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EDITORIAL.

TIRED MOTHERS. NO LEGAL HOLIDAYS.

The most strenuous work in the world is that so cheerfully performed by "poor mothers," who, if they have large families, are never done, and who are usually always tired. Women who can afford help are often shocked in a poor district by the threats and smacks administered by "poor mothers" to their unruly progeny. We ourselves have ventured to remonstrate under such circumstances, and later listened to a tale of woe. Poor mother makes excuses. "Gawd 'elp me, I'm fair worn out; he's that aggravating—'ow could I 'elp but 'it 'im?" and so on. That's the truth—the overstrained tired-out woman, whose toil is ceaseless, and who never gets a holiday, finds even her children, whom she loves, aggravating to the verge of madness. Mrs. Pember Reeves, whose knowledge of the conditions of the very poor entitles her to a hearing, has recently put forward a scheme for mother's helps; it may be somewhat Utopian, but, like the curate's egg, it is good in parts. Anyway, something should be done for the better organization of the drudgery of tired mothers.

On Mrs. Pember Reeves's scheme the *Times* says:—

There are mothers *and* mothers. There is what a well-known lady doctor has called the "cuckoo-mother"—so well surrounded and protected by nurses and governesses that her children never cause her a moment's anxiety. She does not wash for them, cook for them, mend for them, sit up with the baby at night when it cries, and send the elder ones off to school in the morning. She may be the best of mothers in theory, but she never has had her endurance tested in the way the working-mother has. The mother of the working-classes should have her burden lightened. She

should have some leisure away from her family. This is Mrs. Pember Reeves's theory. There should be mothers' helps, to come in when she is well, as well as when she is sick. They might be of the same class as the district nurse, but they must have some training, and they should be paid eventually by the State.

When a working-woman goes to a cinema and locks up the children before she goes, there is an outcry if anything happens to them—she is inhuman, she has left her children; but mothers of other classes can leave their children without any accusation of inhumanity because they can delegate their motherhood temporarily. The burden of cooking, washing, mending for, in many cases, six or seven young children is too great to be borne constantly and continuously by one woman, whatever her walk in life. New housing schemes when they materialize will make things better and healthier for the children, but though they may lighten the day's work for the mother, it will still be an all-day job, for the seven days of the week, with no holidays and with the dreary monotony of unrelieved care and anxiety.

Every mother who needs it would, under Mrs. Pember Reeves's scheme, have the right to appeal to the local authority for one of the mother's helps at intervals, or when she needed it most, to come and help her in her home duties, or take the children out for a walk—above all the last baby—while she either got on with her own work or went out for an afternoon's enjoyment. "Father," when he returns in the evening, is not always pleased to find arrears of work being cleared up after his arrival and fretful children being slapped into quietness. If mothers' helps came in to help healthy but worried and tired women, there would be fewer of the old-before-their-time women to be seen in working-class neighbourhoods.

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