

A Plea for the Babies.

MRS. Harriet Beecher Stowe, writing in *Hearth and Home*, puts in a plea for the nervous, delicate children, which those who have them in charge would do well to listen to. A great many of the children born in the present age, she says, are *not* good, average, healthy children. They are children of deficient brain-power, of diseased nervous systems; children begotten of tobacco-smoke, late hours, tight lacing, and dyspeptic stomachs. The father has put his son's brain into his meershaum and smoked it out; the mother has diddled and dribbled it away in balls and operas. Two young people come together, both of them in a state of half-nervous derangement. She cannot live without strong coffee; her hand trembles, and she has a sinking at her stomach when she rises in the morning, till she has had a cup of strong coffee, when she is primed for the day. He cannot study or read, or perform any real mental labour without tobacco. Both are burning life's candle at both ends; both are wakeful and nervous, with weak muscles and vibrating nerves.

Two such persons unite in giving existence to a poor, hapless baby, who is born in such a state of diseased nervous sensibility that all the forces of nature are a torture to it. "The fathers have eaten sour grapes, and the children's teeth are set on edge." What such children cry for is neither cold nor hunger, but irrepressible nervous agony—sometimes for fear, sometimes because everything in life is too strong for them, and jars on their poor weakened nerves just as it does on those of an invalid in a low, nervous fever.

Now, the direction about putting a child away alone to sleep, without rocking or soothing, is a good one only for robust and healthy children. For the delicate, nervous kind I have spoken of, it is cruel, and it is dangerous. We know one authentic instance of a mother who was trained to believe it her duty to put her infant to bed in a lonely chamber and leave it. Not daring to trust herself in the ordeal, she put on her bonnet, and positively forbidding the servants to go near the child, went out for a walk. When she returned, the child was still, and had been for some time. It had struggled violently, thrown itself over on its face, a pillow had fallen over it, and it was dead from suffocation.