

Plain observations on the management of children during the first month, particularly addressed to mothers. With an appendix, containing a few practical hints for the farther guidance of the nursery.

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Mrs. Longman

PLAIN
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
Management of Children
DURING THE
FIRST MONTH,
PARTICULARLY ADDRESSED TO MOTHERS.

WITH AN APPENDIX, CONTAINING A FEW PRACTICAL HINTS FOR
THE FARTHER GUIDANCE OF THE NURSERY.

London:
SOLD BY UNDERWOOD, FLEET-STREET.

1828.
[*Price One Shilling.*]

THE
OBSERVATIONS
ON THE
NATURE AND
CAUSES OF
THE
DISEASES OF
THE
LUNGS
AND
BREASTS
BY
J. WRIGHT
M.D.

JOHN WRIGHT, PRINTER, BRIDGE-STREET, BRISTOL.

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THE Author of the following little tract has seen much cause to regret that the valuable directions contained in medical works, respecting the early management of Infants, are not sufficiently known to those who are most interested in them, and most capable of applying them beneficially. Few young Mothers think of consulting medical treatises, and were they inclined to attempt it, they would probably be deterred from proceeding far, by finding much in them which they would not understand, and with which they have little or no concern. To remedy this evil, such remarks as are most likely to be generally useful have been selected from writers in great repute. One of the objects in view is to enable Mothers, particularly young ones, to be thoroughly acquainted, before their confinement,

with what is necessary to be done; and to be prepared to require of the nurses in attendance, a strict conformity to their orders. The author is also desirous to spare them much needless anxiety, by pointing out a safer and easier method of managing their Infants from their birth, than that which is adopted by most nurses, and also to enable and encourage them to judge and act for themselves, where the welfare of their children is concerned, rather than to sit down contentedly under the guidance of persons, *many* of whom have neither education, reflection, nor common sense to direct their proceedings.

PLAIN OBSERVATIONS, &c.

CAN a Mother forget her sucking child?—
Yes, she may forget, and fearful is her responsibility for the evils her forgetfulness may occasion.

But where one solitary instance can be found of conduct so unnatural, there are thousands of mothers who permit an early accumulation of suffering and disease, while their feelings are anxiously alive to the important duties of maternal tenderness, but who for want of the information to which they think there is no easy access, are induced to rely upon the experience of others, no better informed, but more fatally prejudiced than themselves.

If a simple mode of proceeding can be pointed out, which may prevent unnecessary suffering to the Infant, and diminish the causes of intense and overwhelming anxiety to the affectionate Mother, the attempt may not be useless.

In support of the opinions advanced, the author can appeal not only to medical men of acknowledged good sense, and high reputation, but to personal observation and experience.

From the hour of birth, the greater number of Infants, in all classes of society, are subjected to inconveniences and injuries which are quite unnecessary.

Not one monthly nurse in a hundred, it may be said, in a thousand, knows how an Infant should be treated. In general they have had no opportunity for acquiring this knowledge, and those among them who really wish to do their duty, attempt abundantly too much, and measure their own good qualities by their powers of enduring the needless inconveniences and fatigues they create for themselves, by their officious mismanagement of their helpless charge.

Surely our great and benevolent Creator did not implant the powerful feelings of maternal tenderness and anxiety, that they should be held in controul by an ignorant mercenary woman, with whose plans the Mother is not to interfere, to whose opinion she is to submit, and whose directions she is to follow, though her own good sense and information should point out a safer and a better path ! It is the duty of every Mother to gain all the information she can collect, on subjects connected with the welfare of her child. This may be done by reading, and by judicious enquiry of intelligent medical men. Her own good sense must assist her in the arrangement of her plans; and her undeviating firmness must

secure their being carried into execution. For this purpose, the person who is to take the first charge of her Infant must be one upon whose obedience she can insist and rely, and the directions she gives must be clear and explicit.

Most medical men declare that the opposition and counteraction their advice meets with from both nurses and mothers, wearies them of taking useless trouble, and as the greater number of Infants do struggle through the bad management they receive, they are obliged to be content to give up the poor little victims, to the absurd and unnatural evils which ignorance brings upon them.

But who shall say exactly where are the limits of the evils incurred? The slightest needless derangement of the bodily organs produces a *correspondent needless* derangement of the temper, and consequently, of the moral powers. The child is rendered more prone to peevishness, and passion, than it would have been under judicious care, and there is more to overcome before it can attain the perfection of human character. This observation applies equally to the mental and bodily powers.

Every Mother should seriously direct her attention to the most convenient manner of clothing her infant. Happily in the last twenty years it has been discovered that the pincushion is not

essential to the baby's toilet, and the use of pins in the dress of Infants is very generally discontinued in the higher classes of society. They are in no case necessary, and it may be well to recommend those ladies who make, or direct the making of baby-linen, to give or lend to the poor, to adopt the greatly improved plan of fastening all the clothes by means of strings and buttons; the poor are generally unwilling to admit improvements in long-established customs, but when they find that in using the articles given to them, their children are free from the irritation occasioned by pricks and scratches, they may be more than reconciled to the alteration.

When the new-born babe is removed from its Mother, it should be wrapped in warm flannels, having the mouth and nose uncovered. It may be placed in a warm bed or basket near the fire, and should be suffered to remain perfectly still and quiet, a watchful eye being kept over it.

Where such an arrangement is practicable, it is desirable to prepare an adjoining apartment to that which the Mother occupies, in which *in case of necessity*, the Infant may be washed and dressed. If the Mother's health be delicate, or if she has been much exhausted, immediate undisturbed rest will be essential to her, and no bustle must be permitted in her apartment. If however she is well, and anxious to keep her Infant in her sight

and hearing, as is very frequently the case, it may be better not to remove it, especially as the adjoining room is generally filled by most of the members of the family who are eager to see the child, and unavoidably distract the attention of the nurse. If the Infant be dressed in its Mother's room, every thing that can be required for the purpose should be properly arranged in it beforehand, that there may be no talking, or moving about, or going in and out of the room, and no person should be there whose presence is not essential. The Mother requires perfect repose, and should on no account either talk, or be talked to, without absolute necessity.

