

# HELPING YOU to KEEP POSTED

IN Harper's Magazine for October, J. Burton Hendrick tells the people of the United States some appalling truths regarding the frightful waste of infant life which is going on all about them. He begins by pointing to the paragraph in the vital statistics which proves that out of two and a half million babies born every year, three hundred thousand die before they reach their first birthday. "Their destruction," he remarks, "takes its place alongside the destruction of forests, birds, animals and coal; these annual human sacrifices are merely another indication of a deplorable national habit."

"Why do our babies die?" is a question which a Federal Government bureau has been trying to solve for five years. In seeking the solution it has established a number of important facts, but the actual solution, apparently, is not yet at hand. In a series of typical American towns the bureau is investigating elaborately the life history of every baby born in a particular year. The bureau has aimed at the underlying circumstances that, directly and indirectly, give the United States so unenviable

## The Frightful World Waste of Babies

a record—housing, sanitary surroundings, earnings of fathers, employment, working hours of mothers and the like. In one city where investigations were made it was found that one ward lost only 50 out of 1,000 babies during the first year of their lives, while another lost 271. The latter district is not the most populous, neither is it the one that has the largest number of births; but it is the section where the poorest people live, and enquiry showed that 78 per cent. of the mothers under investigation were foreign born.

The whole section is poorly sewered, many of the streets are unpaved, and in warm weather they are slippery with slime and mud. Records of mortality rates in other wards show that these conditions exercise the greatest influence. As housing, pavements, and sewerage improve, mortality decreases steadily.

The Bureau has worked out its problem in greater detail than this. Elaborate tables show the precise relation between the death rate of infants and all the circumstances surrounding their lives. The rate was much lower in houses where water was piped in than where it was necessary to carry water from outdoors. Dryness or dampness likewise influenced the physical welfare of the infant. Fewer babies died in dry houses, more in moderately dry houses, and most in damp houses. The bath-tub proved a barometer of infant mortality. Houses possessing this convenience had a rate of 72, those without it a rate of 164. The rate rose and fell in accordance with cleanliness. Babies in crowded houses died in greater numbers than those in homes less crowded. Mortality was much lower among babies who slept in a room with their parents than among those who slept in a room with more than two persons. Babies who slept in separate beds had a much more successful struggle for existence. The value of open-window ventilation was also established.

Another lesson of these investigations was that the extent to which prospective mothers increase the family revenue regulates the extent to which their babies die. Women who add a few dollars weekly to their husband's earnings pay a dreadful penalty in the loss of their children. It was also established that girl babies had greater vitality than boys. The death rate was much higher among women attended by midwives than among those attended by physicians. Babies of illiterate mothers had a higher death rate than those of mothers who could read and write. The investigations also showed that from twenty to twenty-four is the most propitious age for motherhood, and that any age under twenty is unpropitious for maternity.

New Zealand's excellent showing (51 deaths per

**ASSUMING** that you will be interested in the Need for Saving the World's Babies, the Amazing Efficiency of Sir Eric Geddes, the Y.M.C.A. in the Bomb Line, the Arguments Against Too Much Democracy, and the Emotionalism of Russia, illustrated.

thousand) is due, the writer declares, to the fact that New Zealand has consciously willed that its babies should be spared and has adopted the most energetic and enlightened means to preserve them. It has the one fundamental preliminary to infant conservation, a complete system of birth registration. The Government also keeps under the closest supervision midwives, maternity hospitals, infant asylums and nurses. In the public schools girls are instructed in the responsibilities of married life; in the poorer districts expectant mothers are visited and advised concerning the care of babies. The Government contributes to the support of an institution which maintains a nurse for each of a number of districts into which the commonwealth is divided, and also keeps in constant touch in other ways, such as the columns of the newspapers, which give considerable space to a department headed "Our Babies by Hygeia," which has this for a motto, "It is better to put a fence at the top of a precipice than to maintain an ambulance at the bottom."

**A** NEW style of adjuration has been adopted in England since the war began. "By Jove!" and "By Jingo" has gone by the board and nowadays when Lloyd George runs up against a task which is absolutely impossible he simply says, "By Geddes;" and the thing is conjured into accomplishment forthwith. At least, such an idea is suggested by the account given in Munsey's by Judson C. Welliver, of the way Sir Eric Geddes has been

carrying on since the war began. Mr. Welliver's article was written before Sir Eric was made First Lord of the Admiralty, but the record of things accomplished "By Geddes" before he was set to boss the job of administering Britain's naval affairs is complete enough in itself to make the labours of Hercules look like nothing in particular by comparison.

"At forty-two years," says Mr. Welliver, "this man has come to stand forth as probably the foremost master of the art of co-ordinating industry and transport with military organization; and that, it may be observed, is the vital factor in making and winning modern war."

About a year ago Mr. Welliver was rummaging about a British port where ships were being loaded and unloaded in record-breaking time by a new system. He listened to the explanations and then asked how it happened.

"Geddes!" whispered the harbour-master.

A glimpse through the marvels of war-time ship-building methods on the Clyde again inspired the inquiry as to the responsible personality.

"Geddes!" was the explanation.

"Later, in a great foundry," continues Mr. Welliver, "I saw hundreds of women manipulating huge cranes that tossed half-ton ingots of white-hot steel.

Other women worked the hydraulic presses that forged the fifteen-inch shell-casings; yet others handled the giant lathes that bored and shaped and measured these castings into finished shells. This was truly industrial revolution—the men firing the great weapons at the front, the women making the guns and the ammunition at home. How did it happen?

"Geddes!" they told me.

Half a county full of workshops, warehouses, strange industrial establishments, fed by a hundred miles of railway, employing thirty thousand people in turning out just one necessary of war—that stirred the same inquiry, and brought the same brief answer: "Geddes!"

The newspapers told about a corps of expert Canadian lumbermen being turned loose in the woods of England and Scotland, to rip out almost overnight the timber that must be supplied in France, and for import of which no ships were available. Whose idea was that?

"Eric Geddes," they told me. "You know, he was a lumberman in America."

Over in France, in an area which the Boche had evacuated two days earlier, I saw multitudes of experts building new highways faster than the Germans had been able to blow them up; putting in bridges; laying down field railways; paralleling them with water-mains; all so fast that the van of construction was never safe from the fire of the retreating Huns.

"Who ever organized——"

The question was never finished.

"General Geddes, of course," they assured me. "He invented that sort of railroad when he was in India."

A little while later the government took over all the ship-building in Great Britain—naval and merchant, iron, steel, and wood, steam and sailing, big and little. It would have a czar in charge of the whole business in order to systematize, cheapen, hasten.

"But for such a task as that who's big enough to——"

"Admiral Geddes," I was assured.

All of which convinced Mr. Welliver that Geddes was boss of the whole show. "If it wasn't his war, it seemed likely that at least he would soon hold most of the stock," he remarked.

Having caught up with Sir Eric, one feels real satisfaction in discovering a big man who quite looks



"Oh, that I had the wings of a dove!"

—Sykes, in Philadelphia Evening Ledger