

THE BABIES WHO ARE NOT

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“THIS is the age of the child.” The truth of this trite saying is confirmed in many fields of human activity and interest, though not always does the evidence testify to the benefit of the child, for child labor and child helping agencies are equally interested in the youth of the nation. In pedagogical circles the controversy over the Montessori system has awakened renewed interest in the child’s education; psychology, particularly through the activities of the workers in the more or less pathological, psycho-analytical field, is turning to the child mind both for the origin of the mental deviations from the normal in the child and adult, and also for the most promising field of corrective or preventive endeavor; playgrounds and sandboxes are planted everywhere, even on the roofs of the city tenements, where the children are cared for by professional organizers of play; milk stations, infant welfare stations, and day nurseries are multiplying rapidly, all in the effort, and indeed a successful effort, to render “the business of being a baby” or a child a “less hazardous occupation.”

Whereas during the period 1870-1900 the general death rate showed a marked and consistent decline, and is still falling, and whereas, until 1900, the deaths of infants just as persistently remained uniformly high for the most part the world over, since 1900 there has been in most countries a remarkable drop in the number and rate of deaths among our younger population. Many large American cities have been especially successful in conserving the infant population, New York City for instance in the last few years reducing the infant mortality rate (deaths per thousand births) from near 150 to 102 (1913). These reductions have been effected mainly through the remedying of certain obvious, direct, environmental factors, such as would follow the establishment of milk stations and day nurseries, the encouragement of maternal feeding, better maternity service, the control of infectious disease, prenatal care, the improvement of housing and other general sanitary sur-

roundings. The results testify to the energy, enthusiasm and social spirit of a host of agencies and individuals actuated by the sincerest humanitarianism.

Now, although none of these remedies has been used to the full, and although still further reductions will probably follow the complete utilization of these methods, the experience of certain countries in which the direct corrective measures have been most worthily applied, approximately to their utmost, indicates that the infant mortality rate has almost reached, *under present social, economic and industrial conditions*, a stable and irreducible minimum. Such may or may not be the case at the present time, but if it is not true now, it would seem to be inevitable in the near future.

Undoubtedly every year a certain number of people must die. Undoubtedly, also, 100 out of every thousand babies born is far too many to lose in the first year of life. Has society exhausted the means for the prevention of this yearly decimation of infant life? As a matter of fact, a study of infant welfare agencies the world over would seem to show that society has only touched the surface of possibilities, has, indeed, been concerned almost entirely with certain palliative measures and has left untouched the real field of prevention. The workers in this field have suffered from the almost inevitable myopia associated with close contact with the details of a problem. They have most lustily hammered away at the direct etiological factors and have quite consistently and characteristically ignored the great predisposing causes demanding truly constructive and preventive measures.

The workers for infant welfare have two things in common with their fellows who are endeavoring to improve the life and working conditions of the children in the southern cotton mills, the conditions of industrial labor the world over, the housing conditions of the poor, etc. The first is that they are all too close to the problem to see anything but immediate palliatives and temporary expedients and the second is that, common to all the social defects which they are trying to remedy, and almost universally ignored by all, are the same underlying, predisposing causes of social maladjustment, unrest, misery, disease and pre-

mature death. What are these seemingly hidden yet obvious social factors which are either unrecognized or condoned as being hopeless of correction? How are they related to infant life, as indeed to all life? What, in fact, are the great predisposing factors in infant mortality? What must society do further to conserve infant life? There is not space to answer these questions here. Only the high points can be indicated, possibly a sense of direction given. The proposition is a broad one and can be described only in the briefest outline from the point of view of this single field of so-called "social reform." The problem is nation-wide, world-wide, and the perfect answer is indeed not clear. Its intelligent consideration alone involves a recognition of the fact that defects in the structure of mankind are not all in the framework; to stabilize the house necessitates some relaying of the foundations. It is no more sufficient to build a fence at the top of the cliff to prevent the unfortunate from falling over than it is to have ambulance stations at the bottom of the cliff to care for the fallen. The thing to be done is to prevent the crowding above. The broader question is "What shall man do to be saved?"