As soon as it can be conveniently attended to, the child should be washed and dressed. A bason of warm water, a soft sponge or piece of flannel, some rag, and some mild soap, are all that is necessary. The eyes should be first well washed with the plain water and a piece of soft linen rag. A good lather should then be made to wash the head, ears, and neck, keeping the body still wrapped in flannel. The head &c. should be thoroughly dried with a soft old napkin, before the body is exposed, and a loose flannel cap may be tied on until the washing is completed, as the cambric cap is liable to be wetted during the subsequent operations.

The body should then be washed thoroughly

with the lather, and dried perfectly. In performing this task it is desirable to be as quiet and gentle as possible, and all violent and hasty movements, and turning the child about unnecessarily should be carefully avoided.

It having been seen that not a drop of blood issues from the navel string, a double piece of soft rag should be folded round it, and it should then be laid upward on the stomach. A piece of flannel about five inches wide, and long enough to go round the body must be placed over the stomach, and tied behind with strings of narrow ribbon, or tape, just tight enough to prevent the removal of the rag. This need not be tied until having put on all the clothes in front, the child is necessarily turned, in order to arrange, and fasten them behind.

A cruel and dangerous custom prevails among ignorant nurses, of pressing and squeezing the breasts of new-born Infants, "to get out the milk:" this worse than needless operation gives the child pain, and often produces serious inflammation. The navel string also is sadly disturbed by the nurses. It is usual for them to apply tallow and other filth, to soften the string, and facilitate its coming off, and by being so busy about it, they often hurry its removal, before the part under is healed; they then apply a raisin, a fig, or some equally ridiculous application, to heal it. If left undisturbed

it generally comes off on the seventh or eighth day, and the navel requires nothing but to be kept clean, and to be covered with a piece of soft rag to prevent its sticking to the clothes should any moisture exude from it.

In proceeding to speak of dressing the Infant, it may be observed that greatly as the plan of making the clothes is improved in the last twenty years, still farther improvement is yet desirable and possible. Mr. Haden, from whose "Practical observations on the management of Infants" the author will borrow several extracts, very judiciously remarks that *all* the clothes should be made open behind. By this method, the shirt, flannel coat,—which should be made with a flannel body or stay,—and gown, may all be put on by one movement, exactly as a pinafore is put on, provided the dress is properly arranged before hand, and the sleeves and armholes are sufficiently roomy to admit easily the fingers of the nurse. In this case the arms may be put into all the sleeves at once; but should the nurse not think herself sufficiently dexterous to be able to perform this well, all may be put on in succession, without moving the body of the child. It should then be gently turned upon its stomach, the flannel belly band be first placed smooth and tied, the shirt then wrapped over, and the other clothes fastened by strings or buttons. Care must be taken that

neither the strings of the cap or waist are tied tight, as nurses are much inclined to fall into this habit in order to make the child look neat.

By this method of proceeding the child is neither frightened, nor fatigued; and if now laid down quietly, will generally sleep for some hours. It is important that the washing and dressing should be performed in a warm part of the room, especially in cold weather; and attention should be paid to the state of the circulation. If the extremities are cold, they must be gently rubbed with the hand, and then wrapped in a warm flannel; the head requires nothing but a single cap to cover it, but it should be guarded from exposure to draughts of air; or the eyes will probably sustain injury. Some nurses bind up the head—this should not be permitted.

After it is dressed the Infant should be placed either by its Mother's side, or in a warm cot or basket; it should be laid on its side, and the face be left uncovered. It is well to let it lie upon a flannel, lest the coolness of the linen should disturb it. When the Infant is in its Mother's bed it is necessary to be careful that it be not overheated, and it is better always to place it upon its own pillow as soon as it has done sucking. The author has seen Infants taken out of their Mother's bed in so high a state of perspiration that the clothes have been damp through, and the cap

completely wet. This is likely to weaken the child, and to render it very liable to take cold, from the sudden check the perspiration receives, and the chilling effects of the damp linen about it. Having proceeded so far, if the child was born in a natural and healthy state, the Mother if she values it, will insist upon its being let alone.*

The object of these pages is not to point out the manner in which a diseased, or sickly Infant may be treated, in order to overcome natural defect or misfortune. The author is not offering medical advice. The only end in view is to ensure the continuance of that sound and perfect state in which the majority of Infants are born, and which is often so cruelly disturbed and destroyed by ignorance and mismanagement. In the former case, the advice of a medical attendant is indispensable, in the latter, he does not think it, nor is it necessary. The Mother has only to guard vigilantly against any mischief being done to her child.

Among the injuries inflicted by ignorant nurses upon new-born Infants, perhaps none are more serious than those which arise from their improperly administering both food and physic.

* If an Infant appears in any way ill, it is highly desirable that a medical man should be immediately consulted, as much mischief is often done by Mothers, and more especially by nurses thinking they know what is the matter, and treating the commencement of disease improperly.

