# THE WORLD'S BEST SHORT FICTION

# HIS NEW MITTENS--by Stephen Crane

*"Horace stared with somber eyes at the plate of food."*

LITTLE Horace was walking home from school, brilliantly decorated by a pair of new red mittens. A number of boys were snowballing gleefully in a field. They hailed him. "Come on, Horace. We're having a battle."

Horace was sad. "No," he said, "I can't. I've got to go home." At noon his mother had admonished him. "Now, Horace, you came straight home as soon as school is out. Do you hear? And don't you get them nice new mittens all wet, either. Do you hear?" Also his aunt had said: "I declare, Emily, it's a shame the way you allow that child to ruin his things." She had meant mittens. To his mother, Horace had dutifully replied, "Yes'm." But he now loitered in the vicinity of the group of uproarious boys, who were yelling like hawks as the white balls flew.

Some of them immediately analyzed this extraordinary hesitancy. "Hah!" they paused to scoff, "afraid of your new mittens, ain't you?" Some smaller boys, who were not yet so wise in discerning motives, applauded this attack with unreasonable vehemence. "A-fray-ed of his mit-tens! A-fray-ed of his mit-tens." They sang these lines to cruel and monotonous music which is as old perhaps as American childhood and which it is the privilege of the emancipated adult to completely forget. "A-fray-ed of his mittens!"

Horace cast a tortured glance toward his playmates, and then dropped his eyes to the snow at his feet. Presently he turned to the trunk of one of the great maple trees that lined the curb. He made a pretense of closely examining the rough and virile bark. To his mind, this familiar street of Whilomville seemed to grow dark in the thick shadow of shame. The trees and the houses were now palled in purple.

"A-fray-ed of his mit-tens!" The terrible music had in it a meaning from the moonlit war-drums of chanting cannibals.

At last Horace, with supreme effort, raised his head. "'Tain't them I care about," he said gruffly. "I've got to go home. That's all."

Whereupon each boy held his left fore-finger as if it were a pencil and began to sharpen it derisively with his right fore-finger. They came closer, and sang like a trained chorus, "A-fray-ed of his mittens!"

When he raised his voice to deny the charge it was simply lost in the screams of the mob. He was alone fronting all the traditions of boyhood held before him by inexorable representatives. To such a low state had he fallen that one lad, a mere baby, outflanked him and then struck him in the cheek with a heavy snow-ball. The act was acclaimed with loud cheers. Horace turned to dart at his assailant, but there was an immediate demonstration on the other flank, and he found himself obliged to keep his face toward the hilarious crew of tormentors. The baby retreated in safety to the rear of the crowd, where he was received with fulsome compliments upon his daring. Horace retreated slowly up the walk. He continually tried to make them heed him, but the only sound was the chant, "A-fray-ed of his mit-tens!" In this desperate withdrawal the beset and haggard boy suffered more than is the common lot of man.

Being a boy himself, he did not understand boys at all. He had of course the dismal conviction that they were going to dog him to his grave. But near the corner of the field they suddenly seemed to forget all about it. Indeed, they possessed only the malevolence of so many flitter-headed sparrows. The interest had swung capriciously to some other matter. In a moment they were off in the field again, carousing amid the snow. Some authoritative boy had probably said, "Aw, come on."

As the pursuit ceased, Horace ceased his retreat. He spent some time in what was evidently an attempt to adjust his self-respect, and then began to wander furtively down toward the group. He, too, had undergone an important change. Perhaps his sharp agony was only as durable as the malevolence of the others. In this boyish life obedience to some unformulated creed of manners was enforced with capricious, but merciless, rigor. However, they were, after all, his comrades, his friends.

