A HEALTHY NURSERY.
BY A FAMILY DOCTOR.

T is love alone, love
pure and simple, that prompts a
mother to do everything in her power
for the well-being and comfort of her
offspring. A sense of
duty seldom has, nor should it have, anything to do with
the matter; for duty in some measure
implies self-sacrifice, performed at the bidding of con-
science. It is Nature that is the maternal guide.

But, nevertheless, even a mother may err in treat-
ment of, and in her choice of what is best for, the
child. As often as not, she does so when trying to do
too much. Reason may be at fault, instinct never.
Mankind has both in a great degree of perfection; in
the lower scale of creation we have to believe that
instinct predominates. Yet how seldom is it that the
creatures of the fields make mistakes in their little
nurseries! While studying and admiring the homes
made without hands, which we see around us in
walking through the woods in spring, we cannot help
saying with the poet—

"Reason raise o' er instinct as you can,
In this 'tis God directs, in that 'tis man."

Now, as regards the room called the nursery, we
should bear in mind, I think, that it is here the future
man or woman is really moulded and made, and the
state of his or her future health determined. Well, I
mean to devote the biggest half, and maybe more,
of this paper to a description of what I think a
healthy nursery ought to be; and, if I have any
space to spare, I may say a word or two about nursery
accidents.

Where shall we have the nursery? "Says a writer in
a London magazine, "There is no place good enough
for a nursery while a better is to be found. Pass the
ground floor, and then select the largest, the loftiest,
the best-ventilated, and the best-lighted room in the
house—the room with the largest windows, and com-
manding the cheeriest prospect—and make that the
nursery."

These words were surely not meant in serious
earnest, yet there is some degree of solid sense in
it. But to take the advice literally would be to
turn our houses into nurseries from top to bottom.
We should not give our children to understand—and
remember, they are not slow at grasping the
facts of a situation—that they are supreme rulers
in domo, and their parents but slaves. Such a
state of matters would be intolerable, and subversive
of all the rules that ought to guide us in properly
rearing our little folks. Were the principal rooms
in the house to be set apart as nurseries, then fare-
well all peace to father and his friends. Fancy a
poor author condemned to concentrate, or a clergyman
obliged to compose, in a study under a nursery with,
say, even three children and a maid in it! Earth-
quakes, Comanche Indians, barrel-organs, and bag-
pipes, would be nothing compared to such an
annoyance. Male parents would seek refuge in their
clubs, and mothers be driven distracted.

No, let baby be king by all means—bless his inno-
cent soul—but—let him be king in his own corner.

In the choice of a room for the nursery, there are
many things to be considered. But it is of paramount
importance that it should be so situated as not to in-
terefere with the general internal economy of the house
itself, and not to be itself interfered with. Rooms for
the children are the children's rooms, and sacred to
the children. Let me describe a nursery more in
detail.

I. Situation.—It is good for parents and all con-
cerned when this can be chosen on a scientific basis.
The room or rooms should be on the ground floor, if
this be in accordance with health; and it is so in
most country places. If it be so situated, the little
ones can run in and out at pleasure, and spend much
of their time in the open air. A play-ground should
be close by the door, or, better still, close outside the
casement window. This window, for sake of light,
should open right down to the floor, and be protected
at the lower half by wire mesh-work, to save the glass.
In big towns, the nursery cannot always be so
placed; the dwelling-house may be hemmed in with
other houses, in which case it is best to have the chil-
dren's rooms on the first floor, or even right away up
in the attics, where the air, of course, is purest.

There is this danger to be run where the rooms are
well aloft, namely, falling down-stairs. The top part
should always be protected by a gate, and the rails
ought to be strong and secure.

II. The Aspect.—Bearing in mind that no creature
can thrive without sunlight, the windows of the
children's rooms should look south or south-east or south-
west. The mind has a wonderful effect over the body,
more especially in a growing child, and a gloomy outlook
from a nursery window is most depressing. If a
choice had to be made between a room that looked on
to a busy street, and one that commanded a beautiful
view of the country, the former ought to be selected,
as being more in accordance with the mind and mood
of childhood.

The nursery indeed should be altogether "short-
some" and cheerful.

The windows should be guarded in some way or
other to prevent a child tumbling over when they are
open. I must confess I do not like bars, however.

The glass of the windows at the lower part should
also be protected, not that a child if at all properly
 schooled will mischievously smash a pane, but that
III. Furniture and Fittings.—The paper on the walls is a fixture, if not a fitting, and something must be said about that. We have heard a great deal of late years about poisonous wall-papers. I merely mention them to remind parents that such do exist, and should never be hung in rooms where children sleep or live. It ought to be remembered, also, that green is not the only colour that may be called suspicious.

It would be best, indeed, if the walls of a nursery were either painted or simply washed with some delicate tint, not easily rubbed off.

The walls may be hung—here and there—with nice engravings or good photographs, but let no oil or water colour painting otherwise than the best be seen thereon. The walls of a nursery may be nicely and tastefully adorned without expense. Brackets may hang here and there, and flowers should not be forgotten. These latter should be placed in cheap vases, and if one of these be occasionally inadvertently broken, so much the better, as it will form the text on which to hang a little sermon to the culprit child on in-door propriety.

Of course, the nursery is to be as large a room as possible, for the sake of purity and health. It should have no carpet, and really a bare, dry, well-scrubbed wooden floor is better and more wholesome than either oil-canvas or linoleum, as these latter are apt to give colds, and children must and will squat on the floor. But skims here and there, or rugs, are very handy.

Curtains are not needed on the windows, and they are dangerous around the fire. But one big curtain may be hung in front of the door.

There should be no beds, not even a baby’s cot, in the day nursery, and the sofa or dais should be a cane or hair-bottomed one.

The rest of the furniture should be meagre enough. A large screen is handy, and the elder children may amuse themselves by decorating it with scraps. There should be a cupboard or doll and toy house for each child, and, he or she ought to be, at a very early age, initiated in the mysteries of newum and toam. No infant should be allowed for one moment to appropriate the toys of an elder sister or brother, on the plea that “he is only a baby.”

There should be plenty of means of amusement for children in the nursery, adapted and suited to their various ages, from the straw-rattle to the game of draughts, but no rude or noisy sports, no parlour cricket or nursery tennis. Again, it should be remembered that in rainy weather the little folks will be a good deal confined to the nursery, therefore “crawling ferlies,” or infants proper, should not have it in their power to make matters uncomfortable for their bigger brethren. This they may do by the objectionableness of their toys. Drums, trumpets, and whistles should be relegated to the out-door playground; picture-books and mechanical toys which teach the child to think, should take their place in-doors.

IV. The Ventilation of nurseries is an all-important subject, for without pure air health is an impossibility.

V. Temperature of the nursery. This should be as equable as possible; never hot. As you value the health of your children, do not let the mercury in the thermometer rise in winter above 60°, and in summer keep it as cool as possible. In July, August, and even September, “open doors and wide ports” should be the motto. The heat during cold weather had better be kept up by means of a slow-combustion stove. The air, if necessary, may be moistened by putting a saucer of water over the stove.

A screen should always be placed over an open fire-range, and outside this, or around the stove, a brass railing.

VI. The one objection to a railing round the stove is this—and it is a very solid one—servants or nurses are apt to hang thereon articles of wearing apparel to air or dry. I cannot too strongly condemn such an act. Washing soiled linen or doing any cooking in the nursery are other acts that I merely mention in order to depurate; for the air in the children’s rooms cannot be too sweet and pure.

VII. Two thermometers are necessary adjuncts to every healthy nursery. One is the little clinical instrument before mentioned in this Magazine, the other the bath thermometer.

VIII. The bath itself must be a regular institution. Let it be given as often as possible, but the weekly warm bath must on no account be neglected. I have spoken about it before, and have here only to add that a cold sponge-down may be used to the older and stronger children with advantage.

IX. The general comfort of the nursery should be a mother’s constant study; the rock she is most likely to split upon being that of over-coddling and making hot-house plants of her little folks. She has to remember that the world is all before them, and they must be rendered fit to enter it and do battle with it.

X. Sleeping Apartments.—These should be sleeping apartments in reality, sacred only to prayers and repose. They should be well ventilated, large, with but little furniture and no curtains, and the children’s candle should be taken away as soon as they are tucked up.

Cots for infants have nowadays taken the place of cradles. I think the change is a wholesome one, and that the sleep of a child that is neither rocked nor swung into insensibility must be sweet and refreshing.

XI. Perambulators should only be used for children who cannot easily walk or toddle. They no doubt save the dress in muddy pathways, and prevent infants from catching cold through the feet. But the face and neck should be seen to on breezy days, else the chest and even the eyesight may suffer. I more than half believe that a great deal of eye-weakness is attributable to the use of the modern perambulator, which so often exposes the child’s face to wind and sun.

XII. The Playground is the real out-door nursery, and here the children are to be permitted to run wild and do everything they please within the bounds of propriety.