

ARE YOU KILLING YOUR CHILD?



Ignorant Neglect of Baby Ailments the Common Curse of Families

ARE you killing your child? It is a horrifying question—a question which no mother, no parent, can believe would be seriously asked.

Indeed, it is a question which, in view of all that is being done in this age by private charity, public enterprise and general solicitude for the well-being of the children of the nation, would appear to be one of sheer folly.

Yet it is at this very time that it is becoming most pertinent; for at this very time physicians who are the foremost experts specializing in private practice upon the diseases of children, as well as those who are authorities in public institutions and those holding official positions as caretakers of the health of whole communities, all are stirred by the suddenly recognized inadequacy of the care that is accorded the child.

Not health merely, but life itself is put in peril, on the one hand by neglect that is almost culpable, on the other by affections almost criminally foolish.

It is an appalling arraignment. How true are the charges—and who are among the guilty?

MOTHERS, the science of medicine discovers, give coddling affection where they should give intelligent oversight; fathers force development of the mind where it is certain injury, if not absolute wreck of the body.

Communities aim for improvements where they should correct wholesale defects; the average child, at least one prominent physician intimates, receives less thorough and intelligent care than beasts that are reared on scientifically managed stock farms.

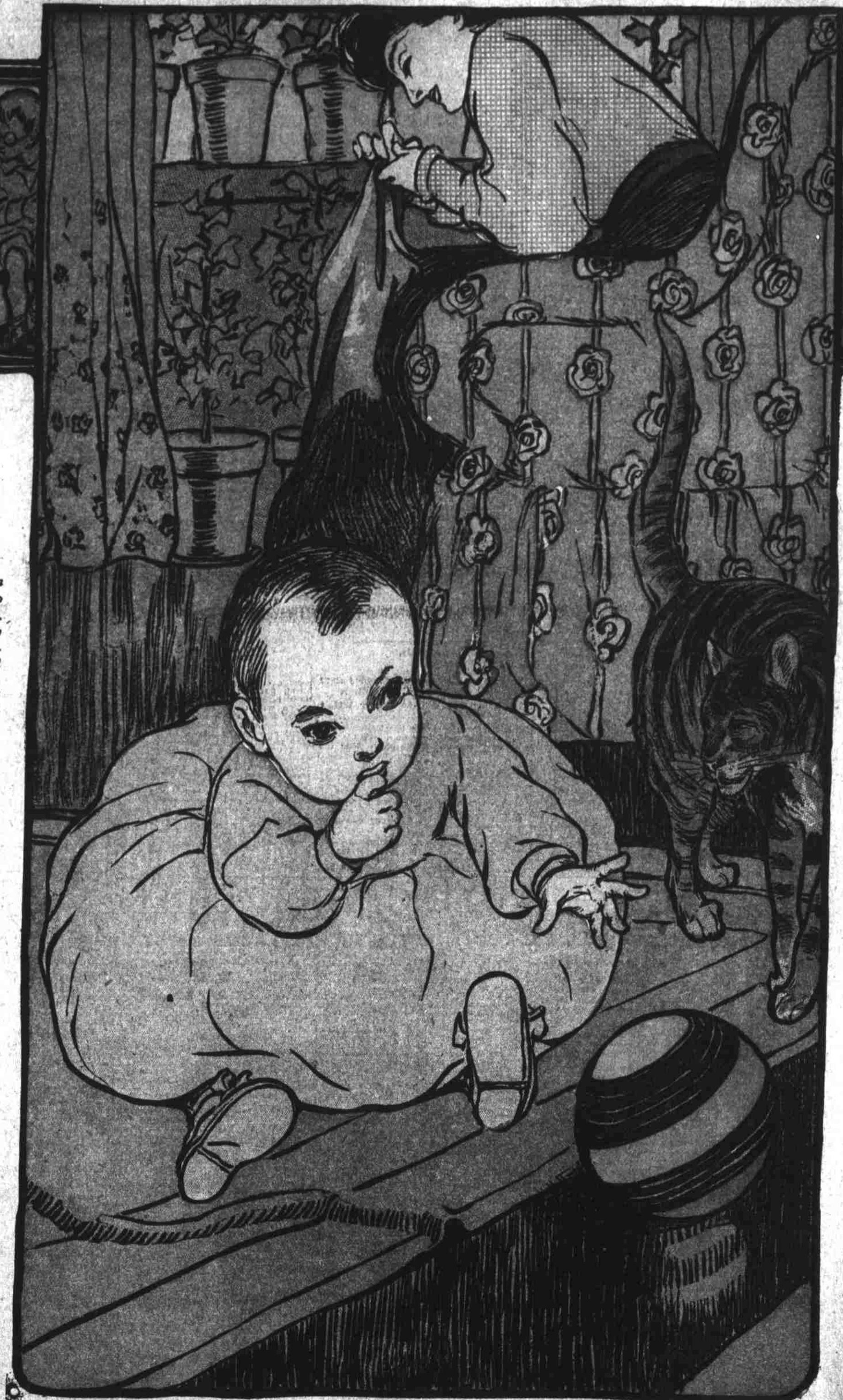
The most significant, if least recognized, neglect—on the part of parents as the natural protectors of the child, of family physicians as the paid guardians and of communities as the general overseers—is that which dooms half the youth of our great cities to partial blindness, to those phases of defective vision which, while but a few of them result in total loss of sight, so extensively and so painfully reduce the happiness and the productivity of a human life.

Facts which have been assembled prove that if children are born with only partial sight, parenthood alone seems necessary to blind whole cities to the needs of the new generation.

In the New York public schools the ordinary city health observations show that 29½ per cent. of the pupils need glasses. Among 450 school children of Boston, 25 per cent. had defective sight. In the Philadelphia public schools the defective number 28½ per cent., while 1100 pupils, under more exact observation, showed 83 per cent. of their number subject to symptoms of eye strain, such as discomfort, headaches and blurring of vision.

The most careful tests of the eyes of elementary school children ever made were conducted years ago upon 2500 Philadelphia subjects, where the expert ophthalmologists engaged, S. D. Risley and B. A. Randall, found that for fine work glasses were needed by no less than 53 per cent.

At the University of Pennsylvania 800 stu-



the magnificent world and is limited to a prison, the blurred, vague walls of which his groping hands can often touch.

The eyeball itself degenerates, and its coatings stretch under the continual strain. The oculists have counted these calamities of the eye as they progress in children and students, both here and abroad.

In Philadelphia schools, when the children are 8½ years of age, there are 4.27 per cent. who are myopic; when they are 11½ years, 8.75 per cent. pay the penalty; at 14½ years, 11.5 per cent. pay it; at 17½ years, 19.33 per cent. pay it.

In the schools of Germany, the elementary schools have 6.7 per cent. of myopic children; the higher girls' schools, 7.7 per cent.; the intermediate schools, 10.3 per cent.; the academy grades, 19.7 per cent.; the gymnasia, 26.2 per cent.; the universities, 59.5 per cent.

It rises steadily, remorselessly, with the age of the student, no matter whether the child is in America or in Europe; and it rises with a steady increase in suffering, with a steady increase of blinding weight to the pall that clouds the helpless, rebellious brain.

It has been only a month or so since the directors of the Lone Pine School, near Washington, Pa., announced that the school, closed because the neighborhood was epidemic with mumps and whooping cough, would be reopened immediately.

The parents, resenting the decision of a health officer who found that they were taking no precaution whatever to quell the outbreaks of disease, demanded that the education of their children proceed, since children had to get mumps and whooping cough anyway, and they might as well get them now as later.

AN EXPERT'S ADVICE

Dr. Samuel G. Dixon, health commissioner for the state of Pennsylvania, in the course of a carefully prepared review of the whole general topic of the neglect which children suffer, has these vital truths to tell:

"Of course, I have nothing to say with regard to the treatment of the sick, whether in childhood or in adult life. It is my business to prevent people, young and old alike, from being sick.

"My advice to all parents is to send for a high-class medical man to teach them how their children should be clothed, exercised and guarded against exposure to infection, and not wait until their children are sick.

"If doctors were called in more frequently to teach parents how to rear their children we would have more of them to be taught at our schools. We are losing thousands of them every year because of the ignorance of parents in regard to sanitary medicine.

"Hundreds of children are being sent to school who should be living an outdoor life under the instruction of intelligent physicians. As it is, many of them will never grow up to make use of what little education they may get.

"Teachers and parents too often lose sight of the body and permit it to be neglected while they are struggling to educate the mind, which will die for the want of proper physical support.

"Some of the children I refer to are to-day suffering with tuberculosis and furnishing infection for their little companions. It is really pitiable to see the poor pale-faced, nervous, ill-nourished little creatures dragging themselves to the classroom, which in many cases is overcrowded and poorly ventilated, and means death to such children.

"The doctor should be consulted who stands highest in the estimation of his professional brethren as a faithful, painstaking student of his cases, and one who loves his profession for the interest that it possesses for him and the opportunities for doing good which he finds in its practice.

"With regard to the management of that class of diseases which we call communicable—more commonly called contagious or infectious—the more usual of which are diphtheria, scarlet fever, measles, mumps, whooping cough and chicken-pox, a few words may not be amiss in its practice.

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dents were tested for sight, and 30.4 per cent. were found to be defective.

In London, England, 20,000 children, tested for having only two-thirds vision or less, gave 26 per cent. who were not up to that moderate mark.

The number of University of Pennsylvania students actually wearing glasses was 34½ per cent. among the 800 examined—a showing rather in excess of the percentage of defective visions.

But out of the 1100 Philadelphia school children, with their 83 per cent. defective, only 7½ per cent. were supplied with glasses. Among

eighty-four really poor children in a small elementary school, where twenty-seven of the pupils showed defects, not one wore glasses.

In Boston, with 23 per cent. among the 420 children showing defective vision, only 4½ per cent. possessed glasses.

Highly statistical and completely reliable, no doubt; but these figures really do not mean anything more than the main, general fact—that Willie's eyes are not so strong as they might be—has ever meant to Willie's parents.

Willie may have to use glasses by the time he's 40, as Willie's father did; that is all.

But those stone dead, cut and dried figures may, possibly, take on a new and ugly light when Willie's father is forced to realize the agony to which his neglect is dooming his hapless boy. In two-thirds of the cases of eye-strain, the symptoms of great fatigue, which mean dull brains as well as torturing headaches, are found to be present.

In what is called a hyperopic eye a constantly repeated strain produces myopia, a little word for a great disaster; for myopia means near-sightedness, in which the sufferer is robbed of nearly his whole vast, splendid heritage of