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Address

THE STATUS OF THE CHILD.

CHAIRMAN'S ADDRESS BEFORE THE SECTION ON DISEASES
OF CHILDREN AT THE FIFTY-EIGHTH ANNUAL SESSION,
AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION, 1907.

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To all who have given serious thought on conditions of society as they exist in our country to-day, certain changes in our ways of living seem imperative if the integrity of the nation is to be preserved. More and more numerous are the bubbles which, rising on the surface of our civilization, denote the workings of ferments beneath. The nation is already somewhat taxed with the burden of caring for, while protecting itself against, an army of defective, degenerate and unstable citizens.

The rapid increase in such members continuing, society as a whole will be vitiated, and sooner or later our people will be compelled to give way to some newer, cleaner and stronger power. To live unwarned by the experiences of other, older and past civilizations, and to blind ourselves to the evidences of decay within us is not optimism but folly! To insist that if our nation is to endure, further deterioration in the race must be stopped is not pessimism but self-preservation!

Without a stalwart and vigorous citizenship our natural resources, domain, a structural navy and a numerical army will not avail in keeping the nation to the fore among the world's powers. Our people must learn the patriotism, the wisdom and the foresight of so safeguarding our children that an oncoming generation of morally, mentally and physically equipped citizens will ever be assured to the nation.

The dangers in modern society which beset the child are many and various. Some of these are so intimately connected with home life that they will be found easier of correction by education and by wise council than by enactments of law. By virtue of their relationship to the family, physicians, if they but acquaint themselves with certain needs, are in a position to render a great and lasting service to their country. It is then to certain phases of our home life as they reflect on child interests that I wish to invite your attention.

THE UNBORN CHILD.

The position assumed by modern society with reference to the unborn child is a subject which has proved so inviting to sentimentalists that physicians as a rule discuss it reluctantly. But the possible physical effects on our women and our children of a widespread revolt against maternity is a question that medical men, no matter how much against their liking, must consider and answer. A countless number of our young women, even before marriage, are entertaining ideas, notions rather, regarding the hardships and taxations incident to child rearing.

Thousands of them at the time of marriage have these notions still further exaggerated by the intermeddling of mothers and friends. Now, too, a certain kind of instruction is given which, since its purpose is to prevent motherhood, precludes any education that would fit these young women for that motherhood. I know of nothing more nerve-wasting, nothing more cruel, than the way newly-married girls are beset with older married women, bringing ghosts of child-bed and bugaboos of child-care with which to haunt the bridal chamber. Can we wonder that many of them, who were normal, mentally, physically and morally healthy before marriage, are changed into unhappy, discontented, irritable and hysterical wives, fit neither for wifehood nor motherhood?

A great number of women live in a state of uneasiness and of absolute dread with reference to maternity. Restless, they display their activities in various freakish and faddish ways. They are not perverse, but, by contact with distorted ideas concerning their natures they are made selfish and unreliable. There may be some of us who are inclined to believe that under certain circumstances a limited family would solve perplexing problems of existence. But no matter how often offered as pleas, economic and like considerations do not enter into the studied attempts at preventing conception. The woman who practices these modern arts is actuated by personal fear or by personal selfishness or by both. With her it is not a question of limiting the number of children—she wants no child at all.

Can the woman who accepts maternity only when the miscarriage of plans compels acceptance ever satisfactorily perform maternal functions and duties? Is it enough to have the mother become reconciled only when the child is born, and only then to try to do her best? These are not mere academic questions, but are now of such import to the nation that physicians have no right to allow them to be treated only by the mawkishly inclined.

Neither will it do to trust to maternal instinct, whatever that may be, to overcome certain deficiencies in the education and in the preparation of a woman for maternity. An instinct which permits a woman to bestow her affections with equal enthusiasm, if not depth, on a Teddy bear or a poodle dog, and under other circumstances on a baby, is not sufficiently divine to be depended on to offset any great ignorance with which she may be endowed. Maternal instinct can not recover the nerve energy lost "in the fear, the anguish, and the unwillingness with which a child may be conceived." Maternal instinct may create in the woman a desire to nurse her offspring, but it can not produce the life-giving milk in a body which has been abused and maltreated and lent so grudgingly to the purposes of creation. Maternal instinct is a very beautiful, a very poetic thing, but it is neither knowledge, nor nerves, nor nourishment.

THE RIGHTS OF THE EXPECTANT MOTHER.

In our efforts to reduce infant morbidity and infant mortality we do not start far enough back. Physicians, in this country at least, do not give enough consideration to conditions that affect our women as mothers. Time spent in crusading for a cleaner milk supply and in educating mothers how to prepare and how to care for market milk is not to be called wasted. But I am convinced that whenever we shall devote as much time and attention to teaching expectant mothers how best to prepare and how best to live for the performance of natural feeding, then our efforts will be as encouraging as they will be consistent.¹

Aside from the influence of exaggerations arising in the indelicate interchange between women of confidences relating to domestic and private life, two things tend to make motherhood burdensome and do lend some reality to the hardships of rearing children. The first of these is the very common failure among mothers to furnish a sufficient or a fit supply of natural food. Compared with the lusty, breast-fed baby that spends most of his time in sleep and the remainder in nursing and in playfulness, the puny, never-satisfied, ever-squalling bottle-fed infant is a nuisance; none the less so because the instructions for his feeding have probably been given with such terrifying minutiae and unnecessary fussiness that the mother can only follow them with uneasiness and uncertainty.

