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**EDITORIAL.**

**THE NEXT GENERATION.**

We are rightly awaking to the supreme importance of conserving infant life, and, to go still further back, of securing for the expectant mother suitable ante-natal conditions, in order that every child may, in the language of eugenists, be "well born," and our Mothers' Welcomes, Baby Clinics, and kindred organizations show that we are alive to the need of skilled supervision of children under school age.

But a word of warning is necessary, and is emphatically pronounced in an influentially signed letter addressed to *The Times* by well known women, in regard to the national consequences with which we are threatened by the entrance into employment of children of eleven years of age. If the care bestowed on the babies is not to be rendered useless we must not allow children to compete in the labour market when they should still be at school, in order to meet the present need for labour. Setting aside their right to protection from the State, no policy could be more short sighted than the extravagant using up of strength which should be conserved and developed so that it may come to maturity.

Further, no case is made out for the employment of child labour, and the Bishop of Oxford, most fearless and outspoken of prelates, declares that cheapness, not urgency constitutes its attraction.

The case for the children is well put by the signatories in the letter above referred to. They say:

"It is a strange contradiction that at a time when Britain is making unparalleled sacrifices of her manhood in defence of all she holds dear, we should tolerate simultaneously an attack on the best interests of the children for whom in a large measure, these sacrifices are made. If to our lot has

fallen the heat and stress of battle, to them will fall the onerous and exacting duties of rebuilding the nation. The children of to-day are the citizens of to-morrow, and the omens point to their task being no light one. To fit them for it by every means in our power is a sacred obligation we owe to the dead. The lives given in Britain's cause will be given in vain, unless we rear a strong, healthy and efficient generation to gather in the fruits of a lasting and honourable peace.

"It seems to us deplorable, therefore, that this happier future for which we pray should be prejudiced by any weakening of our educational system, or a relaxation of the safeguards which protect the employment of children. Such a policy cannot, in our opinion, be justified on the grounds either of national economy or war emergency. Half educated, overworked children when they grow to manhood and womanhood cannot sustain worthily the obligations of an Imperial race. . . . Proposals to exclude infants from school to the age of six, and the lowering of the school age to facilitate the employment of children of eleven are fraught with real national peril. . . . There is a lack of imagination in all this which goes to the root of a great national failing. Britain's apathy about education has proved the Achilles' heel through which time over and again she has been wounded in this war. From German morality and German standards the British people recoil in horror. But from German educational efficiency we have all much to learn, and indeed may have much to fear if we elect deliberately to fall behind in the race. Scientific method is still in its infancy, and there will be no place in the new world for any race which, through slipshod methods, allows the younger generation to grow up half trained, and half equipped to struggle with the obligations of modern citizenship."

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)