

Babies.



IT is what a simple young writer once called "a beautiful truism" that baby is one of the oldest subjects in the world—indeed, it is almost as old as man—and yet it has seldom or never been treated with completeness. No doubt one reason for that is the fact that baby has never been able to make itself heard except in inarticulate cries, and no doubt also another reason is that people in general have not been until lately interested in any babies but their own.

The difference between ancient and modern times is remarkable in nothing more than in the treatment of babies. Human life, merely as such, was considered less sacred then than now, and the average view of the baby was simply utilitarian. Was the baby, male or female, a healthy baby? Was it likely to become a sturdy citizen or a stout soldier, or to be the capable mother of strong children? Then let the baby live. Babies that did not satisfy these conditions were disposed of much as we dispose of superfluous puppies or kittens. And not even now, moreover, is baby life considered throughout all the world as something in itself delightful and valuable. Savage people and tribes are not such sinners in this regard as half-civilised nations like those of India and China.

"What is the use of rearing daughters?" asked an intelligent Chinaman not long ago of an inquiring Englishman. "When young they are only an expense, and when grown they marry and go away. Whereas a son—"

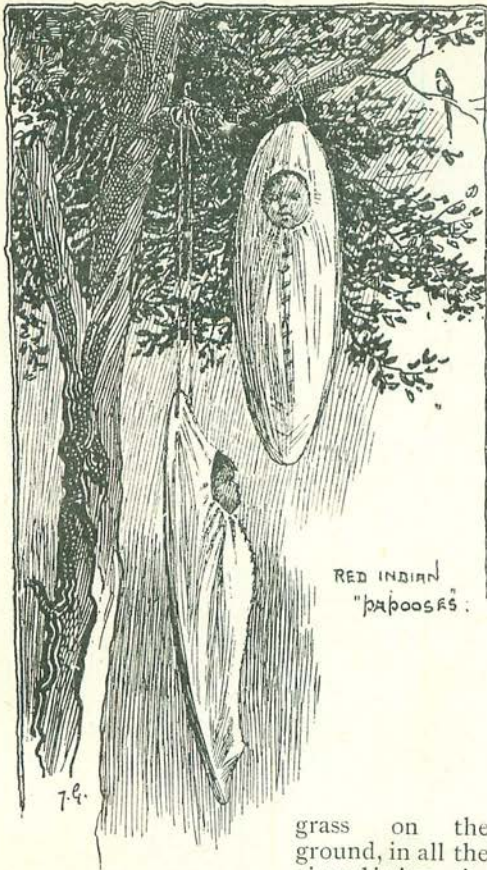
What a world of difference there is between that sentiment and this of "A Cradle Song," a recent poem by the young poet W. B. Yeats, where the mother addresses her baby thus:—

"I kiss you and kiss you, my arms round my own ;
Ah! how I shall miss you, my dear, when you're
grown!"

To us, in these later times, and with all the sentiments of Christian civilisation fostered in us, it is almost incomprehensible that any grown human beings could have the heart to extinguish the first struggling life of babies; most of all does it seem incomprehensible that the mother, whose nature is wont to well up and flow out at

the first helpless cry of her infant, and the father, whose instinct is to hover over and protect and "fend for" both mother and child in their weakness, could ever surrender, or with their own hands destroy, the creature whom they have brought into the world. But, strong as are the natural instincts, stronger still in many is religious fanaticism, stronger is a national or tribal tradition. And when we consider that it has taken ages of Christian culture and feeling to bring us to our present height of imaginative sympathy with all forms of life, till now we are agreed that no more beautiful, sacred, or divine sight is to be seen under the sun than that of a mother with a child in her arms, then we can understand that, while it is an outrage, a sin, and a crime to destroy a child among the taught of Christendom, it is but a hideous barbarism among the uninstructed of heathendom.