Again—and to this, too, I have already alluded—our women lack any education which would give them an understanding of child needs. Unfortunately the child has certain needs which, misinterpreted or uncomprehended, will characterize his career with events, time-exacting, nerve-trying and heart-distressing. Not to speak of the benefits that would accrue to the child, proper education and proper preparation of the expectant mother would be fairer and would make her later duties less hard.

DIVORCE AND EXCESSIVE LUXURY.

It is not surprising that the larger percentage of divorces occurs in childless marriages. The surprising and distressing feature is that there is still a large number of marriages in which child rights are entirely ignored or are not sufficiently considered to keep the family intact. Without entering into a detailed study of the complex causes that have brought about the wreckage of 1,400,000 homes in the United States within the last twenty years, it is seen at once that a home with "frenzied finance" on the one hand and restless indolence on the other is encompassed by much that is favorable to a history of unhappiness. With divorce so rampant, we do not wonder that patriotic men are aroused and are putting home life to an analysis.

Ex-President Cleveland has recently written this message² to the American people:

We have fallen on a time in our national life when it will be well for us to look to the simplicity of our homes. Of course it will not do to inveigh indiscriminately or in wholesale fashion against our country's legitimate advance, which has greatly increased the comforts and reasonable luxury of domestic life. Our plea should be for the subordination of all

this to a standard of simplicity which will safeguard the integrity of the home without curtailing the greater comfort and decent living of latter day changes.

In the British race degeneration for the most part has been the result of poverty and of poor living. The hooligan is the combined product of the factory system and the slums. He is an unmoral rather than an immoral animal. It is his hopelessness and his inertia that make him so absolutely worthless and, therefore, vicious to society.

In America, however, the menacing member of society is not always from the ranks of the poverty-stricken. A large number of unstabiles and degenerates come from homes of excessive wealth and luxury. In some of these homes parents are too busy in money-making or in giddy social strife to outrank rankness to give either love or heed to the child.

In a larger number, however, parental affection is as deep as anywhere, but parental responsibility seems to begin and end in silly indulgence of the child. First "pap-fed," then pampered and spoiled, the child grows up without discipline to desires and without knowledge of his relations to the rest of society. Thus he is so handicapped by home training, or rather by lack of it, that the chances are against him in attaining good and useful citizenship. He is more likely to become where he dares a bully, but otherwise a weakling on whom is easily fixed, one or all, drunkenness, licentiousness, criminality, insanity and suicide.

ANOTHER KIND OF CHILD LABOR.

Thoughtless care of the child is not confined to any one class of our people. Every stratum of our society shows some of its markings. That boys be educated in thrift and that they be taught to earn their spending money or in part their living money may be well enough, but the kind of employment a child is allowed to accept ought to be selected by parents with care, and the expenditure of his wages ought to be supervised with prudence, though not with niggardliness.

One day last summer I saw an 11-year-old boy, whom I knew very well, entering a house of prostitution. The boy's father, who holds a responsible and lucrative clerical position, was surprised and shocked when informed of this fact. It had never before occurred to him that his boy, in accepting employment with a messenger service during the summer vacation, would be sent to such places.

The man who shoes my horse employs six assistants, owns his home and has a neat bank account. This man permits his 13-year-old boy to work on afternoons and Saturdays in a livery stable in the capacity of a "lead boy." The work itself is easy and healthy. Delivering and returning horses allows him outdoor exercise, has an element of danger that a boy likes and that is just sufficient to cultivate confidence in himself and gives him an insight into the wisdom of treating a dumb animal humanely. But a considerable time still must be spent by the boy in the stable, where his associates are a lewd, profane, drinking and gambling set of negroes who keep out of jail only through the protection of their employers.

A few days ago I saw in a lunch room a nicely dressed little fellow, not a minute past 6 years, sipping a huge cup of black coffee. The youngster was so exceedingly bright and talkative that he attracted attention at once. From one of the waiters I learned that this child, this *baby*, drank as many as three cups of coffee in one afternoon; that he sold papers, and that his customers were

1. After writing this paper, I found that an English writer, Sykes (Lancet, April 5, 1907), had very similarly expressed these ideas: "For a long time past it has struck me that the promiscuous distribution of leaflets instructing mothers how to hand-feed their infants is beginning at the wrong end, and even prefixing a few words of advice as to breast feeding does not correct the preponderant details of advice as to how to avoid breast feeding."

