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EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

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EDITORIAL.

THE WAR AND MOTHERHOOD.

One of the effects of the present war has been to bring into prominence the dignity of motherhood, the importance of maintaining the health of the expectant mother, and of conserving that of her offspring, for in the immediate future the lives of all babies will be a valuable asset to the country; those of boy babies that they may grow up to take their place as defenders of the Empire, those of girl babies that they may be preserved for the high vocation of motherhood, women who shall bear a virile race themselves of sound physique, high minded, and honourable, from whom their children, from babyhood upwards, may learn the duty of patriotism, and of devotion to the flag which their forbears have kept flying at such tremendous cost.

What are the present facts as to infantile death? In 1912, out of a million babies born, 95 per thousand died within the first twelve months. It is a percentage to shame any nation, for it is certain that nature intended a large proportion of these babies to live, and that ignorance, and unhealthy conditions of life are to a large extent responsible for this terrible wastage, of practically one infant life in every ten.

Were even half of these lives saved think of the addition to the adult population ultimately, and, therefore, of the gain to the nation if these babies grew up healthy and strong.

For that is the aim of the upbringing of children, that physically they shall be developed to the utmost, that they are not handicapped by the result of preventable diseases, such as ophthalmia, rickets, or tuberculosis which may result in life long incapacity making them a burden instead of an asset to the State.

A study of the question of physical capacity involves three main points. We realize that the child must be well born, well nurtured, and brought up in a suitable environment, if the adult is to achieve physical soundness. To be well born is much, but a constitution initially sound may be irretrievably impaired in the first twelve months by insufficient or improper food. The girl baby may develop a ricketty pelvis through which normal delivery cannot take place when she reaches adult life, and the boy may become bandy legged to a degree incapacitating him for future military service. It must always be remembered, moreover, that rickets result not only from unsuitable artificial feeding. If the mother's health is not cared for her infant may exhibit all the signs of rickets. Again, an unsuitable environment and the foetid air of a slum tenement will quickly undermine the health of the child as surely as if doses of poison were administered to it.

Many babies, however, enter into life handicapped from the outset, because fathers and mothers have not realized the responsibilities of parentage and their duties towards their unborn child.

Both State and parents have thus important duties to the child population. The former in ensuring that the conditions of employment are such that parents shall be able to provide their children with a healthy environment, and parents must realize the duty of acquiring knowledge which will enable them to bring up their children physically, mentally, and morally on sound principles, realizing that such knowledge is not inborn, but must be acquired with painstaking. The parent upon whom the chief duty of rearing infants and young children falls is the mother, and she should spare no pains to fit herself for this duty. The father should encompass her with tenderness, so that the dual duty of child-bearing and child-rearing may not be too great a burden.

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