

Health Department.

BY JNO. STAINBACK WILSON, M. D.

DIET AND DRINKS OF NURSING WOMEN.—The diet and drinks of mothers and wet-nurses are matters of the very first importance: because errors in these particulars must ultimately impair the health of the mother or nurse, resulting in those diseases and physical disabilities of which we have before spoken; and even when there is no immediate and manifest symptom of disease in the nurse, it is a well-known fact that certain articles of food and drink, when taken by nurses, will cause colic and other disagreeable effects in a child at the breast.

The diet of nurses should consist of wholesome, nutritious food, plainly cooked, and eaten in moderate quantity. To be a little more specific—it should be composed mainly of nourishing animal soups, milk, rice, bread, ripe fruits, boiled or baked mutton and beef, &c., to the exclusion of all highly seasoned dishes, rich gravies, fat pork, salt bacon, pastries, acid and unripe fruits, pickles, and such like.

Mothers and wet-nurses are very much given to indulgence in the free use of meat, and the strongest kind of food, because, as they say, "they have to eat for two." Hence, nurses who have, as a general rule, never enjoyed the luxuries of life in too great abundance, are very apt to take advantage of this idea, and to make it a license for the gratification of a gluttonous appetite, and for a troublesome fastidiousness with regard to their diet. Such a course, either on the part of mothers or nurses, is highly injurious to their own health, and destructive in its effects on the infant. It is only the food that is digested and taken up into the blood that goes to nourish the nurse or the child; and all that is not digested and taken into the circulation must oppress the stomach, causing colic, diarrhoea, headache, and general derangement of health, with consequent impairment of the secretion of milk, either in quantity or quality, and oftener than otherwise in both. Once, or at most twice a day, is often enough for any woman who does not lead quite an active life, to take meat; and this, together with everything else, should be eaten in moderate quantity—just enough to satisfy a natural, reasonable, healthful appetite—such an appetite as nature will give to all nursery women who live aright, and who are guided by the plain teachings of physiology and common sense, instead of the absurd notion of "eating for two," and "the more we eat, the fatter we get," etc. etc.

As a general rule, the vegetables should be the principal diet of nursery women, as of all others who do not take active exercise. But there are some vegetables, such as potatoes, turnips, peas, &c., that give rise to flatulency in nurses and children, and when it is found from experience (our only safe guide in such things) that such is the case, all articles of diet so offending should be left off.

The only drinks of nursing women should be water, pure simple water; chocolate, if it agrees; hot-water tea; and milk, which may be regarded both as food and drink. The habit of resorting to tea, coffee, wines, cordials, and various stimulating drinks, under the mistaken notion that they increase the milk and impart strength, is most pernicious, and is ruinous to the health of nurse and child. Stimulants can never give or increase strength; and though some of them may cause a temporary increase in the milk and other secretions,

the excitement caused by them is unhealthful, the effects are transient and unnatural, and the consequences of their use—except in some cases of disease—are evil, evil only, and that continually.

We could say much more on this subject, and more particularly on the apparent necessity for tea and coffee, which seems to exist with some who have long indulged in these drinks; but for further information, we must refer to our "Woman's Home Book of Health," which we trust will prove highly useful to those for whom it is intended.

DRUGGING NURSING WOMEN.—Of the pernicious effects of drugs in excess, and particularly of opiates, when administered directly to infants, we have already spoken. The effects of drugs when taken through the nurse's milk are perhaps no less disastrous; and certain it is that such effects are almost wholly unknown to, or disregarded by, mothers. Many, perhaps most drugs, pass unchanged into the blood, and from the blood through the various glands out of the body. In this way, opiates, purgatives, stimulants, and almost every medicine may pass through the milk gland, producing all the specific effects on the child that would ensue from pouring them into his mouth from a spoon.

The inference is plain and obvious—mothers and nurses should use drugs very sparingly, and as a general rule only by the advice of a physician. Much the best, and safest plan is to so live as to render drugging unnecessary: better throw physic to the dogs than to be continually saturating your blood with it, and dosing your infant through your milk, when you could get along without it, by obedience to the laws of health, and when it is not only useless, but *kill*ing to your babe.

AIR, EXERCISE, ETC. OF NURSING WOMEN.—Pure air and exercise are absolutely essential for nurses. Without these, no function of the body can be properly performed—the blood will become corrupt—the general health will become deranged—the vital processes will be suspended, or improperly carried on, and every secretion be impaired. Without exercise to re-invigorate the body, and drive the blood through the sluggish vessels, these will become clogged up with gross and irritating impurities; and without the vitalizing, vivifying, and purifying effects of free air, the blandest and most wholesome of fluids, such as milk itself, will be converted into an acrid disease, generating poison. In view of these facts, mothers should exercise, and be much in the open air themselves; or, if they have a wet-nurse, they should see to it that she does not become too fat and lazy, which she is very likely to do, if she is employed by a wealthy family, and has nothing to do but to attend to her little charge. At the same time, mothers and nurses should avoid over-heating, and excessive worrying:—the exercise should be moderate, reasonable, healthful, and not exhausting, depressing, and over-fatiguing. In short, all nursing women should, above all others, live naturally, physiologically, and *common sensely*, disregarding alike the rebellious movements of a misguided appetite, the fanciful whims of the ignorant, the baseless traditions of grandmothers, and many of the time-honored customs of the nursery-room. If nursing women would rear healthy, sweet-tempered children, they must be healthy and sweet-tempered themselves; and to be thus, requires obedience to the laws of health, not only in eating, and drinking, and moral influences, and all things mentioned in this article on Nursing Women; but also in sleeping, in cleanliness,

in temperature, in the regulation of the excretions, and in everything else that is pure, healthful, and of "good report." One of the great secrets of *babysism* is a healthy nurse; and *the great secret of health is correct living.* This is worth more to mothers, to the rising generation, to all womanhood, and "the rest of mankind," than an army of physicking doctors, or a ship-load of drugs.

Columbus, Ga.

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