A nurse who had very considerable practice in families of rank and respectability, always made the Infants under her superintendance swallow a solid mixture of nutmeg, butter, and brown sugar, within an hour of their birth. This was succeeded by a tea-spoonful of castor oil, and a boat of gruel. The consequence was, as might be expected, the greatest difficulty in making the child attempt to take the breast. Its stomach was overloaded and irritated, and the stimulus of appetite was destroyed. The child *could* not suck, the nurse said it *would* not, and was out of patience with it, to the no small discomfort of the Mother. In a little time the nurse insisted upon feeding it again, because, she said, she could *make* it swallow out of the boat. The breasts of the Mother became hard and inflamed, and both Mother and child were subjected to much suffering, for which there was not the least occasion. In another instance a nurse persisted in giving the child thick food, while she drew off, and threw away the greater part of the Mother's milk, of which there was an abundance. During the whole month the Mother suffered severely from inflammation in the breasts, and the child was constantly screaming from indigestion. As soon as the nurse was gone, the child was allowed to live entirely on the food which nature had prepared for it, and both Mother and child were released from their needless torments.

Another nurse regularly applied a blister to the Infant's back, in order, she said, to clear its complexion.

The common practice of giving castor oil is not only useless, but probably often injurious, if the child is born in a healthy state. It produces painful irritation of the bowels, and by straining them is liable to weaken their future natural action. It will seldom happen that evacuations will not take place without assistance. But when the bowels have been excited at the first, they will be less likely to act naturally afterwards, therefore the bad effects of the first dose may be felt in some degree for a considerable time.*

Dr. Hamilton remarks that "The pernicious practice of giving purging medicines to Infants as soon as they are born cannot be too much reprobated, for the retention of the meconium for some hours after birth, certainly produces less inconvenience than is occasioned by the acrimony of the substances which the child is often forced to swallow."

A friend of the author's having observed in company, that her infant, a very fine boy, had taken no medicine during the month, was asked with expressions of surprise, if her monthly nurse would allow that? She replied that her monthly

* If no evacuation take place within sixteen hours, a tea-spoonful of castor oil will be proper.

nurse was not allowed to interfere with the management of the baby in any way.

“The prevention of diseases in children depends principally on the regulation of the diet and clothing, sleep, exercise in the open air, and cleanliness.”

That Infant then has the best chance of doing well, who has neither food nor physic before they are required. It should be put to the breast within eight hours from the time of its birth. Perhaps it may get nothing perceptibly for the first two days, but this is immaterial, the action of sucking will do good, by drawing out the nipples, and accelerating the flow of the milk; and as the process of digestion does not go on until after the removal of what the bowels contained at birth, called the meconium, the Infant will not suffer from want of food.

“Immediately after a child is born, it is customary to give it food, and also medicine; neither of these can be necessary. An Infant’s bowels will be cleansed, as it is called, quite soon enough if time be given for the natural evacuation of the meconium, or dark green secretion with which they are filled, and it is an idle notion to suppose that children who take medicine immediately after birth, thrive better than those who do not.

“Infants are often said to be flatulent when the opening medicine is withheld. It is doubtful whether any Infant would be flatulent so soon

after birth, if improper food were not given at that time. The argument for feeding an Infant on the same occasion, is, that as the secretion of the Mother's milk does not take place until the second or third day after birth, the child's constitution requires support during that period. This argument is probably fallacious. It cannot but be that if food were really required during that interval, it would be provided by the author of nature. No artificial proceeding of this kind is perceived in the case of any other animals which suckle their young, the secretion of milk is late in some, and early in others, but in none of them is that impatience displayed, which leads the human subject to anticipate nature, and thus interfere with an order which is doubtless the proper one. Neither is it an argument that an Infant will swallow the food which is put into its mouth. It has no power of selection, and would swallow poison as readily as food.

“ But whilst it seems probable that no advantage can arise from feeding children thus early, it is more than probable that considerable evils result from the practice. It may be that the difficulty which often occurs in making Infants take kindly to the breast arises from this cause. The system is oppressed by the unnatural load which has been laid on it, and it feels none of that appetite for the proper food which it would have had

under more favourable circumstances. Again, what is it that causes that eruption called the red-gum, which is so universally found to affect young Infants? Probably this eruption would not occur, if the due order of nature were not interfered with. Eruptive disorders scarcely ever arise in children except when the stomach is deranged, and therefore it is probable that the red-gum is occasioned by the indiscreet feeding of the Infant.*

“No Infant will be starved to death if kept without food for two days. In a case lately published, an Infant lived for eight days with no opening into its stomach; and indeed this case bears in some degree upon the necessity of giving opening medicine to new-born Infants: the meconium came away in small quantities every day from the child until its death; thus shewing that neither medicine, nor the first milk of the mother, which is supposed to be of an opening quality, is necessary for its perfect expulsion.

“The most reasonable course then to pursue with a new-born Infant is to give it nothing, neither food nor medicine; but to wait patiently until the secretion of milk takes place in the Mother’s breast. This generally commences on

* The Thrush also appears to be connected with a deranged state of the alimentary canal, and seems to arise most frequently from the use of improper food, but other causes sometimes produce it, such as exposure to cold, damp weather, &c.

the second day, and becomes more perfect on the third, but it will be proper to put the child to the breast very soon after birth; it will generally get something, but were it only to excite the breast to a due performance of the natural actions, it will always be advisable to let the child suck at an early period. This practice is probably connected with the subject of sore nipples—it may be expected that this evil will be more certainly averted if the breasts be drawn early, than if they are permitted to be over-loaded with milk before this natural mode of relief be afforded to them.”

The attempts of the child to suck its fingers as soon as it is born, though it is an indication that it is ready to try to procure the food which nature has provided for it, is no proof that it ought to have unnatural compounds thrust into its stomach, which are not unfrequently pushed down the throat by the finger of the nurse. The young of animals are never so unwisely assisted—they suck their mothers till the milk comes. The action of sucking satisfies the Infant, and hastens the flow of the milk.

If a mother is able to suckle her child, can it be doubted that it is her duty to do so? a duty to herself as well as to her Infant. Mr. Syer observes that, “if natural instinct and affection be insufficient motives to induce every healthy parent to nurture her own young in the manner

which the author of our being has pointed out still the circumstance of insuring a continuance of health to the Mother by such employment cannot be too earnestly enforced, the practice of suckling being fully known to exempt women from many diseases of a delicate and painful nature."

