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## Editorial.

### THE NEED OF DAY NURSERIES.

No class of the community probably suffers more in this age of stress and strife for daily bread than the babies whose lives should be surrounded with mother love, and shielded from everything untoward. At the present day the mother is often compelled either to supplement the family income or to maintain the family altogether, and, only recently, we recorded the statement of the Matron of the East-End Mothers' Home that frequently when the wife is laid up "the family income ceases, and such things as are pawnable are pawned in order to pay the rent and provide some sort of food." After a brief stay in a hospital, or some ten days in bed at home, it thus becomes imperative that once again the mother should resume her work if her family, normally underfed, are not to starve.

What happens, not only to the newly born infant but to its predecessors of a few years old, under these conditions? The baby fed irregularly by its mother, and with its food supplemented by milk or patent foods of doubtful purity, administered by an older brother or sister in bottles of doubtful cleanliness, becomes puny and weak, and, perhaps, fades away altogether—to this the infant mortality statistics, which are at present causing so much concern, bear ample testimony.

The hospitals can bear witness as to what happens to the older babies. The admission of children who have drunk boiling water from the spouts of tea kettles, who are seriously burnt from playing with fire, or whose cheap and inflammable flannelette frocks have been set alight, is but too frequent. It is imperative in the interests of the children that the mother who goes out to work should be able to leave

her babies with some one who will give them intelligent care, who will keep them warm, clean, and fed with suitable and wholesome food.

The National Society of Day Nurseries, though still in its infancy, aims at supplying this need. Already crèches established in many working-class districts have proved the greatest boon to working mothers. Beyond this it is doing good work by forming a central bureau where reliable information can be obtained as to the best methods of opening and managing a crèche. It assists local committees with advice and financial grants, and arranges for the inspection of crèches by the local medical officer of health. It also collects information on the subject of day nurseries, both at home and abroad, with the object of their affiliation, and in time to come of their registration, by Act of Parliament.

It is the duty of every civilised nation to ensure that its children in their years of helplessness, when they are entirely dependent on the provision made for them by others, should grow up in a healthy and wholesome environment. It is not only a duty, but a necessity, if the national physique is not to deteriorate, so that the adult population become undersized and sickly, and, in consequence, incapable of providing an adequate national defence.

The increase of crèches should afford fresh openings for work for trained nurses who are child lovers. True, the children are not ill, but the object of nursing, as of medicine, is becoming increasingly preventive. It is much to nurse the marasmus baby back to health. It is more surely to prevent the development of marasmus by skilled care. The establishment of a high health standard is the test of success of the work of both doctors and nurses.

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