Turning to consider particularly the treatment of babies in various lands, by various peoples and tongues, we are compelled to note that even where infanticide or "exposure" is not practised, a similar result is worked out through the hardships—sometimes unconscious, sometimes designed—of infant life. The conditions of existence among many savage tribes are so severe that only the "fittest," the sturdiest, and wiriest constitutions can survive. There is, for instance, a very fine and intelligent tribe of blacks in the neighbourhood of the Cameroons, named the Duallas, which imposes from the first a very violent test upon the constitutions of their offspring. Like the ancient Germans, the Duallas take a child when only four or five days old and plunge it in the river. This is repeated every day till the child is strong and hardy enough to bathe itself, or till it has succumbed beneath the treatment. Other less intelligent and more savage tribes of Africans train their children to endure torture from a very early age. Even the average nursing of the negro mother is enough to try the toughness of the child's constitution. When the child is being fed he is set astride his mother's hip; and he must hold on how he can and get what nutriment he can, while his mother moves about her ordinary duties. When he is not thus attached to his mother he lies on a little bed of dried



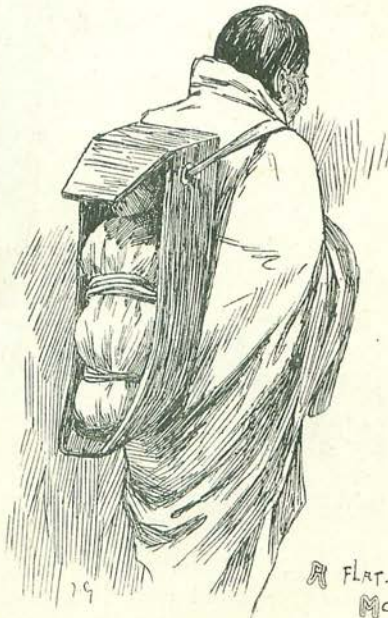
RED INDIAN
"papooses":

Thus done up, baby can be hung (with a thong attached to his cradle) on the branch of a tree, or from the pole of the wigwam, or set in a corner out of the way. It may seem to us that the close confinement and the upright position of these nests cannot be very comfortable, but it is said that after tumbling about a while on the grass or among the dogs of the wigwam the Indian baby frequently cries to go back to his solitary nest. In this wise, too, is he carried, slung over his mother's back, when the tribe is on the march. The oval thing we have described is the prevalent pattern of cradle among American Indians, though in the extreme north or in the extreme south modifications of the style obtain. The Flat-head mother, for instance, makes her papoose into a round bundle, with folds of bark and thongs of deer-skin, and carries it in a wooden receptacle something like a canoe, slung on her back, with a little pent-house or shade projecting over the baby's face.

It is worth noting that this complete swaddling of infants is almost universal among both barbarous and civilised peoples who dwell in sub-tropical or temperate climates. It is done not so much (or not only) to keep the child warm, but to prevent it from scratching itself, from moving about and hurting itself, and from bruising itself or breaking its tender bones if it should chance to fall. A baby, however, that is

grass on the ground, in all the simplicity in which Nature brought him into the world, and crams himself with earth or whatever he can lay his little black hands on.

Akin to the negro's treatment of children—though considerably in advance as regards tenderness and picturesqueness—is that of the Red Indians of North America. The father and mother combine to make a very curious and ornamental close cradle or bed for the "papoose." In shape it is not unlike the long oval shield of the Zulu. The father cuts it out of wood or stout bark with his tomahawk and scalping-knife, and covers it with deer or buffalo skin, or, if he has not these, with matting or the softest bark of trees, leaving the upper side loose and open. The mother then adorns and embroiders it with beads and grasses, and lines and pads it with the softest grass or moss or rags she can find. The "papoose" is lightly strapped in with soft thongs fastened to the board and passing under his arms, and then the covering is laced over him as one laces up a shoe, and nothing but the face of the "papoose" is left exposed.



