

A TALK ABOUT BABIES.

BY MRS. M. P. HANDY.

An American mother with her first baby is often an object of pity. Very rarely has her previous education fitted her in the least for the duties and responsibilities which have come upon her. Even if she is the elder daughter of a large family, in all probability her mother has always shouldered the burden of household cares alone, leaving her child to "enjoy herself," and to that end allowed her as much of the delights of idleness as she has chanced to fancy.

Mrs. Gamp has immortalized the failings of monthly nurses, yet there are those who really merit the high prices they demand. Of them, however, I have naught to say. My business is with the young mother, when the nurse is gone, and she is thrown wholly on her own resources. She knows that when her baby brothers and sisters cried "Mother used to give them something out of a bottle," what that something was she has no idea. One friend suggests catnip tea, another uses fennel-seed whisky—old-fashioned people these!—while Madame Mere, whose babies never give her any trouble, advises the soothing syrup she always uses. So the poor baby is dosed first with one thing, then another, and undergoes useless tortures.

Soothing syrups are perhaps more efficacious; they stupefy the child and silence its crying, but, alas, who shall count their victims?

"Never give a child patent mixtures," said a prominent physician to the writer. "To prescribe for a patient properly, a doctor should always know what medicines have been given, and if these have been used he has generally to go to work in the dark. If opium is necessary, use paregoric—then you know just how much you are giving."

It is safe to assert that every one of the syrups, cordials and elixirs, advertised as a boon to babies and a relief to mothers contains opium in greater or less quantity, and more than one woman is to-day killing her child by their use, in total ignorance of what she is doing.

It is a good rule never to give physic unless you are sure it is needed; and colic may often be relieved by external remedies. Warm flannels to the stomach, which should be gently rubbed; toasting the little feet; laying the infant across the lap, face downward, while rubbing the back with the palm of a warm soft hand, and holding baby against the shoulder whilst the rubbing process is carried on in the same way; these are some of the simple modes in which a slight attack may be cured.

If medicine is needed, Dewee's Carminative, an old foggy preparation which has been in use for over forty years, is safe and reliable. The asafetida in it is a specific for wind; the prepared chalk is a standard baby physic, and of opium there is not enough in it to be dangerous. Besides, every druggist can mix it, every physician knows its component parts; so that mothers who think that the child must take something can administer it with perfect safety. The medicine is not patented, and the good old doctor who first compounded it has gone to his grave long ago.

Babies should be bathed regularly once a day in tepid, not hot, water, and as soon as strong enough to be supported in the tub by one hand of nurse or mother, the bath should be given in that manner. It is astonishing how soon the child will learn to know its bath tub; how soon it will begin to struggle to get to the water, and to kick and splash and play while bathing. It should always be taken out of the water on a blanket, and wiped perfectly dry by friction with a soft towel; powdered from head to foot with corn starch, with whichorris-root may be mixed for perfumery; and dressed as quickly as possible.

Pins are often instruments of torture to babies, and it is not a bad idea to keep needle and thread at hand and sew the garments on instead of pinning them, though when safety pins are used this is hardly necessary. Have the clothes ready beforehand—shirt, petticoats and little dress, all fastened together, so as to be put on all at once, and as soon as the baby is dressed feed it and let it go to sleep.

The superstition that putting long clothes on over a baby's head is unlucky is a fortunate one for the small folks whom it concerns.

Nearly every baby dislikes to have its face covered for even a moment, and slipping the clothes on feet foremost, while the baby lies on the lap, is a pleasanter process for all parties. It is a pity that fashion prescribes such very long clothes for young babies. True, it is imperative that the feet should be kept warm, but skirts three or four times as long as the wearer are scarcely necessary for this; however, fashion is positive on this point and I have no idea of making a female Quixote of myself by fighting against fashion.

The clothes should be loose, and comfort is first to be considered in preparing them. Learned physicians—alas for those brave crusaders against so many follies!—have lectured on the inhumanity of keeping babies' arms and necks uncovered in winter weather, and have not lifted their voices in vain. Let a mother try it herself and see how she likes it! The little things get used to it just as greenhouse plants manage to stand exposure to a Northern climate; the hardy ones struggle through it, those more delicate—die. Flannel should be worn next the skin, covering chest and bowels the year round, until the teething period is past; then, in a warm climate, it may be left off during summer. The band worn around the body of the newborn infant may, at four months old, unless the child is unusually delicate, be exchanged for a little flannel shirt, low-necked and short-sleeved, long enough to come well over the stomach. While the band is used, it must be tight enough to give the needed support without compressing the wearer, and should be looser at night than during the day. Do not depend too much, however, upon this as a support for the back; and remember that you cannot be too careful not to tax the strength of your baby's spine. Nothing is gained by encouraging a child to precocity in sitting and standing alone or walking; and overtaking the infant spine has laid the foundation for many a weak back.

Patterns for babies' first clothes may be bought from any agency for paper patterns, and are generally sensible and reliable. The day shirt should open behind for convenience in putting on; that worn at night, in front, like the barrow-coat or night flannel, which last should be buttoned its entire length by buttons sufficiently close together to keep out the cold.

Teeth are a mysterious dispensation, on the whole, and it might be well if they could be abolished by act of Congress and sets provided for us all by dentists at once. Oh! the babies that die in the tedious process by which nature furnishes them. Blind humanity is ready to question Providence in thinking of it. In winter there is not so much danger, but in summer the little sufferers may be numbered by thousands. The pain cannot be avoided, yet it may be greatly lessened by judicious care and nursing. The first essential is plenty of fresh air; country air, is possible; if not, the early morning and cool evening air of the city. Shun a hot sun like a pestilence, and keep your baby cool. Let the garments be as thin and as few as possible, always keeping flannel over the bowels. Bathe twice a day and keep the nursery well ventilated. A small piece of ripe peach, English raspberries, or a slice of tomato may be given with safety if the baby seem to crave them and not be ill; but the fruit must be fresh, and the quantity small. I have known cases where these have proved almost medicinal, and indeed have been used by medical advice; but no other fruit is safe.

