

### International Congress for the Protection of Children.

THOSE who have at heart the future welfare of the human race cannot afford to ignore any question or any proposed reforms which bear on the up-bringing of our children. It is of paramount importance to every nation that its young should be reared under conditions which are favourable to their development into healthy, moral, and useful subjects; and the progress and enlightenment of the present age are nowhere more apparent than in the consideration that is now given by statesmen and philanthropists to matters which are connected with the training and surroundings of the rising generation. The children's cry has reached the ear and heart of every thinking man and woman, and their claim to be heard is no longer put aside. Kindness and wisdom now combine to see what is best to be done for the little ones that they may be rightly equipped for the battle of life and may know something of happiness and beauty, and, as a means of helping forward this noble work of rescue and preservation, an International Congress is to be held during the month of September next at Budapest, to which invitations are being sent into all countries to those societies and individuals who are interested in the protection of children. The last International Congress of the kind met at Florence in 1896, and it was then decided that the next should assemble in 1899 in the Hungarian capital.

Some of the more special aims of the Congress will be:—

- (a) To deliberate on means for the protection of children under 16 years of age, from influences and surroundings which are prejudicial to their physical, intellectual, and moral development.
- (b) To consider the best means to be employed to arouse the authorities and society in general into taking a more lively and practical interest in the physical, intellectual and moral education of children under 16 years of age.
- (c) To propose reforms which shall render the conditions of home life and school life more conformable to the needs and interests of the growing generation, and which may help to awaken a more active feeling of love towards them.

The Congress will open with a general assembly, and the different sections, five in number, will then hold their separate sittings. The legal section will deal with all matters concerning the protection of children which come within the province of the law; the medical section will occupy itself with the physical condition of infants and minors; the scholastic with their intellectual development; the benevolent with proposals for the amelioration of the condition of the children of the poor; the philanthropic with the moral training of children and the care of the afflicted and imbecile. Among the subjects to be discussed we note one or two of exceptional interest and importance, such as the injury often done to the intelligence of children by the literature and pictures especially written and prepared for them, the dangerous consequences of precocity in children, and the advisability or not of legal restrictions to the authority of parents in cases where their unrestrained influence menaces the life or health of a child.

An exhibition of every kind of the very many industrial products destined for the use of children, of models and photographs, with descriptive literature, of the various establishments founded for their benefit, and, in short, of every place and article connected with the feeding, clothing, training, and amusement of the young, will be opened in connection with the Congress.

The price for admission is fixed at 10 francs for the ordinary public, and at 5 francs for those who are especially occupied with the teaching of children.

The Baroness Ernest Daniel and the Baroness Jérôme Malcomes are Presidents respectively of the Committee of Reception and the Benevolent Section; and Mme. Joseph de Rudnay, Mme. Charles Herich, and Mme. Charles Vajda, are on the Exhibition Committees as Presidents and Vice-President. The Congress is under the patronage of His Imperial Highness the Archduke Joseph.

MARION EDWARDS.

### A Book of the Week.

#### RAGGED LADY\*

Mr. Howells' new book is, on the whole, very delightful. It is full of character study of rather a wider range than is usual to his microscopic touch. The opening part of it could hardly be better. The elderly, wealthy American couple, with their money, and their awful dialect, and their ignorance of the merest commonplaces of breeding; the wife, with her essentially common mind, with some fine points in it which luxury and self-indulgence have quite wiped out; the elderly husband, really ill, while she is *malade imaginaire*, knowing that he must die and leave her lonely, and pathetically trying to provide her with a companion that she would like, yet not daring to betray to her the reason for his insistence—these are really delightful reading.

After her husband's death, Mrs. Lander, divining some of his motives which before were dark to her, adopts the sweet little "Ragged Lady" who captured both their elderly hearts at first sight, in a sort of spasm of useless remorse which is altogether natural.

The description of the hotel and the summer boarders, and the universal kindness and admiration which Clementina receives when she is a member of the household as an extra help, is pretty and amusing, and also very instructive. In America, as in Switzerland, it is apparently the custom for impecunious young college students to pass their vacations in the capacity of head waiter. The head waiter at Middlemount is an intense young man who proposes for himself a career as a missionary in one or other of the Protestant sects. His conscientiousness, his passionate and reluctant love for the sweet Clementina, his secret purchase of the shoes, and the misunderstanding therefrom resulting, make most charming reading, and are evidently true to life.

In the sequel we find these people—the little backwoods girl and the hotel waiter, in a circle in Florence which includes an English lord; though, to be sure, he is an impecunious one, and could not, perhaps, choose his company. Clementina here preserves her limpid candour among all the admiration she receives. Certainly her various lovers are not presented in such a manner as to make one feel that they

\* By W. D. Howells. Harpers.

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