A FLAT-HEAD
MOTHER:



A GERMAN BABY.

done up tight and flat as a Red-skin baby is, must be almost as safe on a top-shelf as on the ground. The close swaddling and padding of baby is found, the more we consider it, to be the fashion among both civilised and barbarous kindreds, and peoples, and tongues, where women are very hard-worked. It is easy to understand how that must be. When the mother digs and plants the soil, and grinds the corn, draws the water and cooks the food for her husband and children—as does the savage woman of every clime—when she spins and brews, and makes and mends, and cooks and cleans, as does the housewife of almost every degree in almost every country of Europe; when the mother has thus her hands full of toil or occupation from morning till night, and when the expense or the convenience of a nurse is not available, what can she do, with baby, but contrive some means of keeping him from troubling her and at the same time from damaging himself? Therefore the American

jutting bamboo of his father's hut or on his mother's back by a strap passed across the forehead; and therefore the European baby of several countries is wrapped and padded in the ways we are about to describe.

"BABY WAS FOUND ASLEEP
IN THE SNOW."

Of all house-wives in Europe, probably the German is the hardest worked, and of all European mothers the German practises most completely the art of swathing and padding her baby, and of putting it on the shelf. The German baby is swaddled in a long, narrow pillow, which is made to meet completely round him, being tucked up over his feet and turned under his solemn chin. Three bands of gay blue ribbons are then passed round the whole bundle and tied in large, florid bows about where his chest, his waist, and his ankles may be supposed to be. In this guise he can be

deposited as an ornament either on the sumptuous best bed, or on the kitchen dresser, or on the drawing-room table. How fond the Germans are of this presentment of baby may be guessed from the fact that it figures largely in their picture-books, among their dolls, and even in the bakers' shops at Easter-time, made of dough and covered with sugar to be devoured by greedy live babies.

The German mother has the completest confidence in the safety of her baby when swaddled



"A VERY QUEER FISH."



thus. But the confidence is sometimes betrayed by the wrappage, as witnesseth the following story. A party of peasants set out for the christening of a new baby, the baby being swaddled and wrapped in the usual manner. The way was long to the church, and the weather was cold; indeed, snow lay on the ground. The anxiety of the christening over, the whole party—parents, sponsors, and friends—adjourned to the village inn to warm and cheer themselves with *schnaps*, or what the Londoner terms "a

drop of something short." They then set off on their return home lightly and gaily, and their hearts being merry within them they essayed a snatch or two of song and a step or two of dance. Home at length was reached, and the interesting christened bundle was laid on the table. The whole party—parents, sponsors, and friends—stared agape and in silence; there was the pillow, the ribbons, and the bows all complete, but where was the baby? Someone ventured to raise the bundle; it was quite limp and empty! Baby was gone! Back the whole party hurried on its lonely track, and baby was found asleep in the snow, about midway between the church and the village. He was a sturdy child, and the story runs that he escaped with a violent sneeze or two, which, it is said, the anxious parents strove

to allay by popping him into the oven. There can be no doubt that the German child that could survive the pillow, and the snow, and the oven, must have been sturdy indeed.

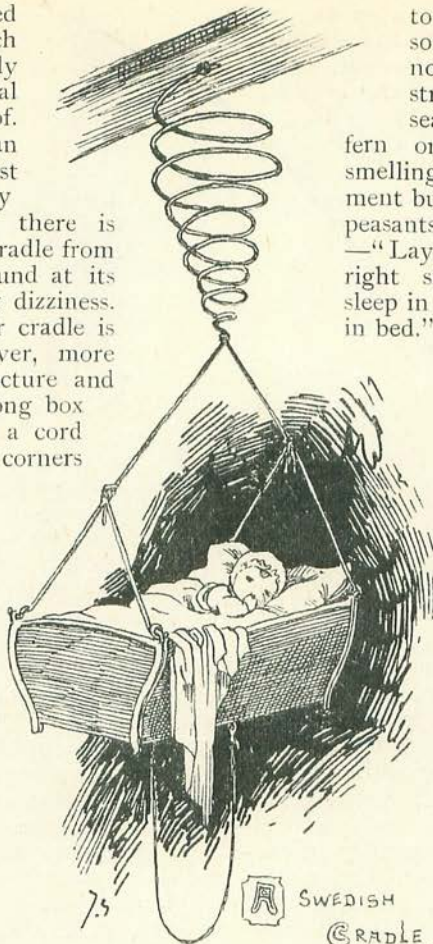
Like the German mother in her treatment of infants is the Austrian—the real Austrian, that is, who is of Teutonic origin; for the Austro-Hungarian monarchy in-