When the gums are swollen and hot to the touch, the intolerable itching may frequently be eased by a little crushed ice beaten in a towel with a hammer, until as fine as snow, and given slowly, letting the baby suck it from the spoon. Be very cautious about administering medicines, remembering that if cholera infantum be suddenly checked the disease is apt to attack the brain.

The best course is to give none except under medical advice. In almost every case opium is poison to a teething child. Calomel and chalk is the allopathic remedy, almost infallible if used in time; and homeopathic specifics are not wanting; indeed, Dr. Humphreys merits a handsome testimonial at the hands of the babies for what he has done to lessen the use of opium in their diseases.

If the mother can nurse her baby,

let her do so by all means, for when nature provides sustenance, her provision is always best. Tradition has made many a woman half starve herself by dieting for the sake of her little one, but it may be safely asserted that no wholesome food which agrees with the mother will render her milk injurious to the child. Wet nurses are dangerous experiments, when one reflects that high medical and psychological authorities agree that physical and even mental traits may be transmitted to an infant through the breast at which it nurses.

Cow's milk, fresh and pure, diluted with soft water and sweetened with loaf sugar, most closely resembles the mother's milk, and is, therefore, its best substitute. One part milk to two parts water are the proper proportions under six months of age; after that the quantity of milk may be gradually increased with the age of the child. If your baby is fed from a bottle, keep two always on hand and let one soak in cold water while the other is in use. Never allow the milk to turn sour in the bottle. It is very little trouble to rinse the vessel at once, but if the milk coagulates it is no easy task to remove it. Make the tea by pouring boiling water on new milk, and then replacing the stew-pan on the fire, let the mixture boil for a minute or two. Unless you have a nurse on whose fidelity you can rely, make your baby's tea yourself and see that it is kept sweet. A stationary washstand with the water running will, unless the weather is very warm, keep boiled milk fresh, then a little ice must be used. If the baby is unable to digest tea thus prepared, use a tablespoonful of cream to half a pint of water. If unable to procure reliable milk fresh from the cow, substitute condensed milk in its place, taking care to observe the proper proportions. Often a little lime-water added to the tea will enable the most delicate stomach to digest it.

Feed regularly, at first every two hours, increasing the interval to three and four hours as the child grows older, during the day, and not at all during the night. Give the child a good meal at bed-time—say ten or eleven o'clock—and another when it wakes in the morning, but if it cries in the night don't feed it. A grown person getting up at one or two in the morning and demanding oysters and coffee, would be thought delirious; and there is no more necessity for stuffing a baby all night long. Let the little one sleep at the mother's bedside in a crib with hair mattress and hair pillow. Keep a rubber cloth over the mattress, under the sheet, and air bed and clothing frequently. Much has been said for and against the rubber diaper. It is cleanly and keeps the clothing dry; nor is it unhealthy except where careless nurses make it an excuse for neglect in changing the linen underneath. Have at least two—one for night and one for day wear—and wash frequently with cold water, hanging where they may air when not in use.—*Christian Union*.

Hard Times In New York.

A WIDOW'S STORY.

A gentleman, a member of the firm of Wilcox & Gibbs, met a lady volunteer visitor of the Guild and requested her to examine into the merits of a case with which he had accidentally become acquainted. This lady called at the address given, a back room in the upper story of a rear house in Sixth street. Here, in one of the worst tenements of a wretched district, she found a starving widow, with two sick children. The room she describes as "an oasis of cleanliness in a desert of filth." The floor was polished white, and the few articles of furniture—a table, two chairs and a cot bed, were scrupulously neat. The only food in the house was a dry crust of bread, which one of the children was dividing into three parts—one for his little sister, one for his mother and one for himself.

The poor woman told her simple story. Born and married in England, she had come to America with her husband to seek their fortune. They had not fared well in the New World, save that children were born to them to share their struggles and partake of their misfortunes. A few months ago the husband died of small-pox. The widow sold all their furniture,

save the few articles alluded to above, piece by piece, to buy bread. When the last saleable article had gone and the last morsel had been eaten, she found temporary work. She was employed by the proprietress of a furnishing store to stitch buttonholes in ladies' and gentlemen's garments. She sewed till she had earned \$5.76, when her employer sold out her business and disappeared without paying her. How she had struggled day and night to care for her sick children no one can tell. Her quiet heroism in the midst of destitution, sickness and sorrow will some time win for her a reward greater than that which attends the successful seeker after fame or fortune. In at least two hearts the mother's image will be enshrined in all the glory of love and devotion.—*N. Y. Herald*.

MONTANA PENITENTIARY.—In accordance with the Act of Congress and the instructions of the Attorney General, the control of the Penitentiary was transferred on Saturday last from the Territory to the United States, Governor Potts representing the former, and U. S. Marshal Wheeler the latter. There has been no change in the personnel of the officers, and the Board of Directors appointed and confirmed by the Governor and Council last winter still have control of the labor of the Territorial prisoners, the proceeds of which revert to the Territory. It will probably be contracted out next month for a term of years. Warden English, an excellent officer, is still in charge and is likely so to remain. He has furnished us a tabularized statement of expenses, which will be published next week, showing that from Nov. 15, 1873, to date of transfer, the cost to the Territory per day for each prisoner was a fraction less than 91 cents; for the past five months a fraction more than 72 cents. Under the new regime the Territory will pay the U. S. \$1.00 per day for each man, and have the proceeds of the labor.—*Helena Herald*, Aug. 8.

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