching hands,
Scents the pure milk drops as they slow distill;
And thence anticipates the plenteous rill,
From her first grasp the smiling babe she flings,
Whilst pride and folly seal the gushing springs;
Hopeful that pity can by her be shewn,
Who for another's offspring quits her own.
"Ah! Sure ye deem that nature gave in vain
Those swelling orbs that life's warm streams contain;
As the soft simper, or the dimple sleek
Hangs on the lip, or wantons in the cheek;
Nor heeds the duties that to these belong,
The dear nutrition of your helpless young,
Why else, ere health's returning lustre glows,
Check ye the milky fountain as it flows?
Turn to a stagnant mass the circling flood,
And with disease contaminate the blood?
Whilst scarcely one, however chaste she prove,
Faithful remains to nature and to love.
"Nor think your poet feigns; alas too well
By dear experience I the truth can tell:
In dread suspense a year's long circuit kept,
And seven sad months, I trembled and I wept,
Whilst a lov'd consort pressed the couch of woe,
And death oft aimed the oft averted blow.
—Nor hei's the fault—misled by fashion's song,

'Twas I deprived the mother of her young;
Mine was the blame, and I too shared the smart,
Drain'd was my purse, and anguish wrung my heart.
O crime! with herbs and drugs of essence high.
The sacred fountains of the breast to dry!
Pour back on nature's self the balmy tide
Which Nature's God for infancy supplied!
—Does horror shake us when the pregnant dame
To spare her beauties, or to hide her shame,
Destroys with impious rage and arts accurst
Her growing offspring ere to life it burst,
And can we bear, on every slight pretence,
The kindred guilt that mark this dread offence?
* * * *

"But O, to paint the torment and the curse
If once your doors admit a hireling nurse,
Were endless waste of paper and of time
Abuse of patience and abuse of rhyme;
Nor need I here the irksome story tell;
From your own sufferings known, I fear, too well."

Sir Frederick Truby King himself could not put the case for breast feeding more strongly.

LACTOGEN.

Every nurse and midwife should realise the extreme importance of the purity of the milk used in infant feeding when for any reason it is impossible for breast feeding to be continued. Anxious thought is then directed to the supply of cow's milk available, and to its modification so that it may approximate as nearly as possible to human milk, but in the individual household its preparation is beset with difficulties.

Thus it has come to pass that the medical profession are taking an increasing interest in dried milk and Dr. Robert Hutchison, an eminent authority on food and dietetics, at a National Milk Conference, expressed his belief that "no inconsiderable part of the decline in deaths from infantile diarrhoea which has happily taken place in recent years is due to the ever-increasing use of dried milk."

The advantages of dried milk are (1) constancy in composition; (2) digestibility; (3) purity; (4) portability; (5) keeping qualities; (6) ease in preparation.

And the advantage of Lactogen, supplied by the Nestlé & Anglo-Swiss Condensed Milk Co., of 6 & 8, Eastcheap, London, E.C.3, is that it is not merely a dried milk powder, but cow's milk scientifically modified by the addition of cream and lactose to provide the correct balance for the human infant, that is to say to approximate as closely as possible to maternal milk in composition for, as Dr. Eric Pritchard states in "Physiological Feeding of Infants and Children": "To one who believes in a correct physiological 'balance' it seems monstrous to expect an infant to thrive on any dietary of dried milk or otherwise, in which all regard to 'balance' is thrown to the winds, and when the child, with all its human metabolic individualities, is forced into a metabolic groove which is peculiar to the calf."

With a view to reducing infant mortality in the district, Paddington Borough Council Maternity and Child Welfare Committee propose that the Council should take immediate steps to establish a special clinic for children where nutritional and physio-therapeutic work may be carried on.

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