

# INFANTICIDE.

The Girl Reporter of "The Times" Takes in a Batch of Physicians.

Several of Them Prove to Be More than Willing to Commit Abortion.

Some Ready and Anxious to Proceed with the Horrible Crime Without Any Delay.

Prominent Physicians Who Have Not the Stamina to Stand Up for What They Know to Be Right.

Among Them Drs. Knoll, Carr, Davis, Atwood, Tooker, and Sharpe.

The Black List Rapidly Growing Larger—A Corrected Classification Up to Date.

What "The Times" Started Out to Do and What It Hopes to Accomplish Through This Inquiry.

The *Chicago Times* aimed high and hit low: Its "Girl Reporter" wrote that she had been told to target "only the physicians of the better class" in her exposé.

poorer section of the city and made his case. Some proposed medicines and places for her to stay during recovery. Others said they could help with adoption. But most demanded to see the young woman in question.

Enter the Girl Reporter.

She and her male colleague refined their story over the next few days, switching from midwives to prominent doctors, claiming she was six weeks pregnant rather than two or three months, stressing that money was no object.

The Girl Reporter spent long days going from office to office. She visited Dr. Sarah Hackett Stevenson, who treated her kindly but advised her to have the child and get married, even if it would be "but a step toward divorce." She interrupted Dr. John Chaffee at his lunch, and he urged her to have the operation right away, telling her, "Thousands are doing it all the time. The only thing to do when one gets into trouble is to get out again." (A few days later, Chaffee was arrested for giving a woman an abortion that killed her.) Dr. Edwin Hale, a controversial figure since publishing his pamphlet "On the Homeopathic Treatment of Abortion," gave the reporter a bottle of big, black (and harmless, the doctor assured her) pills to take before admitting herself to the hospital. That way, when he was called to her bedside, and performed the operation surreptitiously,

they could blame the medication for causing the abortion.

Beyond the value of the Girl Reporter's research was her voice. She's determined: "I felt that there was some big ruffians to be brought down yet, and I was anxious to have a composed mind and a strong heart." She's weary: "Tonight as I write this I am sick of the whole business. I did not suppose there was so much rascality among the 'reputable' people." Her prose teemed with self-conscious literary flourishes—puns and alliteration, references to Shakespeare and the *Aeneid*. This, alternating with casual exclamations, like "ugh" and "really swell," the gushing enthusiasm for favorite nov-

els and her Sunday-school moralizing, all seem like the first attempts of a big reader and beginning writer. There's the sense of a real person trying to figure things out.

Righteous anger filled her at first, at the doctors and the women who sought them out, but then something shifted.

"I found that I was beginning to be somewhat of an adept at deceit and this rather startled me," she wrote. "I began to be suspicious of myself. I have talked so much of my pretended trouble to the doctors that I now and then permitted my thoughts to wander and drift into the channels where it had been wading though the day." She felt for the woman she feigned to be. Eventually, she cared less about a willingness to commit abortion and more about the failure to sympathize with women in dire straits. When a doctor refused coldly, she imagined saying, "Don't prate of virtue to me. I am as good as the rest of the world only less lucky."

In one installment, she mulled over her assignment and the disconcerting feeling that in constantly pretending to be someone else, she was losing her individuality, her sense of self.

"Today I have been wondering whether, if I had to do it over again, I would have taken a position on a newspaper staff," she wrote. "It used to be the dream of my childhood that I would some day become a writer—a great writer—and astonish the world with my work," she wrote.

"But did I ever suppose that I would have to commence on a newspaper by filling an assignment like this?"

"Well, no."

As a cub reporter, she was prepared to compete on the same terms as men. But this assignment was entirely different: "A man couldn't have done it."

**THE ABORTION EXPOSÉ WAS WEST'S** dream—a sensation. The *Times*, which eight months before had run ads for an abortifacient marketed as Chichester's English Pennyroyal Pills, packed its editorial page with demands that the law be enforced, abortion stamped out. The paper proposed remedies.