

THE EVENING NEWS.

Monday, August 10, 1874.

A TALK ABOUT BABIES.

By Mrs. M. P. RANDY.

An American mother with her first baby is often an object of pity. Very rarely has her previous education fitted her in the least for the duties and responsibilities which have come upon her. Even if she is the mother of a cluster of a large family, in all probability her mother has always shuddered the burden of household care alone, leaving her child to "enjoy herself," and to that end will tell her as much of the delights of idleness as she can manage to fancy.

Mrs. Gamp has immortalized the talkings of monthly nurses, yet there are those who really merit high prices they demand. Of them, however, I have naught to say. My business is with the young mother, who is the nurse, and she is alone, wholly on her own resources. She knows that when her baby brothers and sisters cried "Mother used to give them something out of a bottle," what that something was she has no idea. One friend suggests camip tea, another urges brandy and whisky, all failing to pacify these—while Madame More, whose babies never give her any trouble, advises the soothing syrup she always uses. So the poor baby is dosed first with one thing, then another, and undergoes useless tortures.

Soothing syrups are perhaps more soothing, but surely the child still suffers its ills, but, alas, who shall count their victims?

"Never give a child patent mixtures," said a prominent physician to the writer. "To call for a patient properly a doctor should always know what medicines have been given, and if these have been used he has generally to go to work in the dark. If opium is necessary, use paregoric—then you know just how much you are giving."

It is safe to assert that every one of the syrup, cordials and elixirs, advertised as a boon to babies and a relief to mothers contains opium in greater or less quantity, and more than one woman is to-day killing her child by their use, in total ignorance of what she is doing.

It is a good rule never to give physic unless you are sure it is needed; a cold may often be relieved by external remedies. Warm flannels to the stomach, which should be gently rubbed; toasting the little feet; laying the infant across the lap, face downward, while rubbing the back with the palm of a warm soft hand, and so on. If the child is unwell whilst the rubbing process is carried on in the same way, these are some of the simple moves in which a slight attack may be cured.

If medicine is needed, Dawe's Carminative, an old foggy preparation which has been in use for over forty years, is safe and reliable. This is a powder to be dissolved for wind; the prepared chalk is a stand ard baby physic; and opium there is not enough in it to be dangerous. Besides, every physician knows its component parts, and mothers who think that the child must have something can administer it with perfect safety. The medicine is not patented, and the good old doctor who first compounded it has gone to his grave long ago.

Babies should be bathed regularly once a day in tepid, not hot, water, after which they are enough to be supported in the tub by one hand of nurse or mother, the bath should be given in that manner. It is astonishing how soon the child will learn to swim, and when soon it will begin to struggle to get to the water, and to kick and splash and play while bathing. It should always be taken out of the water on a blanket, and wiped perfectly dry by friction with a soft towel; powdered from head to foot with talcum, with which corn-root may be mixed for perfume, and dressed as quickly as possible.

Plum are often instruments of torture to babies, and it is not a bad idea to keep need and thread at hand and mending them, though when safety pins are available, this hardly necessary. Have the clothes ready beforehand—shirt, petticoats and little dress all fastened together, so as to be put on at once, and as soon as the baby is dressed feed it and let it go to sleep.

The superlatives that putting long cloths on over a baby's head make it easier for him to sleep, small folks whom it concerns. Nearly every baby dislikes to have its clothes covered for even a moment, and slipping the clothes on feet forward so the baby lies on the lap, is a simple expedient for all parties. It is a pity that fashion prescribes such very long clothes for young babies. True, it is imperative that the feet should be warm, but shirts three or four times too long for the body are scarcely necessary for this; however, fashion is positive on this point and I have no idea of making a female Quixote of myself by running against fashion.

The dress should be loose, and comfort is first to be considered in preparing them. Many physicians—especially those who have lectured on the insensibility of keeping babies' arms and necks uncovered in winter weather, and have not lifted their voices in vain. Let me assure you, however, how she likes it! The little things get used to it just as greenhouse plants manage to stand exposure to a Northern climate; the hardy ones struggle through it, if those more delicate die. Flannel should be worn next to the skin, covering chest and bowels the year round, until the teething period is past; then, in a warm climate, it may be left off during summer. The band worn around the body of the newborn infant may, at four months old, unless the child is unusually delicate, be replaced by a little flannel shirt, long-sleeved and close-sleeved, long enough to come well over the stomach. While the hand is used, it must be tight enough to give the needed support without compressing the wearer, and should be loose at night than during the day.

It does not depend too much, however, upon the size of support for the back; and remember that you cannot be too careful not to tax the strength of your baby's spine. Nothing is gained by encouraging a child to precociously sitting and standing alone or walking; and overtaxing the infant spine has laid the foundation for many a weak back.

(TO BE CONTINUED.)



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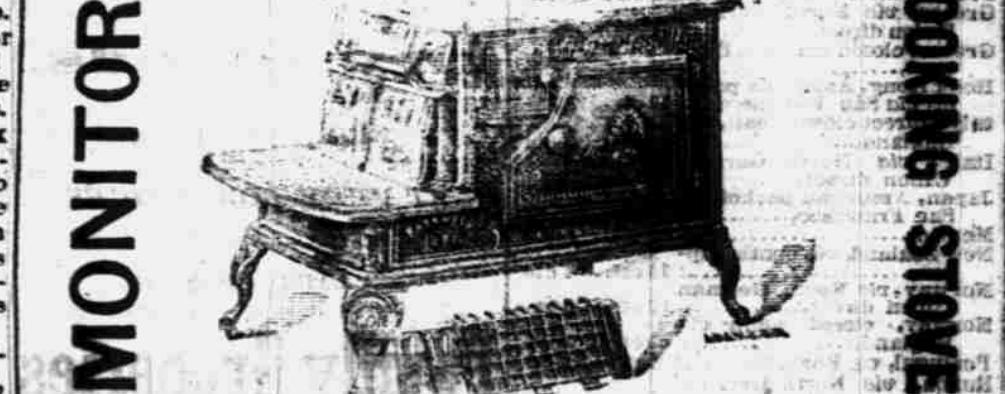
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