

SECTION 3.—INCIDENCE AND IMPORT OF INFANTILE DIARRHŒA.

Infantile diarrhœa kills from half a million to a million babies every year, and makes weaklings of many millions more who do not actually die of the disease. Early mistakes in the feeding and care of children are life's greatest and most far-reaching handicap.

The full import and significance of the foregoing facts, figures, and charts can only be appreciated when it is realized that malnutrition, indigestion, and consequent infective gastro-enteritis, known as "infantile diarrhœa" or the "scouring" of calves, constitutes the one great common universal scourge of early life among ourselves and dairy calves.

This easily avoidable and fell disease still decimates our dairy herds in the course of rearing, and impairs the stamina and subsequent value of the survivors more than all other causes put together; and this will continue until the simple needs of young cattle placed under the artificial conditions of enforced domestication form an important though minute fraction of education, especially throughout rural communities. It is much cheaper and easier to rear babies and calves rightly than wrongly; simple instruction on sensible lines is interesting and easily imparted, and an understanding of the first principles of how to supply the common and special needs of domesticated mammals must and will play a very important part in all enlightened schemes of education in the near future.

Proper systematic feeding, open air and exercise, and freedom from undue coddling and restrictions are the universal needs of early life, and they must receive due attention if progressive deterioration is to be stemmed and replaced by a higher all-round standard of life and living.

Looking at humanity from the standpoint of adult life, and considering the mind, the feelings, the emotions, and the character of mankind, rather than the perfecting of the bodily mechanism alone, I need only quote from convictions formed and expressed seventeen years ago in special connection with asylum life: "If women in general were rendered more fit for maternity, if instrumental deliveries were obviated as far as possible, if infants were nourished by their mothers, and boys and girls were given a rational education, the main supplies of population for our asylums, hospitals, benevolent institutions, gaols, and slums would be cut off at the sources. Further, I do not hesitate to say that a very remarkable improvement would take place in the physical, mental, and moral condition of the whole community."—(Extract from my report on Seaciff Mental Hospital for 1906.)

The deep-seated, underlying causes which threaten modern civilization need, of all things, to be clearly understood at the present moment. Nothing can excuse or justify a continuation of the present cruel and utterly unnecessary sacrifice of mother and child, which has gone on almost unheeded for half a century; and it must never be forgotten that the damage-rate infinitely exceeds the death-rate. Indeed, as I have said already, comparatively few infants escape unscathed by the mistakes of omission and commission which would be rare if mothers—always anxious to learn anything needed for their children—were given the attention, instruction, and help they deserve. As Socrates said, in all human affairs "the beginning is the most important part, especially when we have to deal with anything young and tender."

F. TRUBY KING,
Director of Child Welfare.

PART IV.—NURSING.

I have the honour to submit my annual report for the year ending 31st March, 1923.

SECTION 1.—NURSES REGISTRATION ACT.

During the year 1922-23 two examinations were held under the Nurses Registration Act—in June and December: 250 candidates presented themselves for examination, of whom 212 were successful and are now on the State register.

Forty-six nurses from overseas have been registered, of whom only a very few from England and Wales, Scotland, and Ireland have presented the certificate of the General Nursing Council under the respective Acts. This Act has now been in force for over three years, but there has been considerable delay in the making of regulations and consequently in the registration of nurses. Many of those coming to the Dominion have not been able to wait for their registration to be completed, and therefore have, as heretofore, been accepted by this Department on the ordinary certificate of training of their hospitals.

During the year the demand for nurses for private work has somewhat improved, but still there are periods when there are numbers of nurses awaiting work. The concentration of nurses in the four centres is greatly responsible for this, the few nurses venturing to practise in country towns usually being kept well employed.

There are still numbers of nurses from New Zealand away in America, Canada, and South Africa. They are all doing well, many being given positions of responsibility in hospitals, and all sought for for private nursing, the New Zealand certificate of training being recognized as a guarantee of high standard.

During the year the Secretary of State for the Colonies communicated with this Government in regard to reciprocity in the registration of nurses between the General Nursing Council for England and Wales and the Registrar of Nurses in this Dominion. Full particulars were sent of the training of the nurses, the State examination and registration, and the conditions on which nurses from other countries were accepted. Special emphasis was laid on the necessity of allowing training in the smaller hospitals of the Dominion, and inquiry made as to the acceptance for reciprocal registration of nurses trained in such hospitals. The reply received was to the following effect: That the General Nursing Council, at a meeting held on the 6th October, 1922, passed the following resolution:—

"That this Council agrees to accept a certificate of registration in New Zealand as sufficient evidence of fitness for admission to the register of this Council, provided that the Director of the Division of Nursing in New Zealand agrees to admit nurses registered by this Council with a certificate of three years' training and of having passed an examination to the New Zealand Nurses' Register."