

THE DUTY OF THE PROFESSION AND STATE AS REGARDS THE MENTAL AND PHYSICAL CARE OF IMPROPERLY CARED FOR CHILDREN.*

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Mr. President, Ladies and Gentlemen of the Ontario Medical Association,—When many of us entered upon the study of medicine, nearly a quarter of a century ago, the highest ambition of the profession was to cure disease, but the advances in medical science in that quarter of a century has placed the goal in a higher and nobler position, namely, the prevention of disease. However, the enormous rate of infant mortality throughout the civilized world, suggests the existence of an unpardonable apathy, or casts an awful blot upon the intelligence of both the profession and the state.

Vital statistics show that not 50 per cent. of all babies born alive ever reach maturity. In England there is one death in every five births before the child is a year old. Out of over 60,000 births annually in Paris, 30,000 die before they reach four years of age. In New York City, out of nearly 75,000 births, 20,000 die the first year. In the Province of Ontario, in 1903, out of 48,642 births, 6,700 died within the first year, and 10,162 before they had reached their fifteenth year. Now, a large per cent. of these die from malnutrition or improper feeding, through ignorance on the part of the mothers and those in charge, and are, therefore, largely preventable.

Education along this line must come from the profession, and the means by which it can be accomplished, from the State.

If the government were to spend even a fraction of the money spent on stocks and agriculture on the care and feeding of these poor mothers when they are carrying the children, and subsequently the children, if it can be shown that they can not be properly cared for or provided for in their own homes, the death-rate for the first year, at least, should be very much decreased.

We have in this fair Dominion of ours, conditions suited to produce the very best physical development, and the highest degree of mentality that can be produced any place in the world.

It matters not whether he be an aspirant to the highest medical honor at the hands of the British Empire, or for a

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