

following decade the number is only 21,367; in other words, is merely 0.21 per cent. annually.

What more do these figures tell us? Why, that despite all our improved medical knowledge, all our boasted advance in matters of sanitation and hygiene, all our increased education, we, as a nation, lose 232,922, or nearly one quarter of every million children born to us, during the first five years of their life; and that more than half this loss occurs during the first year, when the child is in its mother's arms, and consequently largely confined to the ill-ventilated house. The mere mention of this fact carries us irresistibly back in thought to that Dublin hospital spoken of by G. H. Lewes, and makes us wonder what proportion of this awful infanticide (for it is little better) is the result of this national neglect of the quality of the air in our dwellings. As soon as it can toddle, the child begins to join its fellows in the street, tumbles about in the gutter, plays gleefully with puddles, runs constant danger of getting run over by passing vehicles, is a dirty, ragged, ill-fed, disgusting object to every onlooker, but all these dangers to its existence are insignificant compared with those threatened by the insanitary condition of the home. At five years of age, the School Board official begins to interfere, and hauls off our budding Briton to the woes of A B C and other similar terrors, but it is only now that our neophyte stands a respectable chance of attaining man or woman's estate, for in the school some kind of attention is paid to hygiene, and a great portion of the rest of the time is spent in shrieking ecstasy *in the open*.

But why these 23 per cent. of premature graves? Why so much useless suffering, agony, and anxiety for the mothers of our land? What need for all their torrents of tears, shed while these flowers of humanity are fading before their eyes and their bodies are being carried to the tomb? Wherefore this tremendous waste of money, for bringing children into the world means outlay, burying them entails expense, and tending them while ill involves paying some medical man and his acolyte, the chemist. Sixty years ago, that Dublin hospital told us as plainly as if it could speak, that pure fresh air was the life food of babes, and have we heeded? No doubt ventilation is only one factor in the needed remedy, but there was "the handwriting upon the wall," and yet the fearful holocaust continues.

Not to speak without assurance of the facts, the writer visited the editor of *Farm, Field, and Fireside*, and asked him what was the corresponding proportionate loss, whilst young, among horses, cattle, sheep, &c. The answer was as follows:—"In animal life, such loss is insignificant, if you except unnecessary or unforeseen exposure to severe weather. You may safely state that every lamb or

calf, that once puts its four feet upon the ground, eventually sees the dinner table in the shape of lamb or veal, mutton or beef. "But then," he cynically added, "you see, these things involve money in their loss!" The fact that stables, cowsheds, &c., are invariably ventilated, has already been referred to. In these cases nothing is left to chance!

(To be concluded.)

The Midwife.

We are told that the supply of midwives in the country is not equal to the demand, and that many more women must be induced to take up this branch of work. It is, without doubt, a sphere in which there is plenty of useful work to be done, but what are the inducements to undertake it? Mainly, it must be frankly admitted the desire to be of use to humanity, for the work is responsible, arduous, and trying, and a midwife is probably worse paid than any other worker having similar responsibilities.

Do we consider what the life of a midwife involves? If she is single-handed she is tied closely to her post, for she never knows when an urgent call may come. She cannot, therefore, like a nurse, have regular times off duty. Neither can she go to bed with any certainty of a night's rest. The probability, indeed, is that she has just got into her first sleep, when she receives a summons; then, be the night what it may, does it rain, snow, hail, or thunder, a hasty toilet and out she goes into the night, to trudge probably a mile or more, and then to work in a room where a roaring fire and an exhausted atmosphere intensify the feeling of weariness and sleepiness, against which, if the case is likely to be deferred for some time, she must struggle continually.

Then, there is often considerable anxiety as to the patient, for it must be remembered there is no doctor at hand to shoulder all responsibility. The midwife must often decide, and promptly, in cases of considerable doubt, what is the right procedure. Assuming that all is at last satisfactorily over, mother and child left comfortable, and the assurance given that the midwife will call again within six hours, back she goes home for a brief rest, very likely to find that she is wanted in an opposite direction, and the history of the last few hours again repeats itself.

And for her work what pay—for certain it is that the majority of women work because it is incumbent upon them by some means to support themselves, and her earnings are therefore a matter of importance to her? If she is fortunate she may get a fee of 5s., to include her first visit, and a daily one for the subsequent ten days. Such is the pecuniary value of women's labour!

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