They did not heed his return. They were engaged in an altercation. It had evidently been planned that this battle was between Indians and soldiers. The smaller and weaker boys had been induced to appear as Indians in the initial skirmish, but they were now very sick of it, and were reluctantly, but steadfastly, affirming their desire for a change of caste. The larger boys had all won great distinction, devastating Indians materially, and they wished the war to go on as planned. They explained vociferously that it was proper for the soldiers always to thrash the Indians. The little boys did not pretend to deny the truth of this argument; they confined themselves to the simple statement that, in that case, they wished to be soldiers. Each little boy willingly appealed to the others to remain Indians, but as for himself, he reiterated his desire to enlist as a soldier. The larger boys were in despair over this dearth of enthusiasm in the small Indians. They alternately wheedled and bullied, but they could not pursuade the little boys, who were really suffering dreadful humiliation rather than to submit to another onslaught of soldiers. They were called all the baby names that had the power of stinging deep into their pride, but they remained firm.

Then a formidable lad, a leader of reputation, one who could whip many boys that wore long trousers, suddenly blew out his cheeks and shouted, "Well, all right then. I'll be an Indian myself. Now." The little boys greeted with cheers this addition to their wearied ranks, and seemed then content. But matters were not mended in the least, because all of the personal following of the formidable lad, with the addition of every outsider, spontaneously forsook the flag and declared themselves Indians. There were now no soldiers. The Indians had carried everything unanimously. The formidable lad used his influence, but his influence could not shake the loyalty of his friends, who refused to fight under any colors but his colors.

Plainly there was nothing for it but to coerce the little ones. The formidable lad again became a soldier, and then graciously permitted to join him all the real fighting strength of the crowd, leaving behind a most forlorn band of little Indians. Then the soldiers attacked the Indians, exhorting them to opposition at the same time.

The Indians at first adopted a policy of hurried surrender, but this had no success, as none of the surrenders were accepted. They then turned to flee, bawling out protests. The ferocious soldiers pursued them amid shouts. The battle widened, developing all manner of marvelous detail.

Horace had turned toward home several times, but, as a matter of fact, this scene held him in a spell. It was fascinating beyond anything which the grown man understands. He had always in the back of his head a sense of guilt, even a sense of impending punishment for disobedience, but they could not weigh with the delirium of this snow battle.

II.

One of the raiding soldiers, espying Horace, called out in passing, "A-fray-ed of his mit-tens!" Horace flinched at this renewal, and the other lad paused to taunt him again. Horace scooped some snow, molded it into a ball, and flung it at the other. "Ho," cried the boy, "you're an Indian, are you? Hey, fellers, here's an Indian that ain't been killed yet." He and Horace engaged in a duel in which both were in such haste to mold snowballs that they had little time for aiming.

Horace once struck his opponent squarely in the chest. "Hey," he shouted, "you're dead. You can't fight any more, Pete. I killed you. You're dead."

The other boy flushed red, but he continued frantically to make ammunition. "You never touched me," he retorted glowering. "You never touched me. Where, now?" he added defiantly. "Where'd you hit me?"

"On the coat! Right on your breast. You can't fight any more. You're dead."

"You never!"

"I did, too. Hey, fellers, ain't he dead? I hit 'im square."

"He never!"

Nobody had seen the affair, but some of the boys took sides in absolute accordance with their friendship for one of the concerned parties. Horace's opponent went about contending. "He never touched me. He never came near me. He never came near me."

The formidable leader now came forward and accosted Horace. "What was you? An Indian? Well, then, you're dead—that's all. He hit you. I saw him."

"Me?" shrieked Horace. "He never came within a mile of me——"

At that momet he heard his name called in a certain familiar tune of two notes, with the last note shrill and prolonged. He looked toward the sidewalk, and saw his mother standing there in her widow's weeds, with two brown paper parcels under her arm. A silence had fallen upon all the boys. Horace moved slowly toward his mother. She did not seem to note his approach; she was gazing austerely off through the naked branches of the maples where two crimson sunset bars lay on the deep blue sky.

At a distance of ten paces, Horace made a desperate venture. "Oh, ma," he whined, "can't I stay out for a while?"

"No," she answered solemnly, "you come with me." Horace knew that profile; it was the inexorable profile. But he continued to plead, because it was not beyond his mind that a great show of suffering now might diminish her suffering later.

