

The Midwife.

THE CHILD.

A PLEA FOR A WIDER VIEW OF PATRIOTISM.

At the present time our minds are filled to overflowing with the heroic and the overmastering horrors of the present conflict. Our newspapers are more to us than daily bread; almost from every household has gone forth one, at least, to brave the dangers and strike a blow for righteousness and freedom, or to bind up and heal those broken in body or spirit in the present strife.

We have developed an appetite for wool; at every fireside the needles lay a minor, ever the same, to the war songs of the battlefield.

In one or two "advanced" journals one sees headings such as these: "The Blessings of Peace," "The Peace when Germany's Power is Broken," and so forth.

Meanwhile there is an old subject, much thought of in the days of plenty, that requires, and will require, more and more thought as the days go on, and we realise again and again how many fair lives have been laid down; for now that the flower of England's manhood stands forth at duty's call, lads in their teens, men in the twenties and thirties, lusty and strong, by the thousand, many of whom will pay the full price of their loyalty in the coming months, to those of us who think forward we see how greatly our race will be depleted, and thought turns with fresh emphasis into the old groove. *The preservation of child life; our duty, the duty of the State and individual to the child.*

I am not writing this with any desire to suggest that it is not the first duty of the patriot to give his life for his country: that intention is, indeed, far from my thoughts; to have a whole skin and a carefully nursed estate were poor patrimony, sans honour, for our sons' sons.

My contention is otherwise. There is a terrible wastage of child life going on in our midst, especially amongst the industrial classes; there are also a great many degenerates amongst the hard-worked professional classes; the aristocracy are not free either; amongst the substrata, the very poor and the vicious, they abound. Why?

Some years ago a book fell into my hands, the title of which escapes my memory. The

main drift of the carefully written pages was to establish a theory that every child born into the world was physically perfect, that they all had an equal start at birth; what happened afterwards were the determining factors in the child's mental and physical and moral development. An astonishing array of learned names, medical and otherwise, vouched for this truth, and statistics were produced that appeared conclusive. I remember that American and German thought were in agreement on the point.

It seemed like presumption to dismiss such a work with one word, "Bunkum." I think it was Heine that said: "Experience is a good school, but the fees are somewhat high." It is only from experience that we form our private judgments, and personally I can claim a larger knowledge of child life than falls to the lot of most people, and I have garnered some words of wisdom from at any rate two or three men famous in their several ways, who have devoted all their working years to medical and social work amongst children.

My first lessons were under a child specialist, who told me when he was nearing seventy that "he was just beginning to know something about a child." He claimed that every child could be hand-fed on milk properly humanised, so that if the child were properly fed (always conceding the fact that the child's fontanelles were open), it would be almost impossible to say whether or no the child had been breast-fed in later life; naturally the ideal method of infant rearing wherever possible. At the same time, he held each child must be separately dieted, no two alike, no hard-and-fast rules. Wise words indeed.

Medical men and women holding positions where they can control the care and management and feeding of large numbers of infants and children, *should be willing to make it their life work*, otherwise they cannot expect to get the best results; and fail in their duty to the race.

So much for the body. If we get a child in the first few months of life, fontanelles open, we can develop that child's head and body on normal lines. *But the mind.* No, we cannot vouch for the brain; that may or may not be able to develop normally, and I think I know why.

In some instances, lack of proper nourishment during the first six months of life appears to be the determining factor; in the majority

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