cludes so many nationalities, so many kindreds and peoples and tongues, that it would need a whole article to write of them all. And like also, with a curious difference, is the Swedish and Norwegian mother. The Swedish child, or *barn*—(compare the Yorkshire *barn*, and the Scottish *bairn*)—is swaddled in more complex fashion than the German. It is wound about with six-inch-wide bandages, sometimes with the arms free and sometimes not, sometimes the legs included in the whole bundle, but usually swathed separately. The bandages are traditionally supposed to make the limbs and figure grow straight. The bandaged *barn* is then wrapped in a pillow and tied about with ribbons and bows like the German child, except that frequently his arms are free and his legs are shortly and stoutly suggested by the tucking in of the pillow. After that he may be fastened flatwise to another pillow, and slung perpendicularly from a supple pole stuck in the wall, so that he looks like a very queer fish indeed, fit to be shown outside the shop of an angling-tackle maker. Like the German, the Swedish child always wears a cap, which is borderless and of special fineness for its first Sunday, when it is christened. Then, also, it wears beads upon its neck, and gorgeous garments with gay bows of ribbon, all which are provided by the godmother. In the remoter parts of both Sweden and Norway it is still the custom every Sunday to carry these swaddled infants to church, which is probably a long way off. They are not taken *into* church, however, but buried for warmth in the snow, in which a small hole is left for them to breathe through.

In less primitive parts of Sweden and Norway, however, and among the better-off, the pillow-bundle often gives place to

a wooden cradle, shaped like a trough or a French *baquet*, which is usually suspended by a spiral spring from the roof. The elastic motion can scarcely be of the most delightful kind to baby we should think, for there is nothing to prevent the cradle from spinning or twisting round at its will, and so producing dizziness. In Russia, too, a similar cradle is used—contrived, however, more rudely as to both structure and motion. It is an oblong box or wicker basket, with a cord from each of its four corners converging to the hook or the rafter from which it is hung, and with a looped cord underneath, in which the mother puts her foot to swing her baby. In winter—which in Russia is long and severe—the cradles or, sometimes, the hammocks in which the youngest children sleep are slung round the great stove upon which the parents and other adult members of the family pass the night, wrapped in their sheepskins.

France is the only other country in which the pillow is a necessary complement of the baby. But the attachment of the two is nowadays characteristically French. It is a compromise between the old and the new, between tradition and fashion, and consequently it is not universal. The French baby (especially on gala days) is laid upon the pillow, and his fine frocks and gay ribbons, instead of enveloping his tender body, are spread upon him as he lies, so that he is no more than a kind of *bas-relief*. In France, however, it must be noted there came earlier than elsewhere in Europe—one of the results of the Revolution—the revolt against mere tradition and usage in the treatment of babies. Among well-to-do and aristocratic French folk, in particular, a change in that regard has long been in progress. The French child used to have always its pillow or cradle; now it begins



A SWEDISH
CRADLE.

to lie upon a fresh, wholesome bed, neither of wool nor of feathers, but of hair or straw, or among country or sea-faring folk of sweet dried fern or bracken or pungent-smelling sea-weed; and Government bureaux circulate among the peasants such directions as these:—"Lay the infant to sleep on its right side; avoid putting it to sleep in the lap before putting it in bed." The French baby used

to wear a multiplicity of caps—a small close cap of fine linen, over which was a second of light flannel, and over that a third of some light and ornamental stuff; now the caps are being discarded, and baby goes openly and baldly bareheaded. There is, however, one infantile institution to which well-to-do French folk cling obstinately, and that is the foster-mother or wet-nurse. The institution had its origin ages ago, and was popular with other than fine ladies who feared to spoil their shape with nursing. It was

under the early Bourbon kings that the practice first became established of sending infants into the country, to some well-known dependant of the house, to be nursed and fed and brought up. That is why one reads so much in



FRENCH BABY - OLD STYLE.



A BURGUNDIAN NURSE.

French literature of foster-brothers and foster-sisters, who were the peasant children brought up in the same lap, and at the same breast as the young lords and ladies. The wet-nurse who lived in the family was—and is still—commonly a Burgundian, an ample, handsome, and good-natured type of woman, something like our own woman of Devonshire. The fine Burgundian nurse is still a feature of Parisian life, with her black eyes, her rich colour, and her opulent form, her red cloak, her full-bordered cap, and her long, floating ribbons. It is evident that this large and productive type is very old, for there is a curious statute in ancient French law, called the "*droit de douze enfants*:" it obtained only in Burgundy, and it enacted that all parents of a dozen children should be exempt from the payment of any taxes whatever.

Before we finally turn, whither we have all this while been tending, to the completest and wholesomest treatment of babies, let us note one or two remarkable curiosities in that way. There is, first of all, the well-worn, and now almost out-worn, tradition that Chinese female babies have their feet tortured by tight bandaging to make and keep them small. That practice, let us say at once, was never prevalent, except in very high society—like really tight-lacing in England—and even there it is now gradually becoming obsolete. But, among the swel-

tering millions of China there is a practice which seems to have a curious result. The mother carries her infant in a kind of bag or pannier on her back, and not—as in other countries where the dorsal carriage is affected—with the face turned outwards, but—as, probably, we ought to expect in China, where everything seems to go and come by the rule of contraries—with the face turned inwards. The result of that is that the baby's nose is of necessity pressed against its mother's back, whence, no doubt, say the learned in these matters, has been evolved, in the course of ages, the peculiarly flattened or blunted nose, characteristic of the Chinaman. Furthermore, Chinese girls, even when allowed to live, are little thought of. In the family generally they bear no names: they are known as Number One or Number Two, like convicts, and they are no more reckoned members of the family than the cat or the dog. So when a Chinaman is asked what family he has, he counts only his boys. And a boy is treated with great honour and ceremony by the women. When he is four months old, he is set for the first time in a chair, and his mother's mother sends or brings him many presents, notably among which is sugar-candy. The candy is emblematic of the sweet things of life, and it is stuck to the chair to signify the hope that he may never lack such things. His first birthday is the second great day of rejoicing. He is then set upon a table in front of many

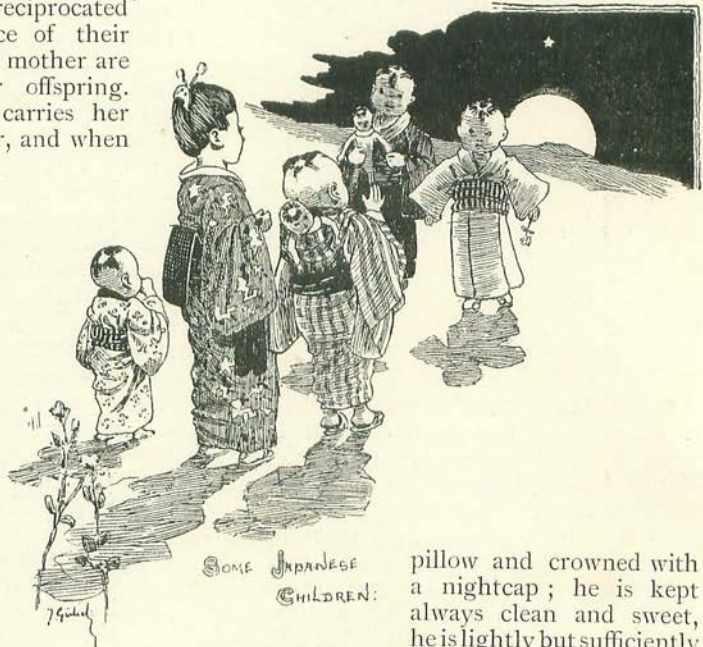
A CHINESE
MOTHER
& CHILD.

things, such as ink, books, tools, &c., and whichever he first lays his hand on decides his future occupation.

