

infants tended to lower the vitality of those who survived.

ILLEGITIMACY.

Then illegitimate children had a poorer chance of surviving than the legitimate. That was a subject which the whole country would probably have to consider very seriously shortly. We should have to consider how to produce conditions which did not induce secrecy, and the bringing up of illegitimate children under conditions which were cruel and harmful to the child. At the present time, though the illegitimate children were born quite as healthy, if not more so, than legitimate children, they had a death rate which was a terrible disgrace to the country.

THE HOUSING PROBLEM.

In regard to the effect of housing accommodation Lady Barrett showed a diagram illustrating an investigation which was carried out to see whether infant mortality could be grouped according to the number of rooms occupied. The results showed that where families were housed in one room only, the infant mortality was over 200 per thousand. Where two rooms were occupied—and they were all taken from similar districts—the death-rate was over 150. When we came to three rooms, there was a death-rate of between 125 and 150; and for four rooms, it was just under 100. This showed that the overcrowding of families in insufficient air space had a harmful effect on the lives and the health of the children.

OCCUPATION OF FATHERS.

Another investigation was carried out as to whether by a consideration of the occupations of the fathers of the children we could get any idea of the conditions of life that were harmful to the children. In one group were placed the professional classes—artists, merchants, medical practitioners, solicitors, clergymen, and Army and Navy officers, whose wives might be presumed to live in comfort. In the other group was placed the hard worker and the poor worker—foundry hands, dock labourers and various home workers—people, who, as a rule, have most unsatisfactory homes; there the infantile death-rate worked out at more than double that of the other class. Between one and three months the effect was even more marked. From six to twelve months, it was more marked still, showing that the effect of the poor home was progressively greater the longer the child lived.

EMPLOYED MARRIED WOMEN.

In regard to the employment of married women during pregnancy, investigation proves that working in factories is not necessarily harmful to mothers. In fact, in some cases before the war, it was found that among very rough women workers—such as the chain-makers of the Midlands—the mothers who went out to work showed a less infant mortality and a healthier group of children than did the mothers who stayed at home; the reason probably being that the mothers who went to work were able to earn money with

which to make the conditions for the children in the home better than the mothers who stayed at home. Another suggestion was that the former class were, on the whole, a hardier and better class of mother than those who were content to leave their children with what they could get.

Fresh air was also proved to be one of the greatest factors in the preservation of infant life.

CAUSES OF INFANTILE DEATH.

Lady Barrett also dealt with the causes of infantile death, as shown in the statistics of the Registrar-General. Infectious diseases kill off 42 per cent. of the children who die under one year of age; premature births, injuries at birth, or something not quite normal at birth, kill off 23.6 per cent.; and diseases signed up as wasting accounted for another 12 per cent.

The tendency of the working mother to deprive herself of food in the interests of the rest of her family, deprived her infant of the inestimable start in life which came from being fed by a mother who properly cared for herself.

The lack of proper places for storing food, even when bought in a suitable condition, was another factor, as we were learning more and more how necessary fresh and uncontaminated food was for health; and poor health on the part of the underfed mother, with consequent inertia and lowering of capacity for looking after her children was another point emphasised.

The housing question was of the very first importance, and one of the most important things on which women could give their opinion in municipal affairs was the housing question.

The lecturer spoke of the need of suitable provision for midwifery, and of home helps to do the house work when the mother is ill. She also emphasised the value of ante natal clinics.

Princess Arthur of Connaught, in moving a vote of thanks to Lady Barrett, said she had listened to her excellent lecture with the greatest pleasure; and a vote of thanks to Her Royal Highness for presiding, proposed by Mr. Herbert J. Paterson, was most heartily carried.

Mr. Herbert J. Paterson, F.R.C.S., Medical Hon. Secretary, and Miss Isabel Macdonald, Secretary of the Royal British Nurse's Association, will address a meeting at the Royal Institution, Liverpool, on February 8th, at 2.45 p.m., on subjects of topical nursing interest. The Chairman will be Dr. E. W. Hope, M.O.H.

JOINT WAR COMMITTEE.

The following Sisters have been deputed for duty in home hospitals:—

Brunner Mond Red Cross Hosp., Middlewich.—Miss L. Huggins.

V.A. Hosp., Bourne, Lincs.—Mrs. L. Greenaway.

Seaham Hall Aux. Hosp., Seaham.—Miss K. E. Moseley.

Red Cross Hosp., Barry Docks, Glam.—Miss E. M. Jones.

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