

Milk is the most important food product in the world. It is the "Staff of Life" - the stable diet of infancy and childhood, and nothing can take its place.

The difficulties of supplying wholesome milk to the thousands of little children in a big city are very great, but the city that cannot guarantee wholesome milk to its children does not deserve to have any children.

It has been said that "A city is no place for a child," and when we think of the crowded tenements and school-rooms, and the meager parks and playgrounds, and particularly of the poisoned milk supply we are constrained to believe that this statement is true. And admitting that this statement is true we admit that we have failed in our first and highest duty, for the first and highest duty of men and women is to care for helpless infancy, and those who elect to live in cities should make those cities fit for children.

From the standpoint of child welfare its milk supply is the most important matter with which a city has to deal. Children cannot thrive without milk and a contaminated supply insures a high mortality among them. It is unfortunate that this indispensable food is so easily infected. It is so delicate that it rapidly deteriorates and unless it is kept at a low temperature it is a very hot-bed for the germs of disease.

The mortality among bottle-fed babies is about three times greater than among the breast-fed during the first year of life, therefore, every mother capable of nursing her child should do so, and every mother incapable of nursing her child should be ashamed of herself. Not that she is always at fault, but since we are proud of physical perfection we should be ashamed of physical defects, and the woman who cannot nurse her child is vitally defective.

The high mortality ~~between~~ among bottle-fed babies is not due to the inherent difference between human milk and the bovine production, but mother's milk is delivered direct and fresh, while cow's milk is necessarily stale and is exposed to infection from all directions before it reaches the little consumer. Of course, mother's milk is more digestible but the great difference - the great danger of cows milk is due to diseased cows, to unsanitary conditions surrounding the dairies, to the use of preservatives and particularly to carelessness in handling milk by dairymen before delivery, and by mothers and nurses after the milk has been delivered.

Things went from bad to worse for uncontrolled tuberculosis in men or animals tends to spread and some dairymen seem to delight in dirt. A year or two later the Consumers League, another body of intelligent women, took up the matter and presented a protective ordinance to the city council. ~~WHICH~~ This ordinance was evaded for a time and ultimately voted down. The matter, however, was urged by the Health Board and after several months, with the doubtful help of a council-chamber full of women, a less drastic measure was passed.

Very little was accomplished under this milk ordinance for the reason that the State Dairy Commissioner was unfriendly to the measure, ~~and resented any interference on the part of the city officials~~ He refused to co-operate with the city officials and resented any interference with outlying dairies. Of course the ~~dairymen~~ ordinance might have been enforced by excluding milk from all dairies whose owners refused to submit them to inspection, but a poor excuse for inaction is better than none and dirty, diseased milk continued to pour into the city until such a large number of little children died of enteritis that the whole town was aroused and the demand for better milk could no longer be ignored.

With their ineffectual womanly influence a large number of intelligent women had been trying for several years to secure a clean milk supply for the city of Portland, but it an improvement was effected only after ~~scores~~ the lives of scores of little children had been sacrificed that might have been saved if the mothers of the city had been able to vote.

And now from Chicago in this enlightened day and age comes the cry - the wail of infants: "Give us pure milk lest we die!" The City of Chicago had a satisfactory Milk ordinance but the state passed a law in the interest of dairymen which has ~~apparently~~ nullified ~~entirely~~ the city ordinance. Since that time the quality of the milk supply has deteriorated, the bacterial count has increased, and the mortality among ~~has kept pace~~ infants has kept pace with the bacterial count of the milk upon which they are fed.

The July Bulletin of the Chicago Health Department calls attention to the existing danger, and the August Bulletin gives the bacterial count and the ~~corresponding~~ increase correspondingly increased death rate among infants as compared with the same month of the preceding year when ~~milk~~ the milk delivered to the city was of higher grade and the mortality among infants lower.

It would be unjust to hold men responsible for this loss of life. They are doing the best they can according to their judgment, but every woman knows that a man's judgment regarding the needs of an infant is not worth very much. A man naturally leans toward the business side of a question - that is where he shines. A woman naturally leans toward the home side of a question - that is where she shines. From a man's standpoint dairying is a great industry that must be protected, and the prohibitive cost of pure milk must also be considered. But what does it profit a woman to suffer for months and go down to the gates of death to produce one child if that child is to be sacrificed afterwards to the demands of trade?

In this same Chicago bulletin we read that during the first seven months of this year 350 children died ^{from} scarlet fever, 82 from measles, 489 from diphtheria, 101 from whooping cough - harmless seeming whooping cough that is whooped all over our street-cars every day - and 1,511 from enteritis. Approximately 2,500 children poisoned by preventable diseases in one city during seven months. What an army of infants! When we talk about the slaughter of the innocent we should confine ourselves strictly to this day and age. Every perfect child born has a right to live. It has the same right to protection from preventable diseases as it has from any other form of homicide.

When the Titanic sank with sixteen hundred souls the world was horrified and steps were immediately taken to prevent a repetition of that dreadful holocaust, but thousands of people perish every week from preventable diseases and it does n't cause a ripple on the surface of things.

If the knowledge we possess regarding the transmission of preventable diseases were intelligently utilized these diseases would ~~perish from~~ ~~the earth~~ disappear from the earth - and why do men neglect so important a matter? Simply because it is not their business. It is a matter that pertains to the home, therefore, it is the business of women.

The work of men and women in this world is naturally divided and in regard to contagious diseases man's part is fairly well done. By years of patient research the germs of contagious diseases have been isolated and ~~preventive~~ preventive rules formulated. If this knowledge was commercially valuable men would use it. In the construction of the Panama Canal it was necessary to render certain territory malaria proof and it was done.

A woman's great enterprise is her home. Her great success is her successful motherhood and it is not unreasonable to assume that when a woman is given the power she will employ it for the protection of her home and her children and preventable diseases will be prevented.

Acting as a free agent she has made a success of the home-keeping business and it is only where her hands have been tied that she has failed utterly. The health of the family is the mother's natural responsibility, but it is unfair to hold her responsible while she is deprived of a voice in the regulation of conditions which make for the health and well-being of her household.

"Summer Complaint" is the most fatal of all diseases among young children and it is usually due to impure milk. During the warm weather the bacteria in the milk supply rapidly increase and the mortality among bottle-fed babies increases correspondingly.

Pure milk is a matter of politics unless one owns a cow. It is easier to produce dirty milk than clean milk, and it is cheaper to preserve it with formaldehyde than with ice. Economical dairymen long since discovered that brewery waste might be converted, by a process peculiar to cows, into milk that would sell at a profit for less than real milk, and to thrifty people it still seems a pity to condemn a tubercular cow. But these very excellent arguments against the regulation of the milk supply do not appeal to women. Women will not stand for impure milk or ^{or} any other impurity injurious to their children, and the sooner their hands are strengthened by the ballot the better it will be for their homes.