

To relieve or even greatly to diminish infantile mortality the basic conditions of poverty and ignorance must be attacked. Ignorance in mothers of the imperative wants of their infants is in my experience the most powerful of all the causes which contribute to this excessive mortality. To have a fair chance for life a young infant demands its mother's milk and not some patent food, demands its mother's care, and not that of a hireling, and demands pure air and general cleanliness in its person and surroundings. These demands are so primitive and yet so imperative that every effort must be made by the family and by the parish or state, to see that the baby obtains them. For the state should recognize that every mother who brings a child into the world has done the state a service, and that it is a duty to see that the young life is given a fair chance at the outset.

Unquestionably the great majority of failures arise from improper feeding. Mother's milk is the only perfect food and, therefore, the only suitable food for the infant. To have recourse without absolute necessity to artificial feeding is in a large number of cases to court disaster. It is often forgotten, however, that for most mothers it is an essential condition for the successful nursing of their infants, that they themselves should have sufficient nourishing food, sufficient sleep, freedom from excessive worry and a certain amount of outdoor exercise; large quantities of tea and beer play no part as an efficient food. Such conditions are as a rule easily obtainable by the well-to-do, but what about the poor mother, not infrequently with a large family and living in one or two badly-ventilated and badly-lighted rooms? It is often wonderful how they succeed at all. Mothers who have to work to supplement a husband's earnings are in a poor plight, and those who have to stand the abuse and cruelty of drunken husbands are in a still worse case.

In those conditions in which artificial feeding is necessary it is of the greatest importance that a food be supplied which will closely resemble the infant's natural food, mother's breast milk; at the same time it must be free from deleterious substances and be digestible by the infant's stomach. With very few instances cow's milk, modified to suit the age and diges-

tive capacity of the infant, is our best substitute, but only milk that is pure, fresh, and free from contamination by harmful micro-organisms, is suitable for an infant's food.

Unsanitary conditions in the home and its surroundings exert a most depressing effect, both upon the mother and upon the infant. Defective sanitation in our streets and lanes; impure air in overcrowded rooms, and domestic uncleanness are conditions which add heavily to the death rate. On the other hand, mere density of population, although it has some, has comparatively little effect, for in the houses of the Peabody Donation Fund, in London, England, which are generally crowded, and in which the individual rooms are not large, the infantile death rate is much lower than in the surrounding districts, and often does not reach ten per 100 born.

To enable us in Canada to study the question accurately and intelligently a more perfect registration of births and deaths is absolutely necessary. This registration to be effective must be prompt. In many cases much assistance can be rendered if the fact of a baby's existence is promptly recorded. The experience of other cities and countries has shown conclusively the value of compulsory registration of births within 24 hours: Only in this way among the poor and ignorant can adequate care and attention be given to both mother and child, and incidentally can many cases of blindness be prevented.

Even with a more perfect registration, which I hope we shall have shortly in Montreal, no one but a visionary can persuade himself that the underlying conditions to which I have referred are easy of relief. It is, however, greatly in our favor that there are few mothers who are not extremely desirous for their children's welfare, and who will not willingly deprive themselves of many comforts, aye of health itself, in the endeavor to succor their infant. Faults on their side are almost entirely due to poverty, bad advice, and ignorance. The lines along which a campaign to overcome these depressing conditions should be undertaken have been well laid out by enthusiastic workers both in England and America, and support has been obtained both from private philanthropy and municipal funds.