

more than half had decayed or badly-developed teeth. However serious the rate of infant mortality, it is not so serious as the condition of those who survive in a condition of malnutrition. This is the chief cause of physical and mental troubles, and the lunatic asylums are filled with its results.

Again, healthy children, if attacked by measles or scarlet fever, usually recover completely. The case is otherwise with children who are the victims of malnutrition. Their power of resistance is lost, and instead of making a good recovery middle ear disease and other sequelæ are common in cases of this class.

The vast proportion of young adults suffering from pulmonary tuberculosis show obvious clinical signs of rickets, which affect and cramp the chest walls. The prevalence of tuberculosis is due to the want of resisting power. If the tubercle bacillus were capable of affecting the healthy adult in the same way in which it affects the subjects of malnutrition, the whole population would soon be destroyed.

Unsuitable food is at the root of all evils of child degeneration; overcrowding, dirt, deficiencies in clothing and boots, all pall before this. The Jews and Irish make a great point of caring for young children, with remarkable results. In a poor neighbourhood in Leeds Dr. Hall examined the children of a school and found that 50 per cent. suffered from rickets. In another, equally poor, where the children were Jews, the percentage of cases of rickets was only 7 per cent. Jewish and Irish mothers as a rule nurse their children. If whole sections of the community, oppressed by poverty and living in unsanitary surroundings, are comparatively free from the incidence of malnutrition, the cause is clearly to be found in defective feeding.

The first great cause is the absence of maternal feeding. The whole efforts of nature are on the side of the unborn child, but with the birth of the infant things are changed. It seems as if the stress of pregnancy in a weak and anæmic mother makes the subsequent task of providing food for the child too much for her. If, after pregnancy, the health of the mother is to be good, it is essential that throughout pregnancy her health must be maintained.

Then it is absolutely essential that the occupation and environment of the mother during the nursing period are consistent with the duties of lactation. Many mothers try to combine the duties of motherhood with outside

work. Not only does irregularity of feeding upset an infant, but it alters the character of the mother's milk. At the end of two hours it is of one quality, at the end of three of another.

However strongly breast feeding is to be recommended, it is essential that the mother should be able to provide good milk. Some of the worst cases of malnutrition are entirely breast-fed. This is an important point for nurses to remember, because if they advise mothers in an unsuitable condition to nurse their babies the subsequent results are not such as to impress the mother with the wisdom of the nurse.

If substitute feeding is employed, one essential principle must be remembered. The food recommended as a substitute *must be* food, and must compare with the mother's milk. Do not be misled by the statement that no food compares with mother's milk. The duty remains to recommend one that does, or you are not recommending a food. Poisons are put in tins, and labelled food.

It should be a penal offence to put forward as a food for infants anything which does not possess the requirements of such an article of diet.

## International News.

### A COUNCIL OF FRENCH DIRECTRICES.

We have had an exceedingly kind letter from France, intimating that it is proposed to organise a Council of Matrons—or rather *Directrices*:

"The advice given at the last meeting of the Conference in Paris, and the instances of similar Councils created in England and America, have impressed us so much that we have decided to form a Central Committee here. We know that this falls in with your views, and that both you and Miss Dock have already, by your advice, prepared the way and made easy this task which our connections—strictly formal till now—would have rendered more delicate."

Nothing could be more propitious for the growth of skilled nursing in France than that the *Directrices* should associate themselves together to guide its progress. In time, we have no doubt, fostered by the sympathy and help of the able leaders of nursing reform in France, a splendid National Council of Nurses will arise. But time must elapse before such an organisation will be possible. The *Directrices* have our warmest sympathy for the success of any association they may form.

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