

Infanticide

by Edwin Morris

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FVERY ten seconds, somewhere in the world, a baby dies. A blinking red light made this statement to those who attended the convention of the American Association for the Study and Prevention of Infant Mortality at Baltimore, last November. In one corner of the room was an electric light, encased in a red bulb. Six times a minute—7,540 times a day—the light went out; and, every time the light faded from the bulb, somewhere in the world, the light faded from a mother's eyes. So fast do our children die.

Sometimes they die faster. They died faster last summer. If babies kept dying, last summer would go down in the annals of the survivors as the "black summer of 1910." In the single city of New York, 373 died in a single week. Every little poor street had its little white hearse. Worse still, during the course of the summer, 8,000 children died that ought to have lived; that is to say, they died from preventable causes.

Children die from two kinds of causes; those that are preventable and those that are not. This is news. Your grandmother and, possibly, your mother believed that every child that died could not have been saved. Everybody thought so. Preventable causes of deaths were not recognized. It was taken as a matter of course that women should bear twice as many children as were required to maintain the population, because half of them were bound to die.

We still let half of the children die, but we know better. We know they need not die. We know they were born to live. We know that they do not have a chance to live. We have even exploited the old supposition that the children of the physically weak must of necessity be physically weak. We now know that the children of the physically weak are born almost as strong as the child of the strongest.

Every intelligent physician knows this statement to be true. However, let some eminent physician stand for it. Caleb W. Saleeby, one of the most eminent physicians in England, is such an authority. Read what he says on the subject in "Parenthood and Race Culture":

"Most of the babies born in the clime are splendid little specimens of humanity—so far as physique is concerned—bearing no marks of degeneration or correspond with the deterioration of their parents. In a word, hereditary works so that each generation gets a fresh start."

In another part of the same book, Dr. Saleeby estimated that the number of children who are born so weak that they have little chance for life does not exceed ten per cent.; and he attributed the weakness of these to the effects of alcohol and certain fungoid diseases upon one or both of their parents.

Having now some fundamental facts that meet with general acceptance among the enlightened, we may proceed to seek an answer to the question, "Why are children permitted to die from preventable causes and what are those preventable causes?"

We need not go far. Millions of children that are born strong enough to live under favorable circumstances are killed by their mothers. The rest that die from preventable causes are killed by the community—by you and by me, if we help to keep things as they are, and by everybody else who helps to keep things as they are.

We will first consider the mothers who kill their children. Every mother kills or tends to kill her children who does not take the trouble to inform herself concerning the proper methods of child-rearing. It is not that such mothers are lazy. It is not that they are indifferent to their children's welfare. They are simply ignorant. Some of them are asleep in ignorance. Some of them are half-steeped. But they are all ignorant. They don't know that flies, by carrying the germs of diseases, kill more children than all the elephants, tigers, lions, automobiles and street cars in the world. Therefore, flies are considered mere inconveniences. They are regarded as un-ornamental in the soup, but as not detrimental to the health. They swarm in the kitchen, the pantry and the dining room, painstakingly depositing their filth upon every particle of food that the family, including the children, eat. Some of this filth is not deadly; some of it is. But no such ignorant mother ever connects in her mind the going of her baby with the coming of the flies.

Nor does any such ignorant mother have any conception of the care with which she should feed, not only her baby, but her half-grown children. If she doesn't nurse her baby she doesn't realize that any milk she is likely to find for sale is more likely to be poison than food. Nor does she realize that such milk will be precisely as poisonous for her baby after it has been weaned. Such mothers usually buy their milk from the nearest grocery store. The number of bacteria in milk, when it exceeds 500,000 to the cubic centimeter, makes the milk unfit for use. Yet, some analyses of New York store milk, the other day, showed bacteria as high as 38,000,000. What wonder that every summer is a "black summer" for the babies of New York's poor?

In many other ways, the ignorant mother kills her children with the food she gives them. Many a baby six months old is nibbling crackers, bananas and pickles, while putting in the rest of its time at an "all-day sucker" or a stick of candy. Mothers who want their children to live should know that the premature giving of any kind of solid food to a baby is exceedingly dangerous; that after a child is weaned it should be given solid food only in accordance with the instructions of an intelligent physician; that meat and fruit (except orange juice) are like so much poison, even if they do not produce death as quickly as strychnine would; and that all during childhood, the food should be simple, with cereals, milk and vegetables as a basis and a little meat not often than once a week.

But, as a child-killer, the community exceeds in destructiveness even the ignorant mother. It is this meant that the community maintains conditions that sometimes prevent even intelligent persons from taking proper care of their children. The community maintains conditions that create poverty and slums. The community even main-



tains conditions that foster ignorance. What chance has the poor mother anywhere in this country to inform herself with regard to the rearing of children? What chance has the poor mother in New York? She has no money with which to pay a physician for consultation. If she went to a physician paid by the city, she would hardly know what to do with her children while she was away. She might leave them at a day nursery, if it is true; but did you ever think how many more day nurseries and how many more city physicians we should have to have if every mother who needs to know how to rear her children were to adopt this plan? We should have to have thousands and tens of thousands more of each. And, if the community were intelligent enough to demand such conveniences, it would be intelligent enough not to need most of them. Therefore, we who know enough not to need them are responsible for the slaughter of the children of those who won't. And, is not that a pleasant thought?

How can intelligence prevail against the neglect of communities to keep their water supplies pure? Almost every city claims to have pure water. Almost every city is a liar. So long as we have typhoid fever, we shall know that we have not pure water. The water supply of nearly every city is bad part of the year. One city drinks the sewage of another. The contamination could be prevented, of course, but it isn't. Detroit, for instance, will have another outbreak of typhoid fever next fall. Scores, if not hundreds will die, and, the following autumn, there will be another outbreak. Careful parents, of course, can give their children only boiled water to drink at home, but they cannot be sure what their children drink at school. They can only hope for the best and be thankful if they get it.

The most deadly disease that threatens children this summer is infantile paralysis. In June, reports came from the south that the disease had broken out in several widely separated places. Dr. Simon Flexner, director of the Rockefeller Institute for Medical Research, says it does not follow that the disease will again be epidemic in the east and the middle west, but he cautions physicians and parents to be on the look-out.

Infantile paralysis is caused by a living organism so small that it readily passes through a germ-filter of the finest porcelain. It is believed that this germ enters and finds lodgment in the nose, and that children whose noses are not clean are most likely to become infected. From experiments made upon monkeys at Rockefeller Institute, it is known that the average period of incubation is a little less than ten days; that is to say, definite symptoms of the disease appear ten days after the germ enters the system, though illness has sometimes followed in four days.

The first symptoms of the disease appear to vary somewhat with the individual. Also, no individual has all of the symptoms. Restlessness and irritability sometimes mark the approach. At other times there is apathy. Also there may be a low fever for a few days.

Dr. William Palmer Lucas of the Harvard Medical School, who is one of the leading investigators of the disease, offers this general advice:

"Headache, general or frontal, is not infrequently met with in children old enough to locate the pain, and this is often accompanied with rigidity of the neck. If with any of these nervous manifestations, there should be trouble in the upper air passages, such as bronchitis or sore throat, suspicion should be aroused."

But even if the disease, early in its progress, be correctly diagnosed, the best physician cannot stop it. Like scarlet fever, measles and all other germ diseases, this ailment must run its course.

A physician can only put the patient in a condition to weather the storm as well as possible.

But while little can be done after the disease has developed, careful parents can do much to prevent their children from taking the malady. The children's noses can be kept clean. Dr. Flexner regards this as most important. Also, certain disinfectants, if used as a mouth and nose wash during the summer danger period, are effective. A one per cent. solution of hydrogen peroxide will kill the germ of infantile paralysis. So will plain menthol. Each of these statements is made upon the authority of Dr. Flexner.

Yet the germ that causes infantile paralysis is more virulent than the germ of rabies. Dr. Flexner discovered that the paralysis germ could not even be weakened by drying it for weeks over caustic potash, nor by keeping it frozen for weeks. But hydrogen peroxide and menthol kill it.

Dr. Flexner is now and has been for some time conducting experiments to learn whether flies carry the germs and spread the disease. He has already definitely learned that flies do carry the germs, but he has not demonstrated that the germs, when carried, get into the system and produce the disease.

Infantile paralysis came to this country from Scandinavia. Prior to 1907 it had seldom occurred here. Since then it has been epidemic from the Atlantic to the Pacific. New York and Boston, where so many immigrants gather, have suffered most. Minnesota, to which so many Scandinavians remove, comes next. The disease flourishes during hot, dry summers. It is sort of a sister disease of cerebrospinal meningitis and, years ago, was probably often mistaken for that disease. A conspicuous point of difference is that the former malady comes in late winter or early spring, while infantile paralysis comes in summer. Infantile paralysis is most likely to attack children less than four years old, though adults are not immune. But one attack most likely makes the subject immune for life. Dr. Flexner's experiments upon monkeys indicate as much.

But, harking back to the causes of preventable deaths of children, this much more may be said: Mothers are too prone to buy medicine from doctors and not enough given to buying information from them. Mothers who do not know how to care for their children should not wait until a child is sick and then call the doctor to dose the child. They should call the doctor when the child is well, and pay him his regulation fee for sitting down half an hour and instructing them with regard to the care of the child. Most mothers need information more than their children need medicine. Doctors, when called, often give harmless medicine, when none is needed, simply because the public feels that it must have something for its money. The public is not wise enough to know that it can spend its money in no better way than to buy certain information that tends toward the maintenance of health. Diarrhea, for instance, which kills more babies, perhaps, than any other single cause, is solely a disturbance of the digestive tract due to wrong feeding. Milk containing thirty-seven million bacteria to the cubic centimeter—or even a million—will cause it. Cow's milk not properly modified is certain to upset the stomachs of infants. A half-hour with a good physician will enable a mother to get information that may prevent her child from sickening and dying.

In the meantime, the responsibility for the avoidable deaths of children must largely rest with the few who, knowing how to take care of their own, do not, for one reason or another, take effective measures to pass on this knowledge to others. A few men control every government—national, state and municipal. These men, if they wanted to, could compel government to disseminate the vast amount of information concerning the prevention of infant mortality. France moved when her birth-rate became so low that she had to move. When children become scarce, governments are sometimes as careful of their health as they are at other times of the health of hogs.

PROMINENT PEOPLE

NOTED CORRESPONDENT DIES



William E. Curtis, who recently dropped dead from apoplexy in a Philadelphia hotel, was one of the best known and most popular journalists of the present day, and his death came as a shock to his host of friends.

William Elroy Curtis was born at Akron, O., November 5, 1850, and was graduated from Western Reserve college in 1871. On December 24, 1874, he married Cora Kepler at Erie, Pa., at that time and until 1887 being on the staff of the Chicago Inter Ocean. In 1887 he went to Washington as correspondent of the Chicago Record, and remained with that paper in such a connection until 1901, when the union of the Record and the Herald created a new newspaper. Mr. Curtis was retained by the combined papers, however, and was serving as correspondent for the Record-Herald at the time of his death.

During the years 1885 and 1890 Mr. Curtis served as special commissioner from the United States to the South American republics and acted as executive officer at the international conference of that year. He was director of the bureau of American republics from 1890 until 1893; and was historical secretary and chief of the Latin-American department of the Columbian Exposition from 1891 to 1893. In 1892 he was special commissioner of the Columbian exposition at Madrid and special envoy to the Queen Regent of Spain and Pope Leo XIII. in 1892.

He was the author of numerous books and historical pamphlets, a member of all the historical societies of this country and of a number of European societies.

REJECTS TITLED SUITORS

Though her fortune and great beauty call forth persistency on the part of her many titled suitors, Mrs. William B. Leeds has turned them all away and will come back to America to live. She is the youthful widow of the "Tin Plate King," former president of the Rock Island system, a woman whom Tullu, the French artist, enthusiastically testified had 98 of the 100 points that denote physical perfection. She has had a successful social season in London and several offers of marriage, among them being one from Prince Murat, but she wishes to return unfettered to America that she may attend to the education of her son.



Mrs. Leeds wants her eight-year-old son, William Bateman Leeds, to be brought up under those conditions that best tend to promote good American citizenship. More particularly she wants him taught how to conserve and manage the \$25,000,000 estate left him by his father, who died at the Ritz hotel in Paris, June 23, 1908.

Among those who danced attendance on the charming widow were Prince Murat, the Prince de Faucigny-Livigne, Lord Falconer, heir to the Earl of Kintore; Lord Alexander Thynne, uncle of the Marquis of Bath, and Sir Abe Bailey, the South African millionaire.

One by one Mrs. Leeds, with every assurance of her high esteem, dismissed them, saying she preferred to remain single because of her small son, until only Prince Murat remained. He is 39 years old. A grandson of that Lucien Murat, third Prince of Naples and Ponte Corvo, who married a Miss Fraser of Baltimore, the prince has American blood in his veins. He proved for Mrs. Leeds far from easy to discourage.

SEES RISE IN LIVING COST



George E. Roberts, director of the mint, who has recently returned to Washington from a trip through the west, predicts that the cost of living will advance.

He says that while agricultural development will be noted, he does not expect it to keep pace with the increase in population. Farm rentals are advancing, he finds, because many farmers are being forced back to tilling of the soil. The consumers must realize, he says, that the day of cheap free land has passed, and with an advance in the cost of everything entering the production of foodstuffs there must be an increase in prices to the consumers.

Mr. Roberts points to the fact that the census shows the population of the country increased 21 per cent. between 1900 and 1910, while the farm land area increased only 4.2 per cent., and says it means higher living cost.

"The fact is," said Mr. Roberts, "that a large part of the natural gains of industrial progress are being offset by the increasing cost of food and raw materials, and the principal factor in this is the complete occupation of the country."

"There is actually less to divide than there used to be. There is relative scarcity and we have been so important a factor in world production that all the world is affected."

Mr. Roberts says there are symptoms of a struggle for land, which means higher values. The only remedy for the existing situation is a study of the laws and resource of nature and a higher efficiency in all lines of production.

GOES TO WAR UPON OPIUM

F. A. Carl of New York was appointed by President Taft to represent the United States in the conference called at The Hague to consider ways and means for the restriction of the traffic in opium. The greatest evil in China today is the opium curse. The government is laboring hard to combat it, and to a certain extent has succeeded. But the evil in China is still pronounced and for several years past it has been spreading over other countries, among the the United States.



To restrict this evil an international conference was called at the capital of Holland in which the representatives of the various world powers participated. The representative of the American government was present with the others.

While opium is a useful medicine, used under a doctor's prescription, it is a dangerous agent when otherwise employed. It has more human wrecks to its credit than any of the great diseases against which science is now directing its energies.