

THE HYGIENE OF CHILDBEARING

ture. When it is plentiful, and especially when colored, it is a positive sign of labor. But it is sometimes slight, and even absent altogether in true labor, so it cannot always be depended upon as a diagnostic sign.

A full dose of some opiate such as a teaspoonful of paregoric, will stop false pains inside of forty minutes, while it will not affect true labor pains. This is a reliable means of diagnosis but should only be used under the physician's advice.

TRUE LABOR

In true labor the contractions of the womb which are commonly called "pains," grow more frequent and more powerful as time goes on. They may come only every half hour at first, but when labor has fully set in five minutes is a fair average, although there is great variation in different cases. The object of these contractions is, first, to open the womb and, second, to expel the child. We divide labor into three stages. The first is called the stage of dilatation, and ends when the mouth of the womb is fully open so that the head of the infant can pass. This stage may last thirty-six hours or it may be over in an hour. Ten hours is a fair average.

The second stage is called the stage of expulsion, and ends when the child is completely born. It may last five minutes, or five hours. A fair average is two hours. If it lasts longer than two hours, assistance should be given in most cases.

The third stage is the expulsion of the afterbirth