"Dr. William Hunter used to remark that most examples of cancers in different parts of the system occurred in those subjects who refrained from this duty."

There is not the slightest necessity for the Mother to sit up, in order to suckle; the position of the child is quite as favourable, and indeed, more so, when both are lying down: and the Mother thus avoids considerable and improper fatigue. Awkward nurses often take the Infant up by its head and feet, instead of supporting the back, with the hand; if put down to suck in that position, it will only rout about and cry, when if laid down straight and let alone, it will suck readily. During the first month, an Infant should not be allowed to suck oftener than once in three hours, and it is desirable to observe regularity in this respect, during the day, even though it may sometimes be necessary to awaken the child for the purpose. But by night the more it sleeps, and the less it sucks the better, and it should never be permitted to acquire the habit of sucking itself to sleep.

Those Mothers who take the most exercise in the open air generally have the most abundant supply of milk, but the author is aware that in many cases a Mother cannot suckle her own child. Of such instances it is not the purpose of these pages to say much, the author's principal aim is to induce those fortunate Mothers whose Infants bring with them into the world every requisite for health and comfort—and happily the exceptions are not numerous—to insist upon their little ones' being allowed the full benefit of the blessings bestowed upon them; and not to suffer their health and strength to be undermined, as they too frequently are, by the ignorance and conceit of those to whose care they intrust a charge so precious. That many an Infant born under every favourable circumstance, pines away in sorrow and suffering, the first period of its existence, who might by better management have been full of life, and joy, almost every medical man can testify. “Thus the seeds of future disease are sown, indigestible food is put into an Infant's stomach, this very susceptible organ becomes slightly deranged in its actions, and consequently the child is cross and restless, or is otherwise disordered, but as the organ is perfect, and the irritating cause but slight, the offending matter is expelled, and the disorder subsides. By constant repetition however the digestive organs become habitually deranged, and

the child's health suffers in proportion to the derangement."

Nothing can be more simple than the rules to be observed. The baby should be kept clean, quiet, and warm, it should not be allowed more or other food than it has power to digest, and it should have plenty of fresh air, without exposure to cold. It should from the first, be accustomed to lie in its bed, rather than in the lap. All the necessary operations of washing and dressing should be performed so gently that the child should be sensible of the least possible inconvenience from them. Strict attention to this point will prevent that habitual screaming during the time of washing and dressing which is so distressing. An Infant who has been roughly handled, will show every sign of fear as soon as the operation commences ; but those babies never dislike being washed who have always been gently and carefully handled ; on the contrary they always enjoy the application of water. Warm water should always be used ; it more effectually cleanses the skin, and is in every respect much safer in its application than when cold. It has been remarked that "a child learns bad habits first by being irritated, and second, by finding that anger causes the irritation to cease."

It is not right to be too anxious to stop the crying of Infants : the exertion is often conducive

to their comfort, by enabling them more easily to get rid of oppression from wind. Sometimes a child will cry for several days at stated times. Above all things they should never have their cry stopped by feeding, if the regular period for them to take their food be not arrived.

It is important to notice *particularly* one most dangerous, and often fatal practice which prevails very generally among monthly nurses. It is that of giving drams, and opiates, under different forms. In this practice they regularly set the medical men at defiance, usually denying that they are provided with any thing of the sort. In some instances it has been necessary to search them, when bottles of Godfrey's Cordial, Dalby's Carminative, &c. have been found in their pockets. An instance lately came to the knowledge of the author, where the life of the Infant was very nearly sacrificed in this way. The child was supposed to be in a fit, when it was discovered that the nurse had given it a larger dose than usual of Dalby.

Among the poor, gin is openly and avowedly given, and many a hapless Infant is probably thus hurried to an early grave. An inquest was held in London during the last year, on the body of an Infant fourteen days old, whose death was occasioned by a tea-spoonful of the syrup of white poppies, which the mother had administered, by the advice of the grandmother, to cure restlessness.

In her defence, the grandmother stated that she had nursed many children in very respectable families in London, and it had always been her custom to give a similar dose whenever a baby was restless.—Mothers should be aware that in giving their children the “Soothing Syrup” they are administering opium or syrup of poppies, in unknown quantities, and are likely to injure their children materially.

All rocking in a cot, or cradle, or jogging on the knee should be prevented. The constant violent motion to which Infants are sometimes subjected is very injurious. Concussion of the brain or derangement of the viscera is not unfrequently the result : at all events it is giving a child bad habits, by increasing its wants, and greatly adding to the fatigues of the nurse. “Infants under some nurses will lie down quietly when awake, and go to sleep without farther interference, whilst under other nurses the same Infants would probably require rocking, or at least would cry if it were attempted to lay them down awake. This crying is not from disease, and may be easily distinguished from that which is.”

Those only who have been accustomed attentively to watch Infants can be aware at how early a period habits may be formed, and artificial wants created. From the first, an Infant should never be spoken to, or smiled at, or permitted to look at the light, during the night ; it soon learns not

to expect any notice to be taken of it at that time. Too much cannot be said against the very bad practice of carrying a child about the room during the night; the exposure to cold is likely to be injurious both to nurse and child, and it is doubtful whether it ever answers the end proposed of sending a child to sleep more speedily. The child will cry in arms as well as in its cot, until wearied out by its own exertions it sinks at last to sleep.

If the crying has been occasioned by uneasiness in the bowels, the equal warmth of the bed is more likely to alleviate pain, than exposure to the night air, but the nurse comforts herself by the idea that she is doing something, and the greater the inconvenience to herself the greater is her self satisfaction, and her distressed feelings, if she be kindly disposed, have been relieved by constant motion. To wait patiently is in all cases of anxiety a very difficult task. It may be often observed that when an Infant appears restless in one position, it will settle quietly to sleep again if turned on the other side.