He did not dare to look back at his playmates. It was already a public scandal that he could not stay out as late as other boys, and he could imagine his standing now that he had been again dragged off by his mother in sight of the whole world. He was a profoundly miserable human being.

Aunt Martha opened the door for them. Light streamed about her straight skirt. "Oh," she said, "so you found him on the road, eh? Well, I declare! It was about time!"

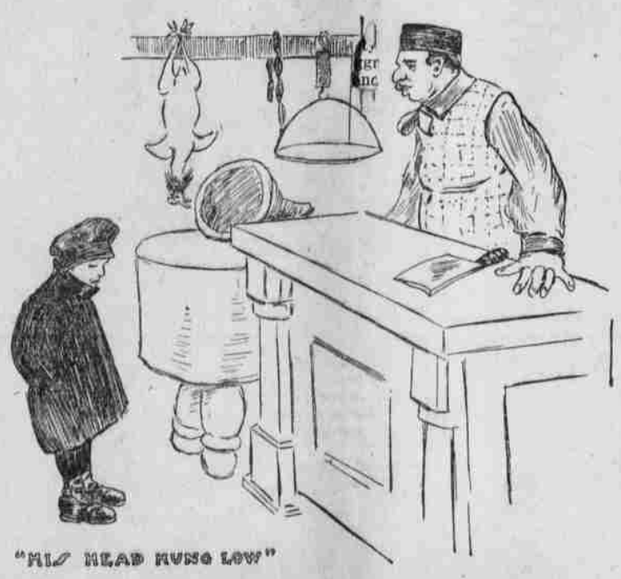
Horace slunk into the kitchen. The stove, spraddling out on its four iron legs, was gently humming. Aunt Martha had evidently just lighted the lamp, for she went to it and began to twist the wick experimentally.

"Now," said the mother, "let's see them mittens."

Horace's chin sank. The aspiration of the criminal, the passionate desire for an asylum from retribution, from justice, was aflame in his heart. "I—I—don't—don't know where they are," he gasped finally as he passed his hand over his pockets

"Horace," intoned his mother, "you are telling me a story!"

"'Tain't a story," he answered, just above his breath. He looked like a sheep-stealer.



"HIS HEAD HUNG LOW"

His mother held him by the arm, and began to search his pockets. Almost at once she was able to bring forth a pair of very wet mittens. "Well, I declare!" cried Aunt Martha. The two women went close to the lamp, and minutely examined the mittens, turning them over and over. Afterwards, when Horace looked up, his mother's sad-lined, homely face was turned toward him. He burst into tears. His mother drew a chair near the stove. "Just you sit there now, until I tell you to git off." He sidled meekly into the chair. His mother and his aunt went briskly about the business of preparing supper. They did not display a knowledge of his existence; they carried an effect of oblivion so far that they even did not speak to each other. Presently, they went into the dining and living room; Horace could hear the dishes rattling. His Aunt Martha brought a plate of food, placed it on a chair near him, and went away without a word.

Horace instantly decided that he would not touch a morsel of the food. He had often used this ruse in dealing with his mother. He did not know why it brought her to terms, but certainly it sometimes did.

The mother looked up when the aunt returned to the other room. "Is he eatin' his supper?" she asked.

The maiden aunt, fortified in ignorance, gazed with pity and contempt upon this interest. "Well, now, Emily, how do I know?" she queried. "Was I goin' to stand over him? Of all the worryin' you do about that child! It's a shame the way you're bringing up that child."

"Well, he ought to eat something. It won't do fer him to go without eatin'," the mother retorted weakly.

Aunt Martha, profoundly scorning the policy of concession which these words meant, uttered a long, contemptuous sigh.

III.

Alone in the kitchen, Horace stared with somber eyes at the plate of food. For a long time he betrayed no sign of yielding. His mood was adamantine. He was resolved not to sell his vengeance for bread, cold ham, and a pickle, and yet it must be known that the sight of them affected him powerfully. The pickle in particular was notable for its seductive charm. He surveyed it darkly.

