



Eight thousand tots like these died in Ontario alone last year, the lives of a great many of which would have been saved had their mothers only known.

TEACHING THE ART OF MOTHERHOOD

BY

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Consulting Expert on Motherhood

WITH the hope that many Canadian mothers may find a little information that may prove valuable to them, I am writing this article. In my estimation there is vitally no difference between American mothers and Canadian mothers and much that I tell here will apply in Canada as well as in United States. To begin with, let me say that instead of urging people to have more children, we should teach them to take better care of those they have.

As a result of investigations made by the Department of Health it was found that nearly eight thousand babies under one year, died last year in the Province of Ontario alone.

You may better realize just what that means when you consider that eight thousand families comprise a city about forty thousand people—a city about the size of London, Ontario, or Calgary, Alberta.

Then imagine, if you can, what a blighting sweep of suffering and sorrow there would be in such a city if it had annually to bear the distressful burden of a little child's illness and death in every one of its homes, rich and poor alike. Its streets would present the drear and sombre spectacle of a continual procession of funeral corteges, over twenty a day, bearing to the grave these thousands of lives snuffed out before their light had fairly begun to burn, half a century before their time, and mostly for causes resulting from neglect.

For the pity of it all is that most of these baby lives were sacrificed unnecessarily—practically thrown away because of the ignorance of the mothers; because the mothers did not know how to protect them against the illness that caused their death.

This is grievously unfair, not alone to the babies themselves, but to the community and nation in need of strong and healthy citizens; and this is made strikingly obvious in the light of the fact that it has been proved conclusively that almost every ailment of infant life can be prevented.

Prenatal causes of infant mortality, diseases due to improper feeding and commonplace accidents can all be prevented in greater or less degree by proper, intelligent care. And in establishing the office of Consulting Expert on Motherhood as a travelling lecturer-instructor-demonstrator throughout the state; in connection with the Division of Child Hygiene, having in mind the single purpose of teaching the mothers—actual, prospective and potential—the correct scientific modern methods of preparing for the coming, and the later care, feeding and clothing of the baby, the New York State Board of Health has taken a long step in advance. It is a movement that promises the successful accomplishment of momentous improvement and reform in social and physical hygiene and resultant health that has not so far been attempted anywhere else in America; at least along such thorough-going lines.

In 1913 the Division of Child Hygiene organized infant welfare work in twelve localities in the state, which was carried on during the three summer months. During the summer of 1914 this welfare work was extended to thirty-two localities. That this limited campaign was the means of saving baby lives is shown by the fact



"Instead of urging people to have more children we should teach them to take better care of those they have."—Lydia Allen de Vilbiss.

that there was a resultant drop of 24 per cent. in the infant mortality rate for the summer months of 1914, as compared with the summer months of 1913. The actual reduction was 767 in the number of deaths of infants under one year. The number of deaths for the summer months of 1913 amounted to 4,600; for the same period in 1914 there were 3,833 deaths.

One of the efforts of the infant welfare campaign managers was the establishment of infant welfare stations in twenty-one cities where previously no work of this kind had been undertaken. These stations are specifically educational centres and their effect is bound to be far reaching.

During August and September of 1914 eight welfare exhibits were shown at 53 county fairs throughout the state. This was found to be the most effective means of bringing to the attention of the rural communities the first principles of public health and preventive medicine. It is estimated that 575,000 people visited these exhibits, which were also shown at the state Fair in Syracuse and at the Industrial Exposition at Rochester. More than 75,000 pamphlets and bulletins on the care of the baby were distributed at these exhibits.

In commenting on the results secured by the campaign of last summer, Dr. Hermann M. Biggs, State Commissioner of Health, exclaimed: "Just think what the saving of 767 babies really means! Seven hundred and sixty-seven mothers saved the sorrow of the loss of their treasured little ones; 767 homes saved the grief, the anxiety and the expense of sickness ending in death; 767 women whose temporary disablement and suffering of childbirth have not been for naught; 767 potential citizens saved to the State!"

Professor Irving Fisher, Statistician of Yale Uni-

versity, computes the actual cash value of a baby's life at \$2,000, so that the saving of these 767 babies' lives in 1914, as against 1913, means an actual cash saving to the state of fully \$1,534,000. The favorable showing already made has added to the incentive to decrease further the infant death rate, and that it can be done throughout the state is shown by the results accomplished by the campaign against infant mortality conducted by the Board of Health in New York City. In 1907 the infant death rate in New York City was 160 per thousand. As a result of the campaign of mother-education begun in 1908 by Dr. S. Josephine Baker, director of the Bureau of Child Hygiene, the infant death rate for 1913 was 101.9 per thousand, and for 1914 it is estimated at not more than 94 per thousand, which, viewed from the point of cash value alone, resulted in a saving of \$132,000 per every 1,000 babies born, in 1914 as against 1907.

The baby health campaign as conducted by Dr. Baker, is largely directed to the teaching of baby care to little mothers by physicians and nurses as a regularly organized class-room work, and it has signally emphasized the value of getting in close touch with the individual, of the personal element in such instruction. This was a pioneer work in the field of child welfare, and has served as an example of what may be done by the State in the education of its actual mothers.

It was for the purpose of getting in intimate touch with the mothers of the State in their home communities that the Department established the office of Consulting Expert on Motherhood, which office I was appointed to fill, and the work of which is now well under way in preparation for the season most perilous to baby life, the summer months.

It is believed by the State health authorities that the infant death rate in New York State should be as low as or even lower than in New York City, and there is every reason to hope that in a few years the efforts of this Department in extending its campaign of education will bring about the desired results.

One of the most ambitious hopes of the promoters of this new work of educating mothers in the intimate details of baby-bearing and care, is that the resultant improvement in conditions will be so prominent and vital to the welfare of the State, that communities in every section of the American continent—and I include Canada—will realize the tremendous value of this educational campaign sufficiently to take active and effectual steps to secure the appointment of travelling "Motherhood Instructors" in connection with the local health departments in every state and province.

Mothers' Clubs, welfare societies, and women's organizations have long been conducting local campaigns in mothercraft, but such efforts have been more or less sporadic and so confined to limited communities, that their efforts have been lacking in evidences of a general betterment, when considered as a national issue in child welfare.

The suggestion is now offered to the members of local mothers' clubs and the various women's organizations, including all societies laboring in the interest of child welfare, that they combine their forces in their several communities and co-operate in an effort, through their state or provincial organizations, to secure the official appointment of a competent and thoroughly qualified woman physician to serve the public in the capacity of

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An interested mother watching demonstrator.



Demonstrator showing how to handle nourishment for a baby.