The nation is concerned about the babies that are not surviving, about the babies that are not born well, and finally about the babies that are not born at all. Social agencies, with a spirit always admirable, have attempted a control over the badly born babies through the instruments of maternal instruction classes, prenatal nursing, etc., with a reasonable degree of success, without, however, as would obviously be the case, reducing in any particular the number of babies who, through hereditary defects, need special care of the character indicated. In so far as simple ignorance is dealt with, the method is perhaps less inefficient, but where bad breeding is involved it is simply relief that is given and it shares the fundamental defects of this short sighted policy. It is even here a futile way of combatting ignorance, especially when it directs the attention away from the great necessity for the reorganization of our educational system and the extension of educational and cultural advantages to the army of workers—a thing possible of attainment only through a radical reorganization of the methods of getting the work of the

world done. Bad breeding is not environmental and its evil effects cannot be mitigated or removed by simple direct measures applied to the results. Its control must be social, coming through the group, acting as a result of a sense of social responsibility. The children of the mentally deficient, or of those who suffer from physical disease or defect—the output of the lame, the halt and the blind—inherit material handicaps from the parent stock and are responsible for a large proportion of our early deaths. Organized and intelligent State prohibition of propagation among this class is the only agency that will decrease the annual increment of the army of children who are unable, or at least unfit, to survive.

The fact that nature's laws are sure is both a promise and a threat. We take advantage of the good which nature promises when we recognize and follow her laws in the breeding of animals. We are beginning to see the evil which nature threatens when we ignore her laws in the breeding of human infants. "We cannot break the laws; we can break ourselves against them."

A very large part of our infant welfare work of to-day directly concerns the home. We work for better housing *for the home*, better sanitary conditions *in the home*. In nearly everything we do we recognize the importance of the home, but what are we doing to preserve, or one might better say, restore the stability and integrity of *the home itself?*

There must be an adequate realization of the annihilatory influence of modern industry upon *the home itself*. It must be realized further that the modern industrial home cannot be changed *in essential character*, cannot be made a much better place to raise babies, by welfare work in the factories, by "better pay or shorter working hours," or by any of the minimums or maximums so popular with the modern pseudo-reformer. *The home itself* needs a father with education, culture, leisure, interesting work and opportunity for spiritual growth, and nothing short of a radical reorganization of the work of the world can give it this. The ultimate cessation of immigration, more immediate impending events in the industrial world, point the way to the time, not far distant, when there will be no army of men

content always to toil at unimaginative labor. There is a plan that will give every better home and "better baby" its better father, and that calls for an industrial State in which no class shall toil unceasingly, but through a "conscript labor army," as proposed by William James, and an intelligent alternation of employment as outlined by Wells, everyone, man and woman, will have the preliminary years for education and development, will spend their allotted time doing the work of the world under the direction of the State on a basis of service to all, and not for the financial gain of the few. The great economies that would enter with the elimination of competition, the elimination of private accumulated wealth itself, would make possible a universal self and home supporting compensation.

Is industry to be reorganized by the intelligent, coöperative, sympathetic effort of a society with an awakened social consciousness, or is it to be seized and wrecked by the maddened and the exploited? Is the spirit of gain to be replaced by the spirit of service or by the spirit of revenge? Is class distinction to grow and class war to come, or are the classes themselves to be socialized into extinction? Shall it be the constructive evolutionary path or the destructive revolutionary one? Poverty and destitution are prime factors in infant mortality. Shall poverty be enlightened and destitution made impossible? Pretty far from infant mortality? Yes and no! Far from the palliative treatment of this social disease, but very near the heart of the cure of the great social defects of which infant mortality is one.

What of the woman in the home of the future, the future baby's mother? Obviously she must share with her brother in his educational opportunities and in his responsibilities and duties toward the proper conduct of the State. Children will, of course, be her special and prime contribution and her life must be shaped around that as an end. Prepared for that function, protected and aided in carrying it out, she will have little to do with industry before the period of child bearing and less during that period. With the maturing of the children she might be expected to enter into the industrial life.

In the provision which the world of the future will make for the welfare of its infant population one thing will be found

to be essential and fundamental, and that is the opportunity for the woman, trained for motherhood, to devote nearly her whole energy to the bearing of and the caring for the State's future citizens. To a great extent the attainment of this condition is based on the realization of woman's emancipation.

