

REAL MATERNITY.

By MARJORIE BOWEN.

Poverty usually overburdens women with children and leaves them neither health nor leisure in which to enjoy them, while riches tend to shift all burdens altogether and leave a woman barren of her duties and obligations. First the nurse, then the governess, then the school undertakes the charge, care, and training of the children, and if the mother gives these an intelligent supervision, she is considered to have her full share of responsibility.

If the nurse leaves or is incapable, if the governess is a failure; if, in any way, even during short holidays, the children are left to the sole care of the mother, she is usually reduced to a state of worry, almost panic despair.

She does not know her own children; she has no control over them; very often their clothes, their games, are mysteries to her, and she is an enigma to them. It is the character and behaviour of the hired person that is forming the child, the school, not the home, that shapes his future.

To bring up her own children herself should not be beyond the strength of any woman who does not have to earn her own living; a certain partial help is desirable to relieve "tedium" or the sense of being tied, but the mother should be the head nurse and the first governess. It is quite easy to learn all there is to know about babies, and to give little children their first lessons is only a matter of average intelligence and plenty of patience. If a woman does not know as much as the usual hired nurse or nursery governess she must be an incompetent creature, and if she finds these tasks boring or irksome, what will they be to a person to whom her child is a stranger and who is doing for a pittance what she won't do for love?

If the child is not interesting to the mother, it will be tiresome indeed to an outsider, and what chance has it to expand and develop served by reluctant hired labour, taught by a disinterested, perfunctory stranger who is (generally unwillingly) earning a livelihood impossible to procure by any other means. These people find the child a "bother"; it is endured, not relished; the atmosphere is stale, dull; nurse and governess have their own interests to consider, their own boredoms to combat; if the one is careless, lying, uncleanly, lazy, the other incompetent, hysterical, ignorant or faddy, it is the child that suffers; the adults have a freemasonry among themselves before which the child is helpless.

Useless for the mother to compromise by an occasional walk or "half-hour" in the nursery, a chance fairy-tale or treat, a decorous romp when all is clean or tidy, to be photographed with baby in a lace frock, and little sister with her hair smooth (for once) and little brother looking angelic with a pet lamb.

Real maternity is not like that. The demand of the children is enormous, more than the

necessities of modern conditions will allow some women to give, but a great number could and do not.

It is not easy; indeed, it means the sacrifice almost of a woman's entire time and vitality, and the exercise of a boundless patience. Nurse and governess repress and punish and gain some "peace and quiet," but the mother cannot; she must see that the children are well and happy and steel her nerves to the noise, damage, and work this entails; she must learn to give sensible answers to incessant questions instead of saying, "Oh, I don't know," or "Children should be seen and not heard"; she must watch diet and the effect of diet, study budding likes and dislikes, talk of cheerful and interesting things until they become part of the daily life; she must be prepared for complete selfishness, heartlessness, and lack of logic on the part of tiny children, and bewildering reserves, sensitiveness and fancies on the part of the older ones.

Above all, she must strive to be the one person who is never cross or unjust, or rude or lazy or slovenly; she must, from the very first, have her moral standard high, and her principles firm, and her manners fine; she must look as pretty and be as pleasant as she possibly can.

All this premises good health—and if a woman has not good health she had better abdicate first as last; "nerves" and the care of children is a fatal combination. And even given health and leisure and sufficient means, the task may appear overwhelming and the reward doubtful.

For who shall say that the children will be grateful or even understanding?

And the mother must not want them to be; she is equipping them for their own lives, not for hers, she must not strive to keep them, to hang love round them like fetters, to chain them with obligations and sentiments.

When the fledglings can fly the nest is empty; to see the straight, strong flight and to hear the joyous song is the sole return for the toil of the forgotten mother bird.

QUEEN ELENA'S TRAINING SCHOOL FOR HOSPITAL NURSES AT THE POLICLINICO HOSPITAL, ROME.

Our King and Queen have received a most splendid reception in Rome, where, as the guests of the King and Queen of Italy, they are having a lovely time. Every minute has been mapped out with great social functions, visits of historic and artistic interest, and of homage to the glorious dead. We fear Queen Mary may not have time to visit Queen Elena's fine Training School for Nurses at the Policlinico Hospital, but will, no doubt, learn something of its very successful pioneer work, as the Queen of Italy is very proud of its success, and we are very proud that to an Englishwoman, Miss Dorothy Snell, much of its success is due.

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