But at last, unable to longer endure his state, his attitude in the presence of the pickle, he put out an inquisitive finger and touched it, and it was cool and green and plump. Then a full conception of the cruel woe of his situation swept upon him suddendly, and his eyes filled with tears, which began to move down his cheeks. He sniffled. His heart was black with hatred. He painted in his mind scenes of deadly retribution. His mother would be taught that he was not one to endure persecution meekly, without raising an arm in his defense. And so his dreams were of a slaughter of feelings, and near the end of them his mother was pictured as coming, bowed with pain, to his feet. Weeping, she implored his charity. Would he forgive her? No; his once tender heart had been turned to stone by her injustice. He could not forgive her. She must pay the inexorable penalty.

The first item in this horrible plan was the refusal of the food. This he knew by experience would work havoc in his mother's heart. And so he grimly waited.

But suddenly it occurred to him that the first part of his revenge was in danger of failing. The thought struck him that his mother might not capitulate in the usual way. According to his recollection, the time was more than due when she should come in, worried, sadly affectionate, and ask him if he was ill. It had then been his custom to hint in a resigned voice that he was the victim of secret disease, but that he preferred to suffer in silence and alone. If she was obdurate in her anxiety, he always asked her in a gloomy, low voice to go away and leave him to suffer in silence and alone in the darkness without food. He had known this manoeuvering to result even in pie.

But what was the meaning of the long pause and the stillness? Had his old and valued ruse betrayed him? As the truth sank into his mind, he supremely loathed life, the world, his mother. Her heart was beating back the besiegers; he was a defeated child.

He wept for a time before deciding upon the final stroke. He would run away. In a remote corner of the world he would become some sort of bloody-handed person driven to a life of crime by the barbarity of his mother. She should never know his fate. He would torture her for years with doubts and doubts, and drive her implacably to a repentant grave. Nor would his Aunt Martha escape. Some day, a century hence, when his mother was dead, he would write to his Aunt Martha, and point out her part in the blighting of his life. For one blow against him now he would, in time, deal back a thousand; aye, ten thousand.

He arose and took his coat and cap. As he moved stealthily toward the door he cast a glance backward at the pickle. He was tempted to take it, but he knew if he left the plate inviolate his mother would feel even worse.

A blue snow was falling. People bowed forward were moving briskly along the walks. The electric lamps hummed amid showers of flakes. As Horace emerged from the kitchen, a shrill squall drove the flakes around the corner of the house. He cowered away from it, and its violence illumined his mind vaguely in new directions. He deliberated upon a choice of remote corners of the globe. He found that he had no plans which were definite enough in a geographical way, but without much loss of time he decided upon California. He moved briskly as far as his mother's front gate, on the road to California. He was off at last. His success was a trifle dreadful; his throat choked.

But at the gate he paused. He did not know if his journey to California would be shorter if he went down Niagara Avenue or off through Hogan Street. As the storm was very cold and the point was very important, he decided to withdraw for reflection to the wood-shed. He entered the dark shanty, and took seat upon the old chopping-block upon which he was supposed to perform for a few minutes every afternoon when he returned from school. The wind screamed and shouted at the loose boards, and there was a rift of snow on the floor to leeward of a crack.

Here the idea of starting for California on such a night departed from his mind, leaving him ruminating miserably upon his martyrdom. He saw nothing for it but to sleep all night in the wood-shed and start for California in the morning bright and early. Thinking of his bed, he kicked over the floor and found that the innumerable chips were all frozen tightly, bedded in ice.

Later he viewed with joy some signs of excitement in the house. The flare of a lamp moved rapidly from window to window. Then the kitchen door slammed loudly and a shawled figure sped toward the gate. At last he was making them feel his power. The shivering child's face was lit with saturnine glee as in the darkness of the wood-shed he gloated over the evidences of consternation in his home. The shawled figure had been his Aunt Martha dashing with the alarm to the neighbors.