An Infant should never be moved from its bed during the night, but for the purposes of feeding and cleaning; but it should not be permitted to remain in wet things, even when asleep; indeed if it has been properly attended to from the first, it will show uneasiness until they are removed. In this respect there would be great advantage

from making all the clothes open behind, as they could then be conveniently turned from under the child when it was in bed, and the napkins being placed loosely under it, might be easily withdrawn, and others substituted, without disturbing the child. The legs also would then rest more comfortably, when freed from the confinement of the napkin as generally used. Old nurses like better to dry dirty things, and put them on again, than to use clean ones, but dried napkins are rough and stiff, and flannel that has been repeatedly wetted, and not washed, has an unpleasant smell. As the plan of open clothes is only proposed for the first few weeks, while the child ought always to be in a horizontal position, and as much as possible kept upon its bed, or mattress, no objection can arise from the fear of the child's taking cold by accidental exposure; for if the clothes are sufficiently full, and are made to wrap over properly, *that* must be a more than usually awkward nurse who would suffer the child's legs to be exposed during the very short time she has any occasion to hold it in her arms. Indeed if preferred, the petticoats might be fastened the whole way by strings, and the frock by buttons.

The attention of Mothers should be called to the injuries Infants may receive in nursing, and to the advantages of keeping them in arms as little as possible.

“ Exercise is not essential to the welfare of

Infants. During the first two months they should merely be carried from place to place in the horizontal position, and be neither shaken nor allowed to sit upright. A mother reported a few days ago that her Infant's illness, a bowel complaint of some danger, immediately followed a fright which it received from being suddenly tossed up in the air as nurses usually do. This child is nearly three months old, and the mother stated, that it had always been afraid of falling, so that she had not exercised it as violently as she had done her other children, but that a friend took the Infant, and unwarily threw it up twice as described above, it instantly changed colour, it became very pale, and immediately afterwards its complaint began. Under all circumstances, perhaps, the best exercise which an Infant can take is that which Nature dictates when the child is allowed to lie upon the ground, or on a mattress, with as few clothes on as possible. The bones of the back are not calculated to bear a considerable weight, and it will be recollected that the back of an Infant always bends when he is placed upright, and his head falls down on his chest or back, just as the child is leaned forward or in the opposite direction. The head is the heaviest part of the body, and it has not the power of keeping itself erect, independent of the action of the muscles. Muscles are fixed to bones, and those which support the head

are principally attached to the back-bone ; and as the back-bone during Infancy is almost entirely formed of cartilage or gristle, it would be unable to afford the necessary support to those muscles when in action. It is perhaps for this reason that the muscles themselves have not yet acquired the power of acting with energy sufficient to support the head, as if to prevent the child from making such exertions as would tend to injure the back-bone in its still soft state.

“ If a child be allowed to take exercise in its own way, it will not attempt to raise its head until the parts have acquired strength enough to support the necessary exertion ; but after that time he will turn himself over on the carpet, and gradually learn to raise himself into the upright position. In reference to this point of nursing Infants, a medical friend of great observation has suggested a very important argument in favour of the plan which is here recommended. He says, in allusion to the prominent breast-bone and narrow chest which is so frequently seen in weakly children, that this species of deformity is produced by the erroneous mode of nursing which has been pointed out, and he refers for his proof to the fact, that the impressions of the nurses' thumbs may be found on the ribs of such Infants, as may be seen by any one who will take up a child in the usual way of embracing its chest with

his hands, for he says, that the thumbs will naturally fall into the artificial hollows, made by previous pressure in the ribs on each side the breast-bone. If this observation be verified, it will form an unanswerable argument for nursing Infants differently.

“The only artificial exercise which an Infant can take with advantage, is that of being well rubbed. This species of exercise however is very advantageous, and it should be repeated at least two or three times in the day. Either the hand or a flesh brush may be used, and it should be continued for several minutes at each time of rubbing. Infants like to have their skins rubbed before a fire, and all writers on the management of children have agreed in recommending frequent and sedulous friction, as being highly conducive to the health of children.”

Many medical practitioners have observed that indentations and distortions of the ribs, and breast bone, are produced by the pressure of the fingers and hand of the nurse. If an Infant be accustomed to lie upon its mattress, or even on the arm, when necessarily carried about, instead of being forced to sit up, this mischief will be avoided. It is a most erroneous idea that an Infant cannot have sufficient exercise unless it is tossed about. To confute this error it is only necessary to observe a healthy Infant who is accustomed to be laid upon

the floor, or on a mattress, and it will be seen that the force with which it throws out its arms and legs, far surpasses in general exertion, any efforts of its nurse to exercise it, and in this case there is no danger of producing concussion of the brain, or derangement of the viscera, which are not uncommonly the result of high and violent tossing. A child three years of age experienced a slight concussion of the brain, which was produced by the nurse riding it violently on a chamber horse. When old enough to sit up, an Infant should always be held by the clothes, rather than by the body, and the limbs should be left as free from restraint as possible.

In a very few days after birth, an Infant shows pleasure when it is talked to, and noticed. This may be done as it lies in its cot, or basket, by the side of its nurse. It should be talked to, and amused, whenever it is awake in the day, more particularly in the afternoon and evening; as the encouraging exertion at that time does something towards securing a long sleep during the night. This is in every way to be desired, as contributing greatly to the repose of the mother, and giving the digestive organs of the Infant time to rest.

Early attention should be paid to forming habits of cleanliness. Wet napkins irritate the skin, beside giving an uncomfortable sensation of cold. If a child is early accustomed to be properly held

out at regular times, it will soon make its wants known; even in sleep it will rouse about, and sometimes cry, without opening its eyes, until it is attended to, and the annoyance removed. The child should be washed with a sponge and warm water whenever it has wetted itself; this will not disturb it, and by this means the skin is saved from much irritation. No application of powder, &c. after washing, is necessary to a healthy child who is properly washed and dried.

The comfort and welfare of both Mother and child will be increased by training an Infant to take its food at stated intervals. It should not at first be allowed to suck oftener than once in three hours, during the day. In the night the intervals should be longer, and the child ought never to be put to the breast because it has been accidentally disturbed by other wants, but should be quietly laid down again as soon as the necessary operations are completed. The intervals between the meals should be gradually extended, and a meal in four hours will be generally found quite as much as a child of two months old can bear without creating an uneasy sense of fulness. Infants cry much more from repletion than from hunger—In the first case the cry is generally loud and distressing, and there is an appearance of uneasiness, and indication of pain—In the latter case it is rather a little begging noise, which

seems inclined to cease the moment the child is aware that its request is about to be granted. Infants soon learn at what period to expect their food, and rarely ask for it till the proper time arrives, if they have been trained to regular habits in this respect. It is well to lay an Infant down soon after it has sucked; it is then generally in a state of complete satisfaction, and the progress of digestion is facilitated, and goes on more perfectly if the child be for a short time at rest.

Great oppression from wind seldom occurs where no improper food is given, and the stomach is not allowed to be over-loaded even with the natural food. If laid on the stomach or gently raised forward against the nurse's hand, it easily expels the wind in a few minutes. In those cases where Mothers neither suckle their children themselves, nor employ wet nurses, the food should be rendered as much as possible like the Mother's milk, and should also be administered in the same manner. The sucking bottle with a teat made of double parchment stitched so close as to prevent the milk passing too quickly, is by far the best mode of feeding, and the best food perhaps that has yet been used, for the first week or two, *at least*, may be that composed of one part of fresh cream, to four, five, or six parts of warm water, according to the richness of the cream. Even from this thin and delicate aliment inconvenience

will arise from giving too much at a time. The author has often observed nurses move the teat of the bottle about in the mouth of the child in order to rouse it to suck a little more, when its languid action showed that its wants were already satisfied.

This food may be gradually exchanged for plain milk, which should be boiled in the morning, and the scum that rises, carefully removed when it is cold. The milk should not be again subjected to the action of the fire, but when wanted, should be immersed in a bason of hot water till it has acquired the heat of new milk. The advantage of cream over milk in the earliest and tenderest period of an Infant's existence, arises from its being nearly destitute of the coagulum or curd, which an Infant at first has seldom power to digest. The mother's milk at first consists mostly of cream and water.

A medical practitioner of high reputation in Suffolk, stipulates with his lying-in patients, that if the Infant *must* be fed, it shall have nothing but cream and water, as he has invariably found *that* the best substitute when the mother's milk is not to be had. The boiled milk, as stated above, is found very generally to agree with children whose mothers can only suckle them in part, or are obliged to wean them early. Experience does not confirm the old opinion that the two milks will not agree together.

A moderate sized tea-cup-full of milk is as much as should be given for a meal to a child of five or six months old. A nurse said to a remarkably stout healthy boy who was partially fed in this manner, and whose treatment has been very much as recommended in these pages, "I can't think what makes you so strong Sir! I am sure it is not what you eat, for you take little or nothing." No, she might have been answered—but it is what he does NOT eat—there has been no indigestion—no oppression from an overloaded stomach—no physic to wear, and torment him—no overstraining of the intestines, to occasion weakness and a craving appetite, but the grand work of digestion has gone on undisturbed, upon just that quantity of food only which was necessary to produce health and vigour.

It is of very great importance that all the food of an Infant should be administered by suction. The quantity of saliva which is mixed with the food, by the pressure of the glands which secrete it for this purpose, is very considerable, and essentially requisite to its proper digestion, and it is by suction alone that the food can be introduced into the stomach by sufficiently small and slow degrees.

Pouring the food down the throat by means of a boat or spoon is a most unnatural and injurious operation. Some persons have objected to the

sucking bottle under the strange idea that *wind* is sucked from it. There is great reason to doubt if wind *can* be taken into the stomach by the mouth; wind is disengaged *in the stomach* during the process of digestion, and in much greater quantities during a state of indigestion.

It is a serious error to suppose that an Infant derives nourishment in proportion to the quantity of nutritious matter that may be forced into its stomach. The digestive organs which are inconceivably delicate at first, can only act upon a small portion of the quantity of food usually given: all the rest forms a load, from which no nourishment can be derived, but which will greatly impede the free operations of the vessels upon that portion which they are adapted to receive.

Dr. Clarke in his commentary upon the diseases of children, says, "The practice of giving solid food to a toothless child is not less absurd than to expect corn to be ground where there is no apparatus for grinding it. The power of digestion in Infants is very weak, and the food designed for them, in the earliest period of existence by the Author of Nature contains but a very minute quantity of nutritious matter, diffused through a large quantity of water, yet quite sufficient for all the purposes of life. It is taken very slowly into the stomach, being procured by the act of sucking, in which a great quantity of saliva is

secreted, and swallowed with it. Nothing can be more contrary to this, than to stuff a child's mouth and stomach with solid, perhaps animal food, or even to pour down its throat with a spoon, milk and bread, or any other solid matter, without sucking, mastication, or the secretion of saliva."

It may be generally observed that children properly fed suffer comparatively little in cutting their teeth. Liquid food alone should be given, and that only by suction, for the first eight months. The change to more substantial food should be very gradually made.

During the first week, quiet is so very important, that it is perhaps better to dress the child only once in the twenty-four hours; taking care however to wash the lower part of the body thoroughly with warm water whenever the bowels have been moved. After this time the dressing and thorough washing all over the Infant should be regularly performed every morning and evening. The nurse should be particularly careful to wash the ears and all the little folds of the skin thoroughly.

