

humanity which seems to have looked out on ages of misery from the sad, hollow eyes. Many of them die, setting their mothers free—not to “go and sin no more” but to go and sin again; others drag on a weary, hunted existence, passed from one to another, shunned, uncared-for, belonging to no one. What wonder that they fill our prisons and asylums? The law enjoins on medical practitioners and midwives the most scrupulous care in the preservation of infant life at the time of birth, when it is most easy to let the golden thread slip through the fingers; so there is no escape from the problem that way. And, in view of the numerous cases of child-mortality always appearing in the coroners’ courts, an Act of Parliament dealing with baby farming was passed in 1895, out of which some improved organisations have sprung. But the matter is not efficiently dealt with yet, nor will it be as long as the educated and influential part of the nation refuses to recognise its responsibility with regard to this substratum of population at our very doors.

What is to be done then? Surely the aim of every thoughtful person who looks at the question from the economic point of view alone must be to ensure the rearing of these children in the most healthy, natural, and moral atmosphere possible, to train them and fit them to become good citizens and worthy members of any honourable working community. It is evident that the mothers, the majority of whom are young women employed in shops, factories, and domestic service, cannot keep their babies with them and maintain them by honest work. In a comparatively small number of cases the fathers—under persuasion or compulsion of the law—pay a certain, rarely adequate, sum towards the maintenance of their offspring, but even this does not ensure fit surroundings for the homeless victims of man’s selfishness. Where the child can be brought up as one of the family by

the relatives of either parent, this is undoubtedly the best course to be adopted, but there are many difficulties in the way; either there are no relatives to be found able to support an extra burden, or the mother will not let her relations know of her disgrace, or, for the same reason, she and her infant are cast off and disowned.

The system of baby farming by ignorant and unscrupulous women, who undertake the care of infants solely for remuneration, is a most pernicious one. They either extort as large a sum of money, weekly, as they possibly can from the mother; or they accept a lump sum down



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on the condition of silence and a promise that the parents shall have no further responsibility in connection with the child. Either way it is very certain that the children receive very little benefit from the money paid on their behalf.

Some few years ago the problem of providing for the needs of these helpless waifs appealed very strongly to the hearts of two women, both hospital nurses of wide experience and high position, with the result that, in 1898, a little Home was founded at Hersham in Surrey, to accommodate ten babies. In three years its inmates had quite outgrown this cottage, so the Home was removed to North Finchley. This move, undertaken after much serious considera-

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