

# OUR BABIES.

(By HYGEIA.)

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"It is wiser to put up a fence at the top of a precipice than to maintain an ambulance at the bottom."

### Inquiry re Hard Tacker.

**A** FATHER in a leading position in one of our cities writes as follows:—"You urge us to make the children eat hard tacker so that they may use their teeth and jaws. While there are plenty of sincere believers in what you say, we are bothered by the difficulty of finding a variety of hard foods. How are we to give the children milk and milk puddings, on which they seem to thrive very well, though I admit that their teeth don't develop as they should? I have always wished to keep to the milk and egg and cereal diet in preference to meat, which, I have the idea, brings children to hand rather too quickly in this climate. Now I can see that meat will develop the teeth and jaws, but even at that one can't give an unlimited number of hard biscuits."

### Reply.

Under the conditions of modern civilization there is always a risk of children becoming overfed of meat, and it is found that such habits tend in the direction of nervous instability, lack of control in all directions, insomnia, and special risks at puberty and other developmental crises. Dr Clouston, speaking as lecturer on mental diseases at Edinburgh University, said:—"My experience is that the children who have the most neurotic temperament and diathesis, and who show the greatest tendency to instability of brain, are as a rule flesh-eaters, having a craving for animal food too often and in too great quantities. I have found also a large proportion of the adolescent insane had been flesh-eaters, consuming and having a craving for much animal food. . . . It is in such children that bad habits are most apt to be acquired at puberty, and I thoroughly agree with Dr. Keith, who for many years has preached an anti-flesh crusade in the rearing of children up to eight or ten years of age."

Without going to extremes, it is unquestionably desirable to use meat very sparingly in the case of children, and it is an inestimable benefit to them if what little flesh they do consume has to be worked for. Let children gnaw or tear the meat off the bones with their unaided teeth. (See "Feeding and Care of the Baby," pages 34, 47, and 109). The normal relish of flesh food in a child who has not been spoiled by being given

meat in abundance will cause him to make the most of any small residue that may be left on a bone.

### Meat Diet and Teeth.

I must now return to the direct issue raised as to the effect of meat-eating on the development of teeth. Quite apart from the important objections just referred to, a meat diet does not even tend, as our correspondent assumes, to the formation of sound, good teeth. One often finds children who are given large quantities of meat with deplorably bad teeth. Far too exclusive attention has been directed to the question of the so-called nutritive composition of food in relation to the development of the mouth, jaws, teeth, salivary glands, etc., whereas the main factor is the amount of masticatory work which a given food calls for and the amount of work actually bestowed on it by the individual child. Excellent jaws of teeth may be built up for life in the first seven years of existence on a diet largely animal or almost exclusively vegetable, provided that attention is paid to ensuring due successive work for the organs of the mouth in the form of sucking, bearing, munching, chewing, grinding, etc. One cannot say that tearing or biting off bits of sugar-cane with the front teeth is better than gnawing or tearing at a meaty bone, or that chewing sugar-cane necessarily affords better exercise than chewing or grinding a piece of tough meat by means of the back teeth. In either case the main question as regards the growth of teeth and jaws is how much work does the particular kind of food tend to induce on the part of the child, and how far have the parents fulfilled their duty towards their offspring by teaching it through example and precept to make full use of its masticatory organs. We can well understand our readers expressing astonishment that one should suggest any possible virtue in sugar-cane as regards teeth, since cane-sugar of all things is held up to the most execration as the natural enemy of the teeth. In reality it is not the sugar itself that is at fault, but the concentrated form in which it is given and the undue quantity which tends to be consumed in these circumstances. Sugar is as necessary as any ingradient, which occurred in the experience of one of the Plunket nurses:—other constituent of food—a point very interestingly exemplified by the following

### An Illustration.

A mother had been feeding her child on cow's milk modified in a way which she thought made it equivalent in composition to human milk. However, the baby, though it did not lose weight and had no definite ailment, became so soft, pale and flabby—the kind of condition commonly resulting from the use of too much starchy or sugary food, such, for instance, as ordinary condensed milk or patent baby foods. On investigation, the nurse found that in preparing the milk the mother was adding an ounce and a-half of solution of sugar of milk instead of that quantity of sugar of milk itself, the result being that the baby received only a third of the proportion of sugar in its food that Nature allows. The adjustment of this mistake caused a rapid improvement in the child's health and condition. Pallor was soon replaced by rosy cheeks, and the pasty flesh soon became firm and healthy.

Nothing strikes one as more absurd than the haphazard remarks one often hears from mothers or nurses, such as, "I believe in giving a baby plenty of fat," or "Don't you think it would 'firm' up and put on weight if we gave him more flesh-forming material?" when all the time, for ought she knows, excess, not deficiency, of fat or proteid may have been the sole fault in the food. So far as chemical composition is concerned, the essential point is to conform to the laws of Nature. In the case of a young baby the proportions of sugar, fat, and proteid found in normal mother's milk forms the safe guide, and during the first few years of life there should be no wide departure from these proportions. On page 53 of "The Feeding and Care of the Baby" will be found illustrations showing the fat, flabby condition, with deficiency of bone and muscle, characteristic of young animals when not supplied with enough proteid or flesh-forming material. This is exceedingly significant—see what is said on the page in question. However, what I am concerned in showing just now is that marked disproportion in any of the three necessary constituents of food may produce a very similar result. The moral is—"Follow the guidance of Nature."

### Flesh-formers.

One finds that few people have any true realisation of the meaning of the term "proteid" or "flesh-forming material." If one tells a mother that there is a deficiency of flesh-forming food in her child's diet she tends to jump to the conclusion that what the child needs is necessarily more meat or flesh. This is a very natural conclusion, but it is entirely erroneous. The red blood and the red muscle or flesh of a baby are built out of the white milk of the mother, and the organs of the young child can form similar flesh and blood out of vegetable proteid, such as the gluten of flour, the albumen of oats or peas, etc.

going to Wellington next week. We have Sunday School now, and a very nice man teaches. He takes a great interest in teaching us, and tries to make us take an interest in it also. We have ten little white chickens. We set eleven eggs under a hen, and they all came out, but one died with the cold. Well, good-bye for the present, with love to all the cousins and yourself.—From Cousin NELLIE.

[Dear Cousin Nellie.—Well, you are a funny little girl not to like holidays, but perhaps they are a bit upsetting. Yes, I have a large number of letters to answer, but I am always pleased to have them to answer. Do you live near Hastings? Christmas is a lovely time when one is young. Enjoy it all you can. With love.—Cousin Kate.]

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Dear Cousin Kate.—May I be one of your many cousins? I am 12 years old. May I have one of the pretty badges? Dear Cousin, you must excuse such a short note, but I will send a letter next time. I must close now, with love.—From RITA.

[Dear Cousin Rita.—Thank you for the post card, and I am pleased to welcome you among us. And I shall expect a nice letter next time. With love.—Cousin Kate.]

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Dear Cousin Kate.—We take the "Graphic." I always enjoy reading the "Graphic," and should like to become a cousin also. I am eight years old, and like school very much. I have a little dog, and would you please give me a name for her. I like all my studies, especially geography and history. Please will you send me a blue badge? I like reading Buster Brown very much. I have no more news to tell you, so I will end with a riddle. "Why is a cowardly soldier like butter?"—With love from FLORENCE.

[Dear Cousin Florence.—I am pleased to have a new little cousin. How would I like to see your dog? Your letter will be printed some day soon. With love.—Cousin Kate.]

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Dear Cousin Kate.—May I become one of your cousins? I am twelve years of age and in the fifth standard. Our school examination is coming off at the beginning of December. I have two miles to walk to school. Would you please send me a badge? I must now close, so good-bye.—From your loving cousin, ETHEL.

[Dear Cousin Ethel.—I am pleased for you to join our circle. You must be strong and well to walk so far each day. Is the card a pretty one? With love.—Cousin Kate.]

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Dear Cousin Kate.—I was very pleased to see my letter in the "Graphic." Please, Cousin Kate, will you excuse my bad writing, for the ink is not good. We are milking four cows and feeding three calves. I am nine years old, and in the fourth standard. We did not have any school today, because it was raining, and the teacher did not come. Now, Cousin Kate, I will say good-bye.—With love from Cousin ANNA.

[Dear Cousin Anna.—Thank you very much for the pretty Xmas card you sent me and the good wishes. I suppose you are looking forward to the holidays. I hope you have lots of fun. With love.—Cousin Kate.]

## IN RHEUMATISM'S GRIP.

This Dunedin Man Couldn't move Without Suffering Agony—Stiff, Swollen, Tender Joints—The Complaint driven from the System.

After suffering agony for years with Rheumatism, Mr. Adam Brockie, Abotfsford, Green Island, Dunedin, was completely cured by Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. The right way to cure Rheumatism is to drive the cause of the complaint, which is acid in the blood, out of the system. Dr. Williams' Pink Pills are for the blood and they tone the system to a point that enables it to throw off the Rheumatic poison. "About eight years since I got an attack of Rheumatism in my right arm," said Mr. Adam Brockie. "It came on gradually. It was a prickling sensation in the muscles of the arms and like pins and needles sticking in the muscles of the shoulder and hand. I was so bad I could not put my coat on without assistance, and it interfered so much with my work I could hardly pull the lever of the engine to start or stop it. I had been like this about seven years gradually getting worse. The pains were unbearable. My adopted son, George Lightly, was also suffering from Rheumatism and was cured by the use of Dr. Williams' Pink Pills. My wife persuaded me to try the Pills also, and I did with the result that in less than a fortnight I was completely cured and I have had no return of the pain since. That is about twelve months since and I have been able to attend to my duties as engine driver without any difficulty. I am positive it was Dr. Williams' Pink Pills cured me as I had not taken any other kind of medicine, and I have recommended them to others, and I was so delighted and impressed with my own cure and that of my adopted son, I was often tempted to write to the papers about the wonderful cures Dr. Williams' Pink Pills performed in both cases, and am only too pleased now to testify to the good they did me."

## Dr. Williams' Pink Pills

are excellent in Anæmia, Indigestion and nervous complaints like Sciatica and Neuralgia. Price 3s. per box, six boxes 16s. 6d. of all medicine dealers direct from The Dr. Williams' Medicine Co. of Australasia Ltd., Wellington.