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THE HYGIENE OF PREGNANCY,

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Perhaps, of all the various avenues of thought through which a physician's mind must travel, there is no one subject of such vast importance as is the theme upon which I am about to speak. Perhaps, also, there is no one topic to which, as a rule, so little attention is given by the busy general practitioner. Let us reflect a moment upon its great significance, and then judge if in any other field of work is there placed in mortal care a power so nearly allied to Omnipotency itself as in the teaching of how to best develop a human body as well as the immortal mind and soul ordained to dwell in that same body, ere the "breath of life" as a distinct and separate being is breathed into its nostrils.

How many of us remember, when a frail little woman presents herself to us for advice as to how she may free herself from those distressing pains in the back and hips, or from the wretched nausea which so often renders life a burden during the early months of pregnancy, how many of us, I repeat, remember that it is our positive duty to not only try to subdue aches and nausea, but to explain to her the necessity of such a course, and then to insist upon the expectant mother placing herself under such strict hygienic conditions mentally, morally and physically as will best prepare her for the sacred responsibilities of maternity?

Do we try to instil into that woman's mind the idea that God has placed a seal of accountability upon her, and

given into her charge His own power of development, to be used wisely or unwisely as she may will? Do we teach her if she be fretful and irritable during those two hundred and eighty days, that the little life soon to be visible in her home will, in all probability, be a cross, worrisome baby, needing a tired mother's attention day and night?

On the other hand, do we tell her that if a constant effort is made to be cheerful and good natured, and not to allow worries of any kind to cause great anxiety during those months of development, the coming little one will be of a happy and contented disposition, filling the house with sunlight and causing many a whispered prayer of thankfulness for its cheering presence?

Now please do not think I mean by this statement that a woman's disposition while pregnant will be exemplified by the child's life throughout, for, of course, hereditary predispositions from either parent, in mind or body, may eventually show themselves as the infant changes from child to youth and youth to maturity.

I am now speaking only of babyhood, and once again I affirm, from a study of over a thousand cases in my own practice, that just as is the mother's disposition during her period of pregnancy, so will be the disposition of the child during its helpless and dependent months.

However, it is not my intention in a ten minutes' talk to enlarge upon the mental and moral hygiene of pregnancy, for upon these subjects might volumes be written, and without exhausting them. My purpose is to simply formulate a few general principles of physical hygiene to be observed by a pregnant woman during the formation period.

These rules I find, from a careful examination of almost 1,300 cases, are, at best, both crude and incomplete, and, in some of the most promising instances, have proven futile and of no

good results, but when every obstetrician in the land fully realizes the importance of securing for each and every pregnant woman under his or her care a certain course of preparation, perhaps experiment and experience may procure for us a formula which will never fail to rid the lying-in period of its torture, and make the pregnant state considered God's greatest blessing to womankind.

In the preparation of the little lecture given to women who apply to me for advice, or who come to engage my services, I tried to keep in mind the one unswerving characteristic of muscle-tissue, viz.: its irritability. The muscles are the main actors in labor, whether uterine or abdominal, and therefore to train them and keep them in a perfectly healthy condition so as to make them able to do their work easily and properly, places their care paramount to all else.

The irritability of a muscle depends—

1st. Upon the adequacy of its blood supply; the better the supply of new material and the more quickly the effete material is removed, the more work a muscle can do without becoming exhausted.

2d. Upon activity, accompanied by an increased blood supply and perfect nutrition.

From these known peculiarities of muscle tissue I have formulated four headings to a talk given to each of my pregnant patients:

- First—Clothing;
- Second—Food;
- Third—Exercise, and
- Fourth—Muscle toilet.

First, as to clothing. From the moment a pregnant woman is conscious of her condition, the loosest fitting and most comfortable garments should be worn, and all tight clothing and corsets abandoned. To a woman accustomed to a corset, its absence will be quite a trial, but a stout muslin jacket will give the needed waist-support without the objectionable stays and

whalebones. All heavy skirts should be supported by shoulder-straps, so as to allow entire freedom of motion to the abdominal muscles. No uncomfortable clothing should be worn. Even the feet and hair should be dressed with the one idea of comfort, no matter if fashion does call for high-heeled shoes or plenty of hair-pins, heavy combs or a chignon.

Second—Food. From the chemical constituents of the different human tissues a comparatively correct dietary for the formative period may be compiled. A carefully assorted mixed diet, supplying to all the tissues the most necessary food is, of course, the best, but an avoidance of great quantities of animal food and, in fact, of all the foods which contain phosphates and carbonates will be found beneficial for one especial reason.

The bones owe to these earthly salts their exceeding hardness, and if these substances be partaken of as little as possible, does it not stand to reason that the hard, unyielding condition of the presenting head during labor would be absent, and labor itself robbed of one of its most trying features? At the Pan-American Congress held some years ago in Washington, Mr. A. J. Sannier, of Chicago, read a paper on Aids to Easy Parturition, in which he says:

"Pregnancy having taken place, attention should be given to diet. The child's food must be of what the mother partook. Therefore, the condition of the child's bones could be controlled by feeding as easily as a person could be fattened or reduced in adipose tissue by regulating the diet. The object was to avoid too great development of the bony system, which would interfere with the moulding of the head and easy passage of the child through the parturient canal. Those foods containing earthy salts in large proportion should be avoided—oat-meal, Graham bread, other cereals, and all things containing large quantities of earthy phosphates; use white bread, potatoes, most kinds of vegeta-

bles, and especially fruits. The latter would keep the bowels open and cause solution of the earthy salts in other articles, so they could be carried off by the kidneys."

The organic acids in fruit of all kinds seem especially grateful to a pregnant woman's stomach, and many a case of "morning sickness" has been relieved entirely by a breakfast of fruit. In any state, whether raw, dried, canned or cooked, fruit seems to give fine results, though I cannot fully explain physiologically, why. I do not know whether or not the fruit had anything to do with one of the easiest labors at which I ever officiated, but the lady herself claimed the ease of the labor to have been produced entirely by her having eaten twenty-seven bananas during the day on which she was confined.

Third—Exercise. By this is meant exercise—1st, for the sake of muscular movement; 2d, for supplying the very necessary blood food (the purest obtainable oxygen) to the lungs; 3d, as a means for distracting the mind from the daily routine of home duties and domestic worries, and 4th, as the foetal blood is, of course, aerated by the oxygen taken into the mother's respiratory organs, exercise in the open air procures richer blood for the foetal circulation.

Thus we know by the natural process of breathing the purer outside atmosphere for a certain length of time each day, the pulmonary tract may be cleaned out and replenished with a fair supply of fuel for another twenty-four hours of indoor life. It is said that eighteen full respirations will cause the lung reservoir to be fully exhausted and replenished, so that exercise for an hour or two out of doors with an occasional full inspiration ought to furnish oxygen enough to purify the entire breathing space for one day at least. This daily oxygenating process also has a beneficial effect upon the muscular organism of the parent, for aside from the benefit derived by the movements of the lower limbs, it fur-

nishes purer blood nourishment to the muscle tissues, and aids them in keeping healthy and contractile.

Fourth, muscle toilet. From the first two months of pregnancy the muscles of the abdomen, thighs and lumbar region should be made special objects of care by daily bathings and massage, in order to make them pliable, strong and easily contracted. Until the sixth or seventh month it is sufficient to order simple nightly sponging all over the abdomen, the lower portions of the back, and the upper part of thighs, to be followed by enough friction with a coarse towel to stimulate the nerve terminals of the skin and to open up the pores. This, in turn, should be followed by a fifteen or twenty-minute massage of the same sets of muscles, using sweet-oil or coconut oil, or, in poor families, simply clean lard as an inunction.

During the last six or eight weeks, instead of the nightly spongings, sitz baths should be ordered—these followed by the same friction and oil-massage treatment. This plan of procedure, if carefully carried out, cannot fail to fortify and improve every one of the muscles brought into action during parturition, rendering them pliable and able to work harmoniously together with immense outside force while aiding the uterine contractions within. In closing up my very imperfect and disjointed talk upon this subject, I cannot resist another short reference to the condition of mind—or mental hygiene—positively necessary to produce the most satisfactory results in combination with these physical hygienic rules.

According to Webster, Hygiene is "that department of medical science which treats of the preservation of health," hence the mental hygiene of pregnancy must mean all those conditions which tend to the preservation of a clean, healthy state of the mother's mind during those two hundred and eighty days of foetal development. Of course we, as physicians, cannot make

over a household wherein is a pregnant female, but, in many cases, a word of advice from our lips will be carefully studied and faithfully followed, and thus a cloudy home atmosphere be cleared up amazingly.

The sunshine of a pleasant, sympathetic face and voice will flood a friend's mind with warm, grateful light, and prove to be a marvelous influence towards calming all distracting thoughts and worries.

Let us impress upon all inmates of such a household the importance of assisting the prospective mother in all her efforts to attain and retain an uninterrupted, peaceful temperament. If we see to this, I am sure the result will astonish us. Thus, and thus only, will the newly created mind of the infant come into the world unhampered and unblasted by bad impressions produced—latent, they may be, but nevertheless produced—in utero.

Perhaps I am an enthusiast, or, in common parlance, a full-fledged crank, upon the topic of my paper, but I am fully convinced that were even these crude and imperfect suggestions carried out to the letter in every case put under our care, thus making us teach and watch wives and daughters during these important times of their lives, and again insist upon the granddaughters following the same routine, by the time the third, fourth or fifth generation will have arrived, pregnancy and child-birth will be freed from agonizing pain, and the pregnant state be considered, instead of a curse, a distinct mark of Divine favor.

Perhaps my religious views may be deemed heretical and at variance with the noble story of Eve in the Garden of Eden, but we are taught to judge by the love dwelling in our own hearts toward our mortal daughters, of the greater and fuller love of the immortal Divine Being for us, and therefore I cannot believe that the great loving, pitying heart of our Heavenly Father would condemn His children forever to suffer the awful agony of travail without some merciful provision having been made by which all pain may be eliminated from the parturient chamber, and also by which may be left within, the shapely, healthy body of the new-comer a shapely, healthy mind—fit abode for the pure white and newly stamped with God's own perfect image.