The open air is the best sedative for Infants, and they can hardly have too much of it, when the weather is dry, and the thermometer not below 60°; but no risks should be run under the idea of hardening the child by exposure to cold.

Severe and often fatal inflammation on the chest frequently results from this attempt.

Though beyond the limit of the observations intended by the author of these pages, it appears desirable to notice the usual modes of lifting children who are old enough to sit up. An Infant should never be lifted by the arms; but the waist of the child should be held by both the hands of the nurse, low enough to avoid pushing up the shoulders. When a baby holds out its hands for assistance to draw itself up into a perpendicular position, the nurse should put her thumbs into its hands, while the fingers embrace its wrists; by this means the possibility of spraining or dislocating the wrist is avoided, and the child has a firm and secure hold.

An *old* woman is certainly not the most desirable attendant for an Infant. She wants that quickness of sight, and free motion of limb which are of some importance to the easy performance of her duties; she is also deficient in that vivacity, and play of features, which contribute to the amusement of the child. A younger woman is more likely to be convinced of the utility of the directions given to her, as she has less determined prejudices and habits to overcome. If a nurse could be made clearly acquainted with the delicacy of the internal structure of an Infant, and of the evils which are likely to ensue from any

accidental derangement, by over-excitement of, or pressure upon the various organs, she would be much better qualified for the office she undertakes.

Every Mother in the higher and middle classes of society has it in her power to possess herself of all requisite knowledge respecting the structure, and proper management of her Infant; and some portion of her time would not be ill employed in communicating to her nurse, in terms adapted to her comprehension, the information she had acquired from sources inaccessible to the nurse. Much might be clearly explained by means of drawings and plates; for by the eye the most untaught can take in ideas which it might be difficult to convey by words.

It must appear to every one, on reflection, no less extraordinary than lamentable, that persons of education and judgment should in a matter of such vast importance as the welfare of their offspring, allow themselves to be managed by people so uneducated as often to be unable to read and write; and whose ignorance is equalled only by their absurd and dangerous prejudices! A very few plain directions would render any intelligent nursery maid, who has had a little experience in the management of older children, far safer than, and superior to the generality of monthly nurses, for the care of newly-born Infants.

The author is persuaded that there are few Mothers who do not wish their Infants to be guarded from needless pain, even when the consequences do not extend beyond the present moment. But when ignorance and inattention may permit the seeds of more lasting evils to be sown in the constitution of mind, and body, it becomes no small dereliction of duty, to be heedless or indifferent upon the subject.

If the voice of nature were more uniformly listened to, our feelings and our reasonings would be better guided, and the paths of duty and real happiness would be freed from many obstructions.

APPENDIX.

FARTHER PRACTICAL HINTS FOR THE GUIDANCE OF THE NURSERY.

EVERY Mother should be fully aware that many and serious injuries are inflicted on young children purely in consequence of ignorance in the persons under whose care they are placed.

In every probable case of accident, a Mother should be familiar with the best method to be pursued, and she should be anxious to communicate to her nurse the information she herself possesses.

Much has been said above on the desirableness of allowing the limbs of an Infant to acquire strength gradually, and by natural efforts, rather than to force them into premature use.

A child should never be put upon its feet, nor assisted in standing. Let it avail itself of all the help it can command from inanimate things. If judiciously left to its own exertions, the child will crawl, and roll in every possible manner long before it attempts to use its feet, and by this

exercise every muscle of its body will be strengthened, and no undue pressure will be placed on any part of the yet tender frame. It will then pull itself up by taking hold of any thing within its grasp; the nurse's attention at that time should be solely directed to the care of removing from its reach unsteady pieces of furniture, or placing it out of the possibility of bringing the fire-irons, or other heavy weights upon itself, or striking itself against sharp corners; but she should not touch the child unless it were absolutely needful to do so, in order to remove it from danger. If the child never receive assistance, it will rely wholly upon itself, and its prudence will generally keep pace with its powers. To snatch a child hastily from an object upon which it is intent, injures it both in its temper, and in its habits of observation. Remove as far as possible every thing really dangerous, and then leave the child to learn by its own experience. If left to itself, a child will not attempt to walk alone for some time after it has acquired the power to raise itself by the assistance of a chair, &c. though it will take a few steps while its arms or hands sustain some part of its weight upon the chair. Its legs are not prepared to carry it on in safety until it has found power to get upon its feet, by raising itself from the ground without assistance from any thing; it will then place itself erect, and after balancing its

body with evident care and satisfaction for a short time, will resume its seat without the least injury.

It should be observed that children who are allowed to teach themselves to walk, never fall forward upon their foreheads, unless tripped up; but either suddenly seat themselves, or if they balance forwards, which rarely happens, sustain themselves upon their hands. Thus the bumps and bruises, so common on the heads of injudiciously assisted children, are avoided.

After the great feat of standing up without help has been performed a few times, the power of walking is acquired. This is at first conducted with much care and circumspection: the legs sustain the body firmly, and the arms are extended to preserve the balance,—in all these natural exertions the child exhibits positive pleasure. It improves from day to day, and it may not be amiss to repeat that there is this striking difference between the natural and the artificial walker (if the terms may be so applied,) that the pupil of nature who at this period never attempts to run, seats itself at the end of its course, with some violence occasionally, but the part which receives the blow is but little susceptible of injury; while the child who has been induced to walk by the usual practice of enticing it to run from one person to another who in turns catch it as its little strength

is expended, will, if *not* so caught, fall with considerable force upon its forehead, having no power to save itself. The injury sustained by the spine and legs from the premature attempts to make a child go alone, before the bones have acquired firmness to support the weight of the body, is often long and severely felt. Let mothers judge then under which system their little ones are likely to be most safe and happy.

Fracture of the collar bone is sometimes the consequence of lifting a child suddenly by one arm; of this the author has witnessed several instances. Careless nurses often jump children up or down a step, or over a puddle in this manner. A child of seven months old moved unexpectedly in the nurse's lap, when her attention was directed to some other object, and in her fear lest it should fall, she caught up its arm, and broke the collar bone. Danger is also incurred of breaking or dislocating the arm by this very objectionable mode of handling a child.

In taking a child by the hands, either for the purpose of jumping, or for the favorite diversion of riding on the foot, or for any other purpose in which the weight of the child may be sustained by the hands, the thumbs of the person should be placed in the hands of the child, which enables the fingers to grasp the wrist firmly, and also gives the child a good hold. By this method all

danger of dislocating or straining the wrist is voided, and of which there is otherwise some risk. Though this observation has been made above, it is repeated as being equally applicable to children of more advanced age.

It is at once the duty and the interest of every mother to guard, as far as possible against accidents. No fire, no window, no staircase, to which a child may obtain access, should be unprotected, and a candle should never be within its reach. But with every precaution, accidents do sometimes occur.

A little boy when fourteen months old, was seated in his chair by the nursery breakfast table; the nurse took a pot of boiling cocoa off the fire, and as she began to pour it out, the handle snapped, and the contents of the pot were thrown over the head, neck, and arm of the child. She stripped off its clothes instantly, and, fortunately, without the removal of the skin from the arm. Under the direction of the Mother, every part affected was immediately bathed with pure spirits of wine, which was squeezed over the scald from a small sponge or rag, while the evaporation was hastened by the constant blowing of a large pair of bellows. In less than two hours the child showed no symptoms of pain, unless one or other of the numerous wounds had been inadvertently permitted to become dry; in that case the fresh application of the

spirits gave pain—the operation was continued without a moment's intermission for rather more than four hours, by which time the child was perfectly unconcerned about the matter, and was wishing for his customary nap—he was put to bed—and slices of sponge were placed behind the ear and under the arm, as in those parts the skin was detached though not broken, and the sponges were carefully kept wet with the spirits while he slept. The skin on the neck was broken, but no harm resulted from the use of the spirits, and scarcely a scar remained even in that part. Not the slightest mark of injury was discoverable in any other place in the course of a few weeks. The quantity of spirits used was more than three pints.

The child waked in health and comfort, and in the afternoon played about as usual, notwithstanding that his life had been considered in great danger in the morning from the extent of the injury about the head.

The instant, and long-continued application of cold water is a safe and efficacious remedy, which is within the reach of every one, but the application must be continued for full three hours, and should be poured, rather than dabbed upon the injured part. It should at all events be applied until good advice can be procured. If the part affected be covered by a stocking or any tight

article of dress, no attempt should be made to remove the covering, as it is scarcely possible to do so without tearing off the skin.

Convulsions not uncommonly occur even in healthy children, and their appearance is so alarming, that it is well for every mother and nurse to be prepared to administer immediate relief, should medical assistance be unattainable at the moment. An attentive Mother will generally know whether the fits are most likely to be occasioned by the "irritation of teething, or a disordered state of the bowels, very frequently both causes may be surmised.

An injection should be immediately administered if there is any tightness of the stomach, or disorder in the bowels, the child should be placed in a warm bath of 96 degrees, up to its shoulders, and the head should be spunged with cold water. If there is any chance of affection from the teeth, the gums should be lanced; and if relief is not then obtained, leeches must be applied to the head. But in this case it is better to have recourse to medical advice if possible.

Much has been written by the late Dr. Beddoes, and others, on the subject of proper toys and playthings for young children, but apparently with little effect. Persons are too apt to purchase for the amusement of their children, those toys which they themselves admire, for the taste of

their decorations, the ingenuity of their construction, or their correct resemblance to larger objects.

To all these advantages a young child is insensible. It likes large bodies which it finds some difficulty in lugging about, and will prefer the limbless, eyeless trunk of an old wooden doll, to the most elegantly dressed *little* lady that the toyshop can furnish. Pieces of wood of various shapes afford much amusement, and if one has a hole in it large enough to admit a finger, or a stick, being thrust through, it is a great treasure. A strong basket, and a wooden cart to load and unload are very desirable toys.

As natural objects become familiar, pictures of them are very interesting, but these pictures should be secured from injury by being pasted upon linen. Toys made of tin, are, from their sharp edges, very objectionable, and the common painted toys may be seriously injurious if put into the mouth.

Every possible care should be taken to guard the mind of a child from the influence of terror, No threats, and no amusements should be allowed, that could excite it. Incalculable have been the sufferings of children from the misconduct of nurses in this respect.

To train the mind to habits of obedience and feelings of kindness must be the desire of every

Mother who is deserving of the name. In order to effect this, no severity or impatience should be shown towards the child. As far as possible it should follow its own little wishes, without restraint, or reproof; but where the comfort of others, or its own safety requires interference with its will, firmness should be shown, though exercised with kindness; and no hesitation should appear in taking away a thing of which it is necessary to say "You should not have that." Very seldom is this kind of authority resisted if it has been adopted early. If it be desirable to foster the kind and sympathetic affections, the child must be accustomed to kindness and sympathy; and the persons about it must be free from every appearance of brutality. The eye of a child should never be allowed to witness a scene of cruelty. If early accustomed to the sight of the infliction of suffering, no effort in its after-education can be expected wholly to remove the hardness of heart which familiarity with suffering at an age too early to comprehend its nature, has occasioned.

It is then of the greatest importance to be well assured of the good dispositions of those to whom little children are intrusted, and the ever watchful eye of the judicious mother is the best and surest safeguard for the mental and bodily health of her offspring.







