

other times will say that it is *not* good for a woman either when she is carrying her child or nursing it, but that milk and gruel and cocoa are much better.

The second thing we want to think about is Food. Now what ought we to mean by "food" when talking about a young baby? We ought to mean *nothing whatever* but its mother's milk. I believe that if it were really *impossible* for a baby to be fed in any other way than at its mother's breast we should soon have an end of this high death-rate among the babies. You will see what an important matter this is when I tell you that the death rate among bottle-fed babies is more than ten times that among breast-fed babies, so that in 12 deaths you would probably find that 11 were bottle-fed babies. In Birmingham two years ago, inquiries were made about the deaths of 178 infants under six months old, and it was found that *only* 16 had been fed entirely at the breast. It is really far less trouble to feed a baby in the way that nature intended, and the baby will be stronger and healthier and better tempered, and less likely to have diarrhoea and other baby ailments. Of course, sometimes it is necessary for a baby to be brought up by hand, but it should not be done unless there are really strong reasons for it. We should not think of taking a puppy or a kitten away from its mother and bringing it up by hand unless we were really obliged to do so, and if for some reason we had to do it we should feel that we had got an awkward bit of work, and that it was a great chance if the little animal would thrive. And what nature has provided is best for the baby, just as it is best for the puppy and the kitten.

Now we come to the third thing that has to do with this question of Infant Mortality, and it is very closely connected with the subject of *food*, which we have just thought about. For what is often the reason why babies are brought up by hand? *Because the mother goes out to work.* Sometimes, of course, the mother is obliged to do so, but very often I fear it is done without thinking what a serious matter it is. It is serious, for nothing can make up to a baby, or to young children at all, for the want of a mother's care, and it would be better, not only for the health, but also for the manners and morals of the children, if the mother were more constantly at home. And in many ways I think the family would really be better off, for when the mother is out at work all day a good deal of money is *spent* which could be *saved*. Someone must be paid to mind the baby, and to do the washing, and, perhaps, some of the cleaning. Then clothes are got ready-made and food ready cooked, and that is always ex-

travagant. We have figures to prove that the number of deaths among young children is greater where the mothers are out at work than where they are at home. For instance, in the Lancashire cotton famine, about 50 years ago, many of the mills were shut down, and work was so scarce that the men were often working short time, while there was little if any work for the women. There would not be very much money brought home then, and we should almost have thought that the children would have suffered. But, instead, it was found that there were fewer deaths among children under five than there had been in years when trade was good, so it looked very much as if having the mother at home had been more valuable than the extra money she would have earned at work. I think we must all agree that it is true that nothing can take the place of the mother's care, especially in the case of babies and quite young children.

Now I cannot tell how far what I have said applies to you who are here to-day, for perhaps none of you go out to work, and you may all nurse your babies yourselves. But there is one way in which these facts may come in useful, and that is if you are asked for advice by *young* mothers about their first babies. The natural thing for a young woman to do is to go and ask her own mother, or, if her own mother is not at hand, to go to a kind neighbour who has had a family, and get advice from her. Now there is a chance of doing a lot of good, for you may give that young woman advice which will influence her for all her life, and influence her children, too. Try to persuade her to be sober, both for her own sake and for the sake of her child. If she is at work, advise her to give it up *in plenty of time*, and to stay at home after her confinement, and beg her to nurse her baby herself, and not hand over the care of it to anyone else. If all the young mothers would take that advice, we should get the "good mothering" that John Burns spoke of, and there would be healthy, happy children, who would grow up to be fine, strong men and women, instead of dying in infancy as so often happens now.

---

It is proposed to found a Society to be known as "The Navy and Army Male Nursing Co-operation," the objects being to enable First Class Orderlies to find employment in civil nursing on leaving the Services. The scheme, which has the cordial approval of the Secretary of State for War and other influential persons, seems likely to prove most useful, providing that adequate standards are maintained. A meeting will be held at 10, Hill Street, Mayfair, W., on June 3rd, to inaugurate the Society.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)