

**INFANT LIFE: ITS  
NURTURE  
AND CARE**

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Infant life: its nurture and care by E. N. G. & Erasmus Wilson

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## INTRODUCTORY PREFACE.

**ONE** of the pleasures of journalism is the occasional acquaintance with persons who take a hearty and earnest view of life and its many obligations. Persons who are not simply content with an inkling of truth, or with an appreciation of truth so far as it touches themselves alone, but who take the trouble to make known their impressions for the study and contemplation of others, and with the kindly intention that some benefit to "our neighbour" may result from their exertions. The writer of the present essay is one of those persons ; one whom I am proud to be permitted to call my friend ;

the mother of a numerous young family, in whose interests the thoughts embodied in the following pages were originally conceived.

When we reflect that the infant is the future man, intellectual as well as physical, the question of "INFANT LIFE, ITS NURTURE AND CARE," is not the least impressive of the questions of daily life with regard to which it is our duty to interrogate rigorously our inward selves. Medical philosophers have long recognised the existence of diseases which depend entirely upon errors of nurture and care of infant and juvenile life ; and the medical expression "preventible disease" has recently come among us as a household word. Can it be true—and there is nothing more true—that scrofula, consumption, cancer, and a host of other affections are preventible diseases. Surely the man who could discover a cure for these terrible afflictions would deserve a parliamentary grant,—a mural crown,—to be for ever held in loved

remembrance by his country. Nay, the discovery has already been made without these rewards, has been published in every corner of our kingdom, is the daily thought, the daily care, the daily work, of many members of the laborious and beneficent profession of medicine. But the truth is so patent that, as might be expected, our author friend, the tender and watchful mother, has anticipated it instinctively; it is—*the healthy nurture and care of infant and juvenile life.*

The present essay first made its appearance in the "Journal of Cutaneous Medicine;" I had discovered the author's eager desire to master this great social and medical problem, and I opened to her my pages for its illustration. The essay may have its imperfections—nothing that is human has not—but I can see only the silver side of the shield; like a genuine artist, I have placed myself where I can behold the beauties of the composition, the very soul of the picture; and I believe it

to be a truly useful work, worthy of the careful study of all whom it may concern. Give but the nourishment and hygienic culture of the young into judicious hands, and the consequences would be a manly race of intellectual giants.

At a moment when the ears of society are dinned with the jarring sound and discordant clamour of "woman's rights, of woman's mission, and woman's work," the words of our author fall upon the senses with the soothing sweetness of an Æolian harp:—"The love of a mother for her offspring, and her conscientious discharge of maternal duty, are the best and purest parts of a woman's life and action." And again, "We have strongly urged the necessity and importance of the mother being the child's real nurse; no matter what her position in society may be, her position *in life* is that of a parent, and *it was given to her* by the great Parent of mankind." But our author has, possibly, not foreseen that she has only made a beginning of her



labour, her children will soon be growing up : we should like to hear her discuss their diet and hygiene while gathered around the family board. Next, they will be distributed in schools for another kind of education, and then we should be glad to be made acquainted with their "nurture and care" in those semi-barbarous establishments, where preventible disease is too commonly encouraged by inadequate or unsuitable diet at the growing and developing period of human life ; when only the constitution of youth, and the stronger constitutions of that youth, are enabled to surmount the unnatural trial. Latin and Greek and mathematics are ill-assorted food for the ever-empty stomach of growing, of man-making youth ; and if the parent hesitate to confide her infant to the venal services of a nurse, still less should she trust her offspring without demur to the more venal arrangements of the school establishment.

The day, it is to be hoped, is not far

distant when hygiene will be the first necessity of a scholastic institution, when "hygienic schools" will be the first recommendation of those institutions. Depend upon it that the progress of Latin and Greek and mathematics under such a rule will not flag, while common sense will grow and expand in the youthful mind. And, better still, a first step will have been made towards the uprooting and annihilation of preventible diseases.

The nurture and care of the infant is the small end of the wedge that has already entered the core of a great evil, it is the duty of all who love their fellow-man to give impetus to the great work, to assist in effecting a wholesome reformation of growing abuses, in accomplishing the perfection of the physical, as well as of the intellectual, structure of man. It is not too much to say that, with proper nurture and proper care in the management of infants, all their diseases, with few exceptions, would be extinguished.

*Introductory Preface.* ix

Let me say a word more in furtherance of this great question. We have heard of late of the transmission of disease by vaccination; the thing is impossible. If the vaccine vesicle be perfect, and the instrument with which the trifling operation is practised, clean, the conveyance of disease by vaccination is an utter impossibility. But children have died from the effects of vaccination? Yes, the fact is unquestioned; but it was not from any poison present in the vaccine lymph, it was simply that the "nurture and care of infant life" had been neglected. Healthy children never suffer, never die from vaccination. If indeed they did so die, we should do no more than shed a single tear to their memory, for vaccination is a law of self-preservation, and must for ever be obeyed. To question vaccination, is to question one of the brightest truths of human knowledge—a truth that has been tested and found perfect in every country, and by countless millions of men.

I cannot feel otherwise than proud that