

nursery superstitions like other delusions die hard. Some obstetricians have shown that with the exception of "scrofulous" and other inherited diseases, with which the child is born, improper feeding is the most prolific source of disease in early infancy. The earlier weeks of life is a period in which the child's digestion is most likely to be tampered with. A second period is when the irritation arising from the beginning of dentition necessitates the addition of new articles of diet. And again at the time of weaning there is usually a sudden and entire change in the character of the food. Breast fed infants are generally all right. Milk from that source is a precious substance which the child swallows straight from the gland pure and uncontaminated by germs. Children usually thrive when fed on a sufficient supply of breast milk. But a great many mothers are unable to nurse their babies; consequently a large number have to be brought up by other means. The great problem, then, is to imitate the natural food of which the child has been deprived. The more closely this can be done the better the prospect of rearing the infant with success.

It is during the earliest period of a child's existence that the function of digestion is being established and in a state of unstable equilibrium, and following the rule of functional establishment, the stomach is in its most active period of growth. Hence the most careful regulation of the bulk of the food given is needed to correspond to this activity, in order that we should not weaken the digestive function by overtaxing its capacity and yet provide the proper materials for nutrition. Thus we aim to avoid the dyspepsia of the later periods of infancy and childhood, the seeds of which are too often sown in this early transitional period.

We have here to deal with two questions, viz., infantile digestion and infantile development. At the same time we should recognize the fact that the problem of artificial feeding is not a simple factor—what food we shall give to the infant—but is a combination of factors of which the kind of food is only one. And all these factors, from which we deduce the general problem for the average infant and the special problem for the individual, must approach as closely as possible to the analogous factors which nature freely presents to us for investigation—that is, we must follow nature as closely as possible. Our scientific knowledge and ingenuity have not yet enabled us to imitate nature exactly, and we have not, therefore, yet obtained an ideal method of artificial feeding, and we must be especially careful not to be led astray by the fictitiously brilliant results which are reported from time to time in favor of certain foods.