

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD
EDITED BY MRS BEDFORD FENWICK

No. 1,469

SATURDAY, MAY 27, 1916.

Vol. LVI

EDITORIAL.

THE PROMOTION OF INFANT AND MATERNAL WELFARE

The wastage of infant life, and the neglect of the welfare of child-bearing women, has for long been a blot on our national escutcheon, and it has apparently taken a world wide war, with its carnage and wholesale loss of life, to rouse the country to a sense of its obligations in this respect.

Now that every life is of value, it becomes imperative to enquire into the causes of unnecessary wastage as a preliminary to any settled policy of dealing with it, and we are glad that such an enquiry, in respect of England and Wales, is being conducted under the Carnegie Trust, by Dr. Hope, Medical Officer of Health for Liverpool, a well known expert on the subject, and Dr. Janet Campbell, of the Board of Education. A schedule of interrogatories has been sent out to all the Medical Officers of Health in England and Wales asking for information, both as to the extent of the need to be met, and as to the best methods to be devised of meeting that need.

The ground to be covered will include the conditions of general sanitation, housing accommodation, the extent of insanitary areas, the social conditions of the people, the nature of the principal industries, and the extent to which women are employed.

Statistics will also be given of the birth rate for successive periods, the infant death rate, especially that of infants under one year.

Also there is to be investigation of the most fatal causes of infant mortality, the statistics of maternal mortality, both in regard to puerperal fevers and other complications of child bearing, and between legitimate and illegitimate births.

The work at present undertaken by the

Local Sanitary Authorities, by ante natal clinics, by municipal hospitals, in the training and supply of midwives, as to facilities for securing a pure milk supply, and as to any scheme in operation for providing education in mothercraft will also come under consideration.

Important as is the scope of the enquiry we believe that the most important item is that concerning education in mothercraft, for it is the only foundation upon which the promotion of infant and maternal welfare can be well and truly laid. Throughout the length and breadth of the land it should be instilled into school girls of all ranks that it is a reproach to them if they assume the responsibilities of motherhood without being able to deftly wash and dress a baby, and without a knowledge of the principles which underlie infant care, and the care of their personal health and their practical application. Moreover, such knowledge should be placed within the reach of all.

Schools for mothers, essential as they are at the present time, are after all only makeshifts, for the knowledge which they impart should be acquired before motherhood is entered upon. Too often it is not until a mother has lost her first born that she realizes how vital such knowledge is to her. How should she, when neither her parents nor her teachers have impressed its necessity upon her, or provided her with opportunities of acquiring this essential knowledge. We hope whatever recommendations are made as a result of the present enquiry that the education of girls in the care of infants will be placed in the forefront. If the motherhood of the country is uninstructed the most far-reaching remedial measures proposed will fall short of their intention. With mothers competent to take care of their offspring many of the remedial agencies now employed to combat infantile mortality would be

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