

The Revolution.

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FOUNDLING HOSPITALS.

By the Boston *Banner of Light* we see that the Massachusetts Legislative Committee on Public Charitable Institutions has been investigating the subject of the mortality of infants in the state Almshouses. F. B. Sanborn, Secretary of the Board of State Charities, in his report, gave the fearful statistics that *ninety per cent. of infants in those institutions die before they reach the end of their first year!* The neglect, abuse and exposure which they suffer as the consequence of the life of shame led by their mothers [of course the fathers of these little wails are exonerated!] make this frightful per centage of deaths, which is largest among foundlings, who, in the care of pauper nurses, have but slight chance for life. Mr. Sanborn suggests the establishment of hospitals exclusively for foundlings—one in the Eastern part of the state, and one in the Western; also an enlargement of the accommodations in almshouses for mothers and their infants.

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The frightful increase of feticide, infanticide and child murder in every form, has forced the subject of Foundling Hospitals upon the public attention as never before. Whether such institutions, and indeed many of our so-called public charities, are signs of civilization, or the reverse, may be questionable; but they seem to be necessities inevitable as life preservers to float society, even in seas of barbarism. Christian civilization proudly boasts that Greece and Rome, in all their glory, power and pride, had none of our humane societies and institutions. Whether they had more need of them than we is an inquiry which, rightly answered, might possibly humble us and all Christendom in the dust, and silence all our boasts. But that is not our question here. The New York *Tribune* recently contained an article on the Foundling Hospitals of Europe well worthy the notice of all who are seeking to alleviate through them the woes of humanity. The subject was considered in its relations only to the crime of infanticide.

Foreign missionaries, half a century ago, used to chill the blood of Christendom with accounts of the fearful prevalence of that crime in heathen countries where they labored. But the statistical societies are rapidly disclosing a condition of things in this country that will challenge comparison with any part of the heathen world. And so the inquiry has been raised how

far Foundling Hospitals are a mitigation of the evil.

Throughout all Europe the necessity for foundling hospitals is recognized, and such institutions are liberally provided by the governments of France, England, Austria, Italy, Russia; and other countries in the districts where they are most needed. Like insane asylums, however, they are found available in the prevention of crime only in districts within a certain distance, not exceeding a radius of from twenty-five to thirty miles; but within this circle their influence is clearly noticeable.

Nor is the crime of infanticide of modern date. The fact of its very early existence is proved by laws of Egypt, Greece and Rome; the former prohibiting, and the two latter encouraging it in certain instances. A column in one of the public market-places of Rome was long used to indicate the place where the foundlings might be left by parents wishing to dispose of them, and obtained by those who sought them for adoption.

In modern times the earliest institution of this kind was that in Paris, founded in 1620. Of its management too much cannot be said in commendation. No institution in that metropolis of charities strikes the eye of the visitor more pleasantly, looking only at itself, apart from the evil which called it into existence. Its interior arrangements are as perfect as they could well be made. The building is divided into four wards, commodious, clean, and well ventilated. The top floor is intended for the sick, it being more silent and secluded than the others, and both the medical and surgical patients are placed in separate apartments. The

others, and both the medical and surgical patients are placed in separate apartments. The lower floors are devoted to children in good health, and have their separate dormitories, refectories, wash and play rooms. A sister of charity has charge of each ward. The furniture is plain and strong, but cheerful and attractive in appearance. The cribs are all single and constructed of iron, supplied with soft mattresses and the most faultless bed-linen, and are enveloped in curtains of snowy white dimity. Each one is numbered, and has a ticket opposite with the date of the occupant's birth and its name, if one has been given it by the person from whom it is received. At each end of the dormitories and large halls is a great open fireplace, where cheerful wood fires, protected by wire fenders, are kept burning during the cold season. It is difficult to imagine a pleasanter sight, and the aching heart of many a poor mother might be gladdened to behold her own child in such a paradise.

The only real abatement to the general good management of these institutions, so far as given in the *Tribune*, is in Russia. An even there, the institution as a whole is hardly to be surpassed as a human benefaction in the whole world. Indeed the *Tribune* account says the "Waspiatloni Dom" of St. Petersburg surpasses any public charitable institution of Europe in size and convenience. This was founded

by Cathrine II. in 1762, and successive sovereigns have liberally endowed it from time to time, to assist in meeting the annual liabilities, which amount to \$500,000. Not less than 25,000 children are annually received in this institution. The lodge is open day and night for the reception of infants, and about twenty are taken in every twenty-four hours. The only question asked is whether the child has been baptized, and by what name. The child is then ticketed, and a duplicate given to the mother, which enables her to trace and identify it, if necessary, at some future time. It must be admitted that the mortality is large, but this is no doubt owing to a brutal custom there prevalent, which disguises its objectionable features under the name of a sacrament. One day in each year the ice on the Neva is broken, and the Archbishop of St. Petersburg performs the ceremony of Baptism for such of the children as are candidates, with much tedious ceremony and ostentatious pomp. Standing on the ice he dips the child into the chilly waters and there pronounces the formula prescribed by the Greek ritual.

Under such circumstances the high rate of mortality cannot excite surprise, particularly as the infants are occasionally drowned as well as fatally chilled. When a child has slipped from his benumbed hands and been carried out of sight under the ice by the rapid tide, he has been known to exclaim, with pious glances heavenward, "God has taken this child, hand me another!" Why so foul a transaction is suffered to blot and blacken so much beauty, it is impossible to imagine. Religious superstition surpasses everything in the world in its absurd and monstrous demands. Under these circumstances, together with the mortality resulting

and monstrous demands. Under these circumstances, together with the mortality resulting from inherent diseases, about one in four die of those committed to the institution. They are retained for about six weeks after their reception and then given to the wet-nurses, who wean and tend them until they are six years of age, after which they are returned to the hospital and educated in a superior manner. Their course of study includes languages, mathematics, and the sciences. When of a suitable age, the girls are secured positions as teachers and governesses in the aristocratic families, and the boys are enabled to fill the remunerative position of skilled artisans in the Imperial manufactories. Where a special artistic or musical talent is exhibited, the child is given a thorough education in that branch, and there are numerous instances in which genius thus developed has produced the most striking and valuable results. Whether foundling hospitals could be conducted with so much humanity and success even in Massachusetts as are some of those in Europe, the one in Paris in particular, may be very doubtful in view of many disclosures of malmanagement in some of the humane and reformatory institutions there. But, under the superintendence of the excellent and indefatigable Mr. Sanborn, Secretary of the Board of State Charities, we earnestly wish to see the experiment fairly and fully made.

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