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## EDITORIAL.

### INFANT FEEDING.—II.

We showed, last week, that it is now being recognised as a matter of national importance that the excessive and avoidable death rate among infants which has hitherto been, and still is, found in every country, must be reduced; and that the first and greatest cause of such mortality is insufficient or inefficient feeding of the children. We predicted that, in the future, trained nurses would probably be called upon to perform a duty of the utmost importance to every nation, in the prevention of this waste of life.

Formerly, it was almost a universal, even to-day it is a frequent, custom among the poorer classes to give their infants and young children the same food, in a more or less modified form, which was being taken by the other members of the family. This included not only articles which the infant stomach was unqualified to digest, but also, to an almost incredible extent, various forms of alcoholic liquid. Even when milk was given to the child, this was rendered equally dangerous, whenever carelessness or ignorance had allowed its contamination with septic germs.

The two great principles, therefore, which the public are slowly learning, are that infants should be fed solely on Nature's food—Milk; and secondly, that the milk must be absolutely pure. Perhaps, to many of our readers, these may seem such self-evident truths that they do not require to be insisted upon. They may be even surprised to learn that Medical Officers of Health are convinced that thousands of children die every year in this country alone and still greater numbers die in other countries because of the ignorance or neglect of these very simple facts.

An interesting sidelight was thrown last week on the subject, by an investigation made, for the Local Government Board, into the qualities of Condensed Milk. It is beyond dispute that many mothers, and not only among the poor, have hitherto believed that they were doing wisely in feeding their children on Condensed Milk. "Surely," they might have said, "this food conforms to the two principles above enunciated. Here is milk; and milk so prepared by heat, so protected from contamination, as to make it impossible for germ life to infect it." The argument seems excellent; but the report which we published on September 16th, proved that while, to some extent, the latter may be granted, the constitution of the milk may be so altered by its preparation that it ceases to possess the ideal properties as a food for infants provided by Nature. Condensed Milk, in fact, in too many cases, is now known to be skimmed and over-sweetened milk; that is to say, it has been deprived of the cream or fat which is essential to the child's nutrition, while it has been given an excessive quantity of sugar which tends to set up digestive troubles and diarrhoea. It is very important for the public to know, and for nurses to remember, therefore, that the best and safest form of Condensed Milk for infants is that known as "Full Cream and Unsweetened" and which, therefore, approaches most nearly in its constitution to good cow's milk; and, secondly, that once a tin of such milk has been opened, the sooner it is consumed the less will be the possibilities either of its decomposition or of its septic infection. We could emphasize the importance of our argument by pointing to the increased cost of Cow's Milk during the coming winter; for we believe that raising the cost of the children's food by one-quarter means that the risk in infant life will be doubled.

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