The attitude of the State and of society toward the child-bearing woman of to-day is of vital significance in our problem. It has been our custom, frequently, through our charitable and philanthropic agencies, to place a bounty upon the unfit mother and the undesirable infant. The tender minded "sociologists" who demand pensions for poor mothers *only* are doing what they can to further this tendency. On the other hand, as the result of our short-sighted statesmanship, our meagre social consciousness, and our economic maladjustments, we have placed a penalty on the mother who bears healthy children and who strives with her family to maintain a semblance of self-respecting independence. In the absence of a satisfactory recognition of the State's own responsibility in the matter, charity has found it necessary to assist child-bearing women, even though they have been performing, if of healthy stock, the greatest possible service to the State, and for this service have been laden with especially heavy economic burdens, and have been labelled with the degrading and insulting terms "worthy" and "dependent." Thus private societies are wrongfully aiding the propagation of unhealthy children and in the case of healthy children are paying one of the State's neglected debts.

Young girls, when they should be starting on a career as wife and mother, and home maker, are entering industry or commerce, to wear out the best years of their life in service to trade, when they should be giving the truest womanly service to the State. If they bear children at all it is under the greatest and most unnatural social and economic stress and, old women at forty, no longer useful either by training or physiologically for motherhood, cast aside as unfit by trade, they pass down the remaining years "through the cold gradations of decay" as monuments to the short-sighted imbecility, the ungodly wastefulness, the unpardonable ingratitude and selfishness of mankind.

The mother is rendering a service which should be recog-

nized and for which remuneration must be given. She must receive payment and protection for the great service she renders, and it must be recognized as a service and as a life work for which she should be prepared and to which she should be allowed to devote her best years and finest energies. The attainment of the economic freedom of womanhood will do more to decrease infant mortality than will probably any other measure. It is the only foundation upon which it is safe to build the home structure. It offers the supremest assurance for the welfare of the State's greatest asset, the children—its future citizens.

From every point of view we cannot but see the necessity for the immediate recognition by the State of the worth to society of the healthy mother. Furthermore, this recognition must be of a substantial emancipatory kind. Lack of education and inefficient misapplied methods of education are the causes, directly or indirectly, of much disease and many deaths among the infants. It is obvious that the training of woman for motherhood is practically not at all recognized as an essential part of the general plan of her education. The greatest function of womanhood, the business of being a mother, has been classed, from the standpoint of organized preparation, with the work of the dock-hands and street laborers, for it is looked upon, by the State and by the individual, as the most casual and haphazard of occupations. Proper training for and the endowment of motherhood are essential in the reorganization of human society.

There are very few casual conditions in infant mortality which are not traceable to these underlying factors. From them arise ignorance, poverty and unwise employment. To them may be traced bad housing, insanitation and crime; alcoholism and disease among the parents; neglect, bad feeding, exposure and disease of the children. If we are ever to realize results in preventive work at all worthy of our efforts, we must recognize the vital importance of the fundamental limitations and defects of human organization. Essential to the real solution of our social problems are a recognition of the inadequacy of our present panaceas, a willingness to study and face the problems so insistently demanding solution, a courageous application to our

social defects of radical principles of reorganization. Fundamental to true progress are the fostering of a "sense of the State" among the citizens of the nation, a recognition of the necessity for the social or group treatment of society's sores, and above all, a faith in and actual use of the principles of brotherhood, love and mutual understanding, best exemplified for humanity and taught to the world by the Great Prophet of nineteen hundred years ago.

HAWORTH PARSONAGE

LIZETTE WOODWORTH REESE

A NARROW, old scarred house, set in a stare
At the old graves that crumble to its door;
You cannot think that it has known of yore
An April weather, or a thing so fair
As the small lanthorn of a daffodil,
Swung down the silver alleys of the rain,
Save as a rumor blown along the pane,
That did but pass, and leave it vacant still.
Deep-memoried it stands, as in a gust
Of yesterdays, that beats about it all—
To some dim poignancy of music thinned—
And now is tears, now laughter gone to dust.
There, of a sudden, beyond the churchyard wall,
The three hushed sisters passing through the wind!