

THE PRECIOUS BABES.

The incontestable right of every child who comes into the world is to be born of healthy parents, and to be placed in a healthy environment, and it is the duty of every nation which claims to be civilized to protect the interests of the weak and helpless. Further, it is only by protecting the interests of the individual that a nation can safeguard its own, for the future of every country depends upon the physical, mental, and moral strength of the children of to-day. Yet, it is appalling to think that over three and a-half million children under a year old perish annually in the countries of the civilized world, that a new-born child has less chance to live than a man of ninety, and of living a year than a man of eighty, the three principal factors in infant mortality being neglect, ignorance and poverty.

The more we ponder on these things the more we realise that the supremely important gift of parents to their children is that of healthy birth and that the vocation of fatherhood and motherhood is one of the highest life has to offer. Therefore, in contracting the marriage tie, not only the mutual happiness of the parents, but the future welfare of the children who in all probability will be born to them must be taken into account.

In this connection the modern tendency of late marriages is to be deplored because, undoubtedly, the most virile children are those of parents in their early manhood and womanhood. Further, not only health, but a readiness to fulfil the duties of motherhood on the part of the wife can hardly be over-estimated, for a little child thrives when encompassed by mother love, and all the wisdom of the scientists will never be an efficient substitute.

A little child. Is there anything in all the world more beautiful, more precious than a healthy

infant, with a skin of the texture of velvet and a complexion like the bloom on a peach? What wonder that the mother, who for the first time holds in her arms the blossom born of love, feels that heaven itself can hardly have greater rapture in store for her. Joy fills her inmost heart as she thinks of her treasure, and she breathes a prayer that she may walk worthy of the vocation wherewith she is called.

To bring up such a child aright, to surround him by a gay and happy atmosphere, to teach him, nevertheless, that duty and discipline are the

keynotes of life, and sympathy and care for others amongst the cardinal virtues, is a real contribution to the welfare of the State, and the mother who has such an outlook on life should be honoured and herself encompassed with affection.

Throughout the length and breadth of this land there are many such mothers, under whose fostering care children come into their rightful heritage. But we cannot rest satisfied until every child has a share in this common birthright, its proper inheritance of healthy environment and wise and loving care.

The modern girl, if she is wise, will make a point of acquiring in an infants' hospital, a crèche, or elsewhere, a knowledge of the elementary duties entailed in the care of infants.



A MODERN MADONNA.

“ He came all so still—
 There his mother was—
 As dew in April
 That falleth on the grass.
 He came all so still
 To his mother's bower,
 As dew in April
 That falleth on the flower.
 He came all so still—
 There his mother lay—
 As dew in April
 That falleth on the spray.”

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)