

THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING

WITH WHICH IS INCORPORATED
THE NURSING RECORD

EDITED BY MRS. BEDFORD FENWICK, REGISTERED NURSE.

No. 1,824.

SATURDAY, MARCH 17, 1923.

Vol. LXX

EDITORIAL.

FATHERHOOD.

As the question of Child Welfare is carefully studied, and increasingly understood, it becomes evident that none of the factors which enter into the life of a child can be ignored without detriment to its welfare.

We can scarcely surround motherhood with too great dignity and care. The mother, as the temple of the developing child, the fount of its life's blood, and later, under normal circumstances, the exclusive source of its nourishment for nine months, is most intimately associated with the infant and its welfare, and also a most potent influence in its after life. In many cases, indeed, she fills the picture, so that the father is obliterated; and yet the father is also of supreme importance, not only in the ante-natal period, but also in the child's up-bringing.

The current issue of *Maternity and Child Welfare* has some wise things to say "On being a father."

As long ago as 1826 Dr. William Deewes wrote:—

"Thus the toil and danger of child-birth, the fatigue and anxiety of nursing, and the responsibility of education devolve exclusively upon the mother. It is true, then, that some change should be made which would tend to the relief of the overburdened mother; and this can be most profitably done by the father partaking in the arduous and interesting duty of physical education."

Miss Nora Milnes, in an interesting note in a recent issue of our contemporary, points out that "the environment of the child is determined not so much by the mother as by the father. The results of the mother's ignorance or incapacity are *seen*. The *unseen* influence of the father is a yet greater factor in the life of the child. His capacity to produce is a measure of the type of home the baby can have, a measure of the food that the young child can be given, a measure of the warmth and special attention that can be afforded to the child in

sickness. Above all, it is a measure of the risk that the mother can have when the baby is expected, and after its arrival, and of the time that she can devote to the child."

Why should we not have Mothers' and Fathers' Consultations, where parents can meet, both separately and together, to discuss, to assimilate, to learn, to teach; to bring their own knowledge to the common stock, and share their experience for the public good?

An American writer asks, Whence has come "this modern notion that the father cares for nothing but himself? There is no surer way to make it true than to assert it often enough. The young father, bursting with pride in his offspring, finds himself brushed aside, relegated to the ranks of the incapable. . . . We must strive for the resurrection of fatherhood. Fathers need to be taught, with the mothers, what their babies need. And with the teaching of the fathers the mothers' task will become far easier of accomplishment. One nurse who has done much to interest the father in the welfare of his wife and baby, said: 'We try to make him feel that the baby is to be a veritable social investment into which he must be willing to put thought, time, and money.'"

Our contemporary concludes a very arresting article with the opinion that "sufficient stress has never been laid on the father's responsibility in the ante-natal period.

"The essential causes of still-birth, of premature birth, and of developmental defects still remain largely unexplained. There is good reason to think that many of these accidents would be avoided by increased care and thought on the father's part during the nine months when the mother is carrying.

"It is just during the period of what the late Dr. Ballantyne was fond of terming 'pre-maternity' that unselfish fatherhood will gain its reward."

The instruction of fathers is an almost fallow field, promising a rich harvest to those who cultivate it, in health and happiness for children yet unborn.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)