

The Canadian Practitioner and Review.

Vol. XXXIII.

TORONTO, JULY, 1908.

No. 7

Original Communications.

THE NATIONAL IMPORTANCE OF PURE MILK.*

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When we consider that milk constitutes, practically the sole article of diet of infants and invalids and enters into the dietary of all more or less and that it is the most delicate and sensitive food we have, to bacterial contamination, it is surely time that we are waking up to the fact that it is at least as deserving of municipal control as is our water supply or light and power.

Some twenty years have elapsed since the appalling tide of infant mortality came home to thoughtful minds in Germany, France, Belgium and the United States of America, and so engrossed their attention as to stimulate a spirit of investigation, in consequence of which it was soon apparent that this enormous mortality was largely from the ranks of hand-fed children (90 per cent.), breast-fed children only contributing about ten per cent. They also observed that there was a marked seasonal fluctuation, having an abrupt upward curve for the mid-summer months and an equally sharp drop in the autumn. The marked increase in months of July and August was found to be largely due to diarrhoeal diseases, there being very little fluctuation in the non-diarrhoeal cases. In Leipzig¹ for instance, the proportion of deaths to births in August were as 571 to 1,000, of these 430 were diarrhoeal. Dr. Emmett Holt², in his article on Diarrhoea, says that of 1,943 fatal cases of which he had collected only three per cent. were exclusively breast fed, and that in his experience fatal cases of diarrhoeal diseases in breast fed infants are extremely rare. Dr. Holt goes on to say it is surprising to see how quickly diarrhoea is excited by impure

*Read before the Section on Public Health and Laboratory Workers of the Canadian Medical Association, held in Ottawa, June 9th, 10th and 11th, 1908.