

CHILD BLINDNESS
BEING CONQUEREDScience Makes Headway in
Age-Long Fight.

NEW LAWS HELP CAUSE

Babies' Sore Eyes Chief Among Afflictions That Lead to Permanent Loss of Sight.

NEW YORK, May 27.—The combined forces of medicine, legislation, the press, and other educational agencies are at last getting the upper hand in the age-long fight against the principal cause of blindness in childhood—babies' sore eyes—according to the seventh annual report of the national committee for the prevention of blindness, made public today at the general office of the committee in the Russell Sage foundation building.

But this information is counteracted by the statement in the report that there is no abatement in the wave of blindness resulting from wood alcohol poisoning which started soon after the enactment of the Volstead law. The report says that new legislation for the prevention of blindness has passed in seven states: Connecticut, Idaho, Iowa, New Mexico, Missouri, Oklahoma and Texas.

Expert Diagnoses Malady.
Discussing ophthalmia neonatorum, more commonly known as "babies' sore eyes" or "O. N.," among doctors, Edward M. Van Cleave, managing director of the national committee for the prevention of blindness, said:

"When we turn to a study of the situation as respects this disease, which destroys at birth the vision of thousands of babies, we find new evidence of the effectiveness of a constant educational propaganda on the subject. For more than a year public attention has been drawn to this cause of needless blindness. Statistics gathered during the last year show a smaller percentage of these cases among newly admitted pupils in special schools for the blind throughout America than in any previous year."

Whereas two years ago 23.2 per cent of new admissions to these special schools for the blind were cases of pupils blind from "O. N.," the 1922 report of the committee shows that in the last year this percentage dropped to 13.5 per cent, a reduction of almost 50 per cent.

Wood Alcohol Ravages Eyes.
Under the head of "Methanol," the new technical name for wood alcohol, the report says: "Day by day the toll of wood alcohol poisoning is taken. The wave seems to recede, only to gain new impetus. Warnings sent broadcast over the United States have undoubtedly prevented many from experiencing the tragedy of blindness, but there are still those who succumb to the temptation either through ignorance or through willfulness. The change of name to methanol has eradicated the suggestion of a beverage and a new name has been offered, so coloring it with methyl violet that there can be no possibility of mistaking it for the drink product of excellent suggestion contributed by Dr. S. Lewis Ziegler. It is not uncommon for the committee to receive notices of four or five cases a day of poisoning from this cause; these give no real intimation of the many who possibly through partial immunity or because of the small amount consumed suffer deterioration of sight rather than total blindness. The change in name from methanol to methyl violet has been a considerable psychological effect."

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