

BABIES AND SLEEP.

From *The Nursing Mirror*.

The lecture on "Rest and Sleep—The Nervous Child," given by Dr. Victoria Bennett on Thursday evening, March 13, at Carnegie House, to crèche nurses and others, was one of an advanced course on Infant care, and was marked by sound wisdom and common sense.

Commenting first on the large amount of sleep required by the newly-born infant, Dr. Bennett considered 16 or 18 hours by no means too much from birth until the time that the 10 o'clock night-feed could be omitted. Then the child should have 12 hours' continuous sleep, with two hours at least during the day. This should be continued well up to the "toddler" stage and as far beyond as possible, until the child has at least reached five years of age. It is often the fault of the mother or the nurse if a good habit of sleeping is not formed from the beginning. The baby should be accustomed to go to bed to *sleep*, not to cry, or, if wakeful, to lie still and rest. It is very important not to break the rule of a baby's life, for the sleeping habits formed then are the foundation for the whole life, and, if wrong, are most difficult to break. The child should never be taken up to show to friends, or for other inadequate reasons.

PREPARING FOR SLEEP.

The quality of sleep obtained also matters very much. To be really adequate and refreshing the child should be in a reasonably quiet room, in which fresh air circulates. The cot should not stand in a "blind corner," nor in a draught. A right temperature—about 60 deg. F.—must be maintained, and the bedclothes should be light and warm, so that the baby is neither too hot nor too cold. A little healthy fatigue conduces to slumber, and the child should be allowed to exercise his limbs freely before bedtime, to expand his lungs, and so get healthily tired. All hindrances to sleep should be removed, and any undue excitement or known source of irritation avoided. A common cause of infantile sleeplessness is irritation of any kind, often arising from an irritable condition of the skin, caused by roughness of clothing or a wet napkin; to adenoids; nasal catarrh; indigestion and constipation; or in boys it may be due to a tight foreskin, calling for circumcision; sometimes, in slightly older children, to fear of the dark through some fright. If a baby gets sleepless nights and restless days it leads to illness, and a "vicious circle" is set up, which will have to be broken before the habit of normal sleep returns. How can this be done? Warm sponging will often induce sleep, or a tepid bath in hot weather will soothe a feverish, restless child. The diet usually needs revision to avoid indigestion. Sleeping draughts may only be given by a doctor's orders and for a very short time. If not properly treated a sleepless baby may, and probably will, develop later into a bad-tempered, "nervy" adult, unable to bear the stress of life, subject to hysteria or attacks of "nervous breakdown." It is very important that the child should be taught to obey. Properly managed from birth, he will do so, particularly if he is never expected to be disobedient.