The cold of the wood-shed was tormenting him. He endured only because of the terror he was causing. But then it occurred to him that, if they instituted a search for him, they would probably examine the wood-shed. He knew that it would not be manful to be caught so soon. He was not positive now that he was going to remain away forever, but at any rate he was bound to inflict some more damage before allowing himself to be captured. If he merely succeeded in making his mother angry, she would thrash him on sight. He must prolong the time in order to be safe. If he held out propely, he was sure of a welcome of love, even though he should drip with crimes.

Evidently the storm had increased, for when he went out it swung him violently with its rough and merciless strength. Panting, stung, half-blinded with the driving flakes, he was now a waif, exiled, friendless, and poor. With a bursting heart, he thought of his home and his mother. To his forlorn vision they were as far away as heaven.

IV.

Horace was undergoing changes of feeling so rapidly that he was merely moved hither and then thither like a kite. He was now aghast at the merciless ferocity of his mother. It was she who had thrust him into this wild storm, and she was perfectly indifferent to his fate, perfectly indifferent. The forlorn wanderer could no longer weep. The strong sobs caught at his throat, making his breath come in short, quick snuffles. All in him was conquered save the enigmatical childish ideal of form, manner. This principle still held out, and it was the only thing between him and submission. When he surrendered, he must surrender in a way that deferred to the undefined code. He longed simply to go to the kitchen and stumble in, but his unfathomable sense of fitness forbade him.

Presently he found himself at the head of Niagara Avenue, staring through the snow into the blazing windows of Stickney's butcher shop. Stickney was the family butcher, not so much because of a superiority to other Whilomville butchers as because he lived next door and had been an intimate friend of the father of Horace. Rows of glowing pigs hung head downward back of the tables, which bore huge pieces of red beef. Clumps of attenuated turkeys were suspended here and there. Stickney, hale and smiling, was bantering with a woman in a cloak, who, with a monster basket on her arm, was dickering for eight cents' worth of something. Horace watched them through a frosted pane. When the woman came out and passed him, he went toward the door. He touched the latch with his finger, but withdrew again suddendly to the sidewalk. Inside Stickney was whistling cheerily and assorting his knives.

Finally Horace went desperately forward, opened the door, and entered the shop. His head hung low. Stickney stopped whistling. "Hello, young man," he cried, "what brings you here?"

Horace halted, but said nothing. He swung one foot to and fro over the saw-dust floor.

Stickney had placed his two fat hands palms downward and wide apart at the table, in the attitude of a butcher facing a customer, but now he straightened.

"Here," he said, "what's wrong? What's wrong, kid?"

"Nothin'," answered Horace, huskily. He labored for a moment with something in his throat, and afterwards added, "O'ny—I've run away, and——"

"Run away!" shouted Stickney. "Run away from what? Who?"

"From—home," answered Horace. "I don't like it there any more. I——" He had arranged an oration to win the sympathy of the butcher; he had prepared a table setting forth the merits of his case in the most logical fashion, but it was as if the wind had been knocked out of his mind. "I've run away. I——"

Stickney reached an enormous hand over the array of beef, and firmly grappled the emigrant. Then he swung himself to Horace's side. His face was stretched with laughter, and he playfully shook his prisoner. "Come—come—come. What dashed nonsense is this? Run away, hey? Run away?" Whereupon the child's long-tried spirit found vent in howls.

"Come, come," said Stickney busily. "Never mind now, never mind. You just come along with me. It'll be all right. I'll fix it. Never you mind."

Five minutes later, the butcher, with a great ulster over his apron, was leading the boy homeward.

At the very threshold, Horace raised his last flag of pride. "No—no," he sobbed. "I don't want to. I don't want to go in there." He braced his foot against the step, and made a very respectable resistance.

"Now, Horace," cried the butcher. He thrust open the door with a bang. "Hello there!" Across the dark kitchen the door to the living-room opened and Aunt Martha appeared. "You've found him!" she screamed.

"We've come to make a call," roared the butcher. At the entrance to the living-room a silence fell upon them all. Upon a couch, Horace saw his mother lying limp, pale as death, her eyes gleaming with pain. There was an electric pause before she swung a waxen hand toward Horace. "My child," she murmured tremulously. Whereupon the sinister person addressed, with a prolonged wail of grief and joy, ran to her with speed. "Ma—ma! Ma—ma! Oh, ma—ma!" She was not able to speak in a known tongue as she folded him in her weak arms.

Aunt Martha turned defiantly upon the butcher because her face betrayed her. She was crying. She made a gesture, half military, half feminine. "Won't you have a glass of our root-beer, Mr. Stickney? We make it ourselves."

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*". . . Some sort of bloody-handed person."*



# Common Sense Care That Will Prevent Cholera Infantum

Cholera infantum is a name applied, without great looseness, to a whole group of infantile maladies. These differ very much in important particulars, but they also have many characteristics in common. For one thing, all are disorders of the digestive tract; for another thing, all are caused by unclean and improper food, and for still another thing, all are most prevalent in summer. A familiar synonym for cholera infantum, in fact, is "summer complaint." But this name is far from accurate, for "summer complaint," while most common and most dangerous in the hot months, is by no means confined to the summer.

When cholera infantum appears in its true form—that is to say, as an infectious dysentery—it is an exceedingly fatal disease at any and every season. Several authorities say that the death rate is more than 60 per cent., which means that two-thirds of the children attacked by it die. In all large cities it is epidemic throughout the year, and in New York, where the dwellings of the poor are peculiarly crowded and unsanitary, there are 12,000 deaths from it each year. During the census year 1904, when the last mortality statistics were gathered by the federal government, there were 37,000 deaths from cholera infantum in the comparatively few cities and towns that made returns. Thus in the whole country the mortality was well above 50,000.

The most virulent and dangerous form of the malady is caused by a minute organism now believed to be identical with the germ which causes the terrible adult dysentery of the tropics. This germ was discovered by a Japanese scientist named Shiga in 1898, and bacteriologists have therefore called it the bacillus dysenteriae Shiga. Two years later the eminent American biologist, Dr. Simon Flexner, discovered an organism of similar appearance in the tissues of a patient named Harris at Manila, and to this was given the name of bacillus dysenteriae Flexner, or Flexner-Harris. It was soon noted that the two bacilli were practically identical, and since then it has been found that besides causing tropical dysentery they are also causing cholera infantum.

A great many able men are now studying cholera infantum and its organism, particularly at the Rockefeller Institute in New York, Dr. L. K. Hirshberg at the Hopkins Hospital and at some of the German universities. No certain cure for the disease has been discovered yet, but there is good reason to believe that within a few years a protective vaccine will be perfected. When that is accomplished it will be possible to vaccinate children against cholera infantum just as they are now vaccinated against smallpox. It is evident that this will mean a great reduction in infantile mortality—a most important matter for the human race as a whole.

The cholera infantum bacillus, like that of typhoid fever, practically always enters the body through the stomach and by the medium of bad milk or contaminated food. It lives and breeds in the intestinal tract and sends forth very powerful toxins, or poisons. These toxins cause most of the familiar symptoms of the disease—the vomiting, the acute diarrhoea, the fever, the abdominal pains and the rapid wasting of strength. The onslaught is so severe that the little patient sometimes dies within a week, and even when recovery follows an attack convalescence is always slow and precarious, and the danger of sudden relapse and collapse is always great.

In its war on this terrible malady modern medicine must depend as yet on weapons that are necessarily crude. An effort is made to remove the bacilli and their toxins from the intestines by irrigation, and stimulants are employed to combat the distressing exhaustion. In addition, the fever and other symptoms are combatted in the manner that seems least harmful and an effort is made to administer nourishment. Further than that nothing can be done, and so it is not remarkable that two-thirds of the children who develop true cholera infantum die of it.

In many cases, indeed, the physician is practically impotent and so must confine himself to making the doomed child as comfortable and to preventing the spread of the disease to other children in the household, for cholera infantum, as has been mentioned, is decidedly infectious, and every case is apt to be followed by other cases.

Therefore, when the disease appears in a house, it is well to employ the same safeguards against its spread as would be employed in a case of typhoid. All the bed clothes and other fabrics in use in the sick room should be well soaked in a mild solution of some effective germicide—carbolic acid or corrosive sublimate, for instance—before they are sent out with the rest of the family laundry, and care should be exercised in disposing of the water used to wash the patient. Other appropriate precautions will suggest themselves when it is remembered that the intestines of the patient and their secretions are fairly alive with virulent bacilli.

To prevent cholera infantum it is necessary, first, to reduce the risk of direct infection to the minimum, and secondly, to keep the child in good general health, so that, in case of chance infection, it may be in a condition to make a successful fight against the disease. Both results may be attained by a proper supervision of its food supply. It must be fed intelligently and it must get pure food—which means, not food which merely looks good and smells good, but food which is nourishing, easily digested and absolutely free of all deleterious organisms.

It is a lamentable fact, but one which no observant physician will deny, that mother-love causes almost as many deaths among babies as mother-neglect. About the business of "raising" babies—certainly the most important profession, by immense odds, in all the world—there has been grouped a mass of traditions and superstitions whose practical effect is a needless and enormous increase in the infantile death rate.

Ancient grandmothers, intrenched behind the fact that they have "raised a dozen children and lost none," appear with all sorts of ridiculous lore regarding baby food and baby dressing, and it takes a great deal of firmness and ingenuity on the part of the physician to combat them and put them to rout. Too often he is put to rout himself, and has to content himself with rectifying the damage they have worked.

The present writer was once called in, for instance, to ease the last moments of a poor little child whose life was ending at four months. The baby had cholera infantum and was dying of it, and nothing could be done but make its death painless. And why was it dying? Simply because its grandmother—a presumably sane and intelligent woman—had insisted that it be given a "taste" of every dish eaten by its mother, on the theory that it would thus progress most easily and safely from a diet of milk to one of adult food. The poor child's digestive apparatus was broken down entirely by this incredible barbarity, and stray germs of cholera infantum found it an easy victim. Yet if the grandmother had been told that she was directly and unmistakably responsible for the baby's death she would have protested most violently and, in all probability, would have instituted an action for criminal slander.

Superstitions such as this are by no means few, nor are they confined to the ignorant. Many a mother of undoubted intelligence provides her baby with one of the rubber or ivory nipples called "comforters" or "pacifiers." The theory of this is that the "pacifier" will keep the baby quiet, divert it from sucking its thumbs, and, by giving it something to employ its gums upon, help it to cut its teeth. This is the theory. In sober reality, the "pacifier" merely serves to make the baby querulous and peevish, to teach it bad habits, and to fill its mouth and body with the germs of half a dozen diseases—from cholera infantum to diphtheria and from chicken pox to meningitis.

The baby is dumped into its perambulator, with a "pacifier" in its chubby fist, and a nurse girl is told off to take care of it. In a moment it drops the "pacifier" and the nurse girl rescues the deadly implement from the sidewalk. If she is careful, she wipes it with her apron or handkerchief; if not she jams it into the baby's mouth without renovation. In either case, there are ten chances to one that it is fairly alive with germs. Wiping a thing with an apron, or dusting it with a brush, or washing it with soap, does not rid it of the organisms of disease. The only way to do that effectively is to boil it steadily for at least half an hour. And whoever heard of a nurse girl who boiled her charge's "pacifier" for half an hour before putting it to its disgusting and nefarious uses?

In "pacifiers," rubber rings, and things of that sort cholera infantum lies. One authority estimates that from 5 to 10 per cent. of all deaths among infants less than two years old are due to infections by such or similar means. The average child, luckily enough, has an almost uncanny power for resisting virulent organisms. Its hold upon life, despite its physical weakness, is strong, and it has a wonderful capacity for recovery. If that were not true, the average child, in the face of its almost constant exposure, would die.

There is no truth whatever in the common superstition that children must have something on which to exercise their gums. The baby's liking for such things is a habit, pure and simple, and a bad habit.

It is just as easy to teach it to do without its rubber ring—just as easy and a great deal more humane and sensible.