

The Midwife.

A Child's Birthright.

The Hon. Albinia Brodrick, in an article in *The Child*, entitled "Prospice: A Child's Birthright—Foundation Principles," says:—"That children have the power of suffering acutely, both mentally and physically, we are all aware. But, even in these days of eugenics, it is only the few who have the courage to ask, and still fewer who will honestly answer the very simple question: 'What causes lie at the root of the suffering and death brought upon thousands of innocents annually, amongst the class which esteems itself the most educated, most civilised, most refined in England?'

"Our poorer mothers know the answer, and know it correctly in the main. They are accustomed to dealing with the young of other than the human species, and are besides face to face with Nature and her truths in a way that shocks and wounds the 'sensitiveness' of our modern upper class degenerates. This article is not written for them. For whom then? For a class—a criminal class—whose ignorance is to a great extent wilful, whose selfishness is inhuman, and whose disregard of the laws of Nature on the one hand and of its duties to the State and the Nation, let alone its own offspring, on the other, is an offence against the instincts of the brute creation, and an outrage upon humanity. For the rich, for those who are hasting to be rich, for those who cannot be rich but must ape the ways of such as are hasting to be rich. For Society, for those who are trying to get into Society, for those who, with no hope of getting into Society, must do as Society does, or feel themselves in outer darkness. For the exclusive, for the privileged classes. . . . The gold of the money-god, the silver sweetness of soul culture, the iron exigences of custom and of social life, the dross of pleasure, including the pleasure of getting on—to these Molochs the children, born and unborn, of our aristocrats and plutocrats, and of the jackals of both, are un- sparingly sacrificed.

"The child's birthright is health—physical health. And this includes the health of both brain and nerve, since neither 'nerves' nor feeble-mindedness, nor lunacy, are the impalpable mysteries which they appeared to our forