

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

No. 1,520.

SATURDAY, MAY 19, 1917.

Vol. LVIII.

EDITORIAL.

THE PHYSICAL WELFARE OF MOTHERS AND CHILDREN.

Trained nurses and midwives have for long been aware that the stress and strain of maternity falls with undue severity on many women, owing to the conditions under which they live and bear children, and they will welcome the announcement that in 1916 the Carnegie United Kingdom Trustees, in view of the problems associated with infant mortality, had under their consideration the possibility of taking steps to assist in the physical welfare of mothers and young children, which they regard as one of the most pressing necessities of the present time. They indicated in the following terms of reference the lines upon which they desired a complete survey of the subject:—

“To investigate and report upon the existing provision for promoting the Physical Welfare of Mothers and Children, with special reference to the existing provision of Schools for Mothers, Health Houses, &c., the legislation that exists for governing the administration of such centres, and the extent to which municipal authorities have availed themselves of the powers they possess in the matter. Further, to suggest whether any, and if so what, steps might be taken by the Trustees to encourage the provision of such centres, and under what conditions.”

As a result of the investigation, the Trustees have now published two interesting volumes, “Reports on the Physical Welfare of Mothers and Children in England and Wales,” the first by Dr. E. W. Hope, Medical Officer of Health for the City and Port of Liverpool, and Professor of Public Health in the University of Liverpool, and the second by Dr. Janet M. Campbell, one of the Senior Medical Officers of the Board of Education. Other volumes will follow

dealing with Scotland and Ireland. Investigation is the preliminary to action, and the Carnegie Trustees are to be congratulated on taking up the question.

In his introduction Dr. Hope says that some pressing necessities for which there is as yet no adequate provision, nor prospect of making it, are (1) the provision in suitable localities and under appropriate conditions, of maternity homes for the benefit of outlying rural populations, (2) the establishment of welfare centres to meet the recognized needs of prematurity and infancy; with which may be associated day nurseries. The need of providing for the better care of illegitimate infants calls for careful consideration. (3) Provision for the improvement and better equipment of the means of education in the various branches of the science of public health, and for the encouragement of further research into the circumstances adversely affecting infancy and motherhood.

Amongst the causative factors leading to deaths from diarrhoea and enteritis are, we read, those directly associated with the feeding of infants. Formidable ailments arise from disease organisms gaining an entrance into the digestive tract by means of the infants' food.

These germs are found in filth and dirt in neighbourhoods where there is defective sanitation and bad housing, and give rise to an extremely fatal choleraic diarrhoea.

Dr. Hope emphasises the importance of municipal cleanliness in street washing, supply of baths, etc., which, he says, cannot be over estimated.

The Carnegie Trustees in their efforts to promote the well being of the people will have no warmer sympathizers, and no more useful helpers, than the district nurses and midwives throughout the Kingdom who have an intimate knowledge of the conditions under which the poor live.

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