

The Midwife.

PIONEER WORK FOR MOTHERS AND BABIES.

Where did you get that little tear?
I found it waiting when I got here.

How sweet, just a wee dewdrop, so quickly gone there was scarcely time to wipe it away. Just one more pretty thing amongst all the others waiting for my darling baby.

But what of the thousands of babies who in this great Empire of ours have nothing but tears, and such tears—not dewdrops, but a deluge.

The darlings! When they are born they are just as pink and plump and lovely as their richest brothers and sisters; but there is nothing ready—no cradle, soft clothes or clean home; nothing but the "little tear."

It is not that their mothers are unloving; as a matter of fact they are more ready to sacrifice everything for their babies than their more happily placed sisters would dream of doing. It is simply they have never been taught the refinements of home life, because there has been no one to teach them.

There is no one more anxious to learn what to do for her baby than the poor mother, and she should be able to get the best teaching.

A mother whose children had never lacked anything once said to me: "I can't understand why these women don't know instinctively what to do." And I asked her: "How much did you rely on your instinct, and how much on your highly-trained, refined lady nurse?" She was brave enough to acknowledge that it was the nurse and not her instinct, though, of course, her own education and environment would help her from sinking as low as the women who had incurred her criticism.

If the recent National Baby Week is to make any permanent difference in the health of the nation its effects must be very far-reaching and the work must be laid on solid foundations.

Those into whose hands the task of teaching and uplifting the parents of the race is given must be men and women of education, wide experience and deep sympathy plus the necessary training in welfare work.

It is not enough to have a committee of gentlewomen with heaps of sympathy and little knowledge of the practical side, and a paid worker with much practical experience and not much refinement.

That is the blind leading the blind and both falling into the ditch.

The war found us unprepared to meet our enemy abroad; do let us bend all our energies towards preparation for the fight before us at home.

Let us learn by the mistakes made in the past in the professions for women. Midwives and Nurses know very well that the muddle they are in, is due to lack of organization in the beginning.

If the work is to go forward the right people must be chosen to do it. It is useless to choose women who have no experience and only a few hours' training.

They must have experience in the care of babies and children, in social work, and, if possible, training as a nurse.

They need great tact and a sympathetic understanding of the limitations of the people they teach. They must be able to teach with patience; and they must have organizing power and a keen sense of justice. Above all they must have character and ability.

Of course it will be expensive, because teachers, such as I am thinking of, cannot live on the same level as the people they work among. They have to set a high standard of refinement both morally and physically and help their sisters to live up to it.

It is quite possible to have a clean beautiful home in the most unlikely surroundings, and I know how much it is appreciated from remarks made to me by women who have seen a pretty room.

The labourer is worthy of his hire, and the social worker who is doing her work well for the benefit of the race is as much deserving as any other professional woman, but she must be efficient, or she is worthless. Pioneer work is always interesting, but it is not easy; there are many lions in the path, but as they are overcome the victor will see reflected in the little tear the rainbow of hope.

M. FLEMING.

NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PREVENTION OF INFANTILE MORTALITY AND THE WELFARE OF INFANCY.

A Special Course of Lectures and Practical Demonstrations on Infant Care for Nurses, Midwives, Health Visitors, Voluntary Infant Welfare Workers, Educated Mothers, Teachers and others, organized by the National Association for the Prevention of Infantile Mortality (4, Tavistock Square, London W.C.), will be held in the Lecture Theatre University College, Nottingham, from September 24th to 29th inclusive. The fees for the 14 lectures and four practical demonstrations are 14s., and arrangements will be made for suitable board and lodging at low charges for students desirous of spending the week in Nottingham provided that early application is received.

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