2. The Honest American Marriage, Ladies' Home Journal, Oct. 1906.

the drummers who patronized a nearby hotel. This little one's father (I made it a point to find out) is an able-bodied carpenter making good wages. He owns a suburban home and hires a cook, although his family is small and his wife is in perfect health.

I have no apology to offer for citing these cases. To me they are of the greatest significance. They are only isolated in the positiveness of my knowledge that these parents in no way stand in need of the wages for which they are willing to expose their children to many obvious dangers.

Last month, in the city of Birmingham, a young man was sentenced to six years in the penitentiary for embezzling a large sum of money from a bank. Ten years before the committal of the crime, when only 15 years old, this boy was employed as a marker in a bucket-shop. In the midst of gamblers and surrounded by their influences he spent his adolescence—that period of life in which impressions sing deepest and in which there is greatest susceptibility to influence. Later he entered the service of a bank, where he was rapidly promoted until he was made assistant cashier and, at the age of 25, stole \$200,000. At the trial the young man's lawyers admitted his theft, but plead not guilty "on account of insanity." The only established evidence of his insanity was an irresistible or rather unresisted desire to gamble in the stock market. His father, a leading citizen and prominent attorney, had the temerity to address the jury in behalf of the criminal which he had helped to make by neglect of parental duty.

CHILD LABOR IN FACTORIES.

Philanthropists, humanitarians and others have raised a far-reaching cry against child-labor in factories and in sweatshops. God knows their indignation is righteous enough! The refined barbarity with which these little ones are murdered makes a humane man almost regret the passing from civilization of cannibalism, which, at least, had the comparative virtues of quick and honest dispatch. But the greater number of these children are so born that, even were their liberty uninterfered with by factories, their usefulness to society and to the state would be limited.

In the north they are the children of a class of immigrants that only years of training and of education can make representative in their citizenship. In the southern mills they are the children of a class of people that has lived for a century in contact with civilization without becoming a part of it. Within this class are embraced the "moonshiners," the "feudists," the "white-caps," the "train-wreckers," the "church-burners," etc., who, living at enmity with law, have done so much to bring disgrace on the fair name of the south. Since little has been done to reclaim them, these people, the so-called "poor white trash," are not to be called hopeless, but certainly it will be many years before they will adapt themselves to the greater works of our civilization. Though we work then for humanity and for Christianity in freeing these children from their bondsmen, we can not by that act alone add much to the stability of the nation. Orphans and children deserted or neglected by parents are now being lodged, fed, clothed and educated by society. Crippled and blind children, even those of the poor, are now trained and educated for self-support. Backward and defective children are being humanely placed in separate classes from the better mentally and physically equipped children. They are no longer forced to compete where defeat and humil-

iation are certain. Youthful criminals no longer have criminality fixed on them by association with older and more hardened offenders. They are now placed under restraint so gentle and are surrounded by influences so uplifting that the best side of their natures is stimulated to outgrow proclivities to evil.

Physicians, since they have aided no little in bringing them about, feel a special pride in these reforms. But if our zeal and our enthusiasm are to end here then it were wiser to revert to the customs of that ancient people who, to guard themselves against deterioration, could hit on no more ingenious plan than to do away with weak and defective children. Let us continue to spend time and money in behalf of these unfortunates, but let us not deceive ourselves into believing that these are the boys and girls who will to-morrow shape the history of the nation.

Not they, but the children we know personally, the children in the homes we visit professionally, are the ones who will become the leaders and the representative citizens of the republic; into their keeping will be placed the destiny of the country. Therefore, let our special care be for them, and let us not underestimate the less glaring dangers that may be threatening them.

I have already mentioned some of the insidious social evils that, creeping on us, are endangering our children. If time permitted there are others of which I should like to speak. Before closing there is one from which I can not withhold brief reference.

Twenty years ago and later obscene literature in every form was debarred, at least from our homes. Even today if it came to us in any other form the obscenity of the modern newspaper would be cast out with crimson indignation. And yet the write-up of a recent notable trial, teeming though it did with nauseating detail of indecent situations, was followed closely by children all over the land, who awaited hungrily and greedily for the next issue.

That old dodge of the press, "We print what the people want," is no more lofty than the defense of dive and brothel-keepers. Examine the Sunday edition, baited for children with comic supplement, and then go make a Fourth of July speech on this glorious country of ours, in which the freedom of press shall never, no never, be restricted, though our children be damned.

Original Articles

TEN YEARS EXPERIENCE IN THE TREATMENT OF SYPHILIS BY THE INTRAMUSCULAR INJECTION OF INSOLUBLE MERCURIALS.*

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The dangers of a premature judgment of the value of a therapeutic method is abundantly proved by the experience of the past few years, and should warn us that excessive optimism may be as harmful as the therapeutic nihilism that was formerly the fashion. Tuberculin, for instance, went up like a rocket and has come

* Read in the Section on Cutaneous Medicine and Surgery of the American Medical Association, at the Fifty-eighth Annual Session, held at Atlantic City, June, 1907.