It is an odd thing that by no people on earth are children—both girls and boys—treated with more affection and indulgence than by the island neighbours of the Chinese—the Japanese, namely; and no children have a greater abundance of toys and amusements. It must, however, be said that the fondness and patience of Japanese parents are reciprocated by the love and obedience of their children. Both father and mother are equally devoted to their offspring. The mother commonly carries her baby slung in front of her, and when she is tired the father cheerfully accepts the burden; but fathers and mothers, and elder sisters and brothers may often be seen in the gay, sunny streets of Tokio or Yokohama giving pick-a-backs to delighted, crowing babies. The Japanese baby, moreover, is not only indulged, he is also treated with the greatest care and intelligence. He is judiciously fed; he is regularly bathed either at home or in the public bath-houses; and his skin is stimulated and his health hardened by his being frequently plunged in a cold stream, or even in the snow. A Japanese baby would appear to us a very droll creature. If you would know how he looks you have only to examine a well-made Japanese doll. He has his head shaved, with the exception of four tufts of hair—one in front, one behind, and one over either ear. He wears bright and gaudy clothes (or did wear; for children, like their parents, sad to say, are gradually being arrayed in European fashion), and his loose jacket has very long and very wide sleeves. Very poor children go barefoot; others wear stockings and clogs, the stockings having a separate pocket for the big toe.

To find other children as well, wisely, and wholesomely treated as children are in Japan, we must come to an English home, with a look in by the way at an American home, where, it is said by many, the child is made somewhat too much of, and there-

fore spoiled. But it must be sorrowfully admitted that it is only the child of well-to-do or cultured parents in Great Britain that is as well and wisely cared for, and that is as happy as the child of Japan: there is no doubt that the average of childish comfort and happiness is very much greater in Japan than in England. Yet a well-ordered English home is baby's paradise. There he is not swathed in bandages and rolled in a



SOME JAPANESE CHILDREN:

pillow and crowned with a nightcap; he is kept always clean and sweet, he is lightly but sufficiently clothed, and he is allowed

to kick, and crow, and grow strong as much as ever he likes. He is no longer put to bed in a deep wooden cradle set on wooden rockers, but in a light and airy bassinette, which either is stationary or swings lightly upon hooks. That question of stationary or moving bassinette has become somewhat vexed among mothers, many doctors favouring the opinion that it is neither necessary nor desirable that infants should be sent to sleep with rocking or swinging. The old rocking cradle had a much more fearsome motion than the swinging bassinette. Rocked by a careless or energetic person it would often make the baby ill; indeed, there used to be a tradition among humble mothers (a tradition which still obtains in Scotland) that if the cradle was rocked when empty the baby would certainly be ill when next put into it. The rocking cradle with its great wooden hood has had its day (and how magnificent the height of

its day may be guessed from the cradle of James I. that was shown in the Stuart Exhibition—it has had its day, and is now departing into the limbo of things obsolete and forgotten, and thither probably in the course of years the swinging bassinette will follow it.

We have in this article treated of babies only when they are inarticulate, when none but the mother or the constant nurse can understand them. That is commonly reckoned by the stranger or the mere male person the least interesting age of all, but to the mother—and, indeed, to all women and grown girls—it is the most interesting. Then the baby's clinging helplessness, its wide stare of wonder, and its bright, human smile and crow of response to a kind look or tone, suffuse the female heart with an unimaginable delight. What pride is felt in the health and beauty and weight of the

baby! ("Here's a leg for a babe of a week!" says the doctor in Tennyson's "Grandmother.") How his active crawling is admired!—and sometimes his singular taste for buttons, and marbles, and cinders! With what wonder and gratulation is the appearance of his first tooth hailed! With what expressions of joy is attention called to his first attempts at walking, and how "dear" he is when he first goes "pattering over the boards!" But beyond and beneath all these common phenomena the earliest infancy has ravishing mysteries which only the mother can patiently watch, and pore over, and understand. Every day, every hour brings to her a new joy, of which she can speak to no one; for that which no else one sees—the waking attention, the dawning reason—the mother sees, and that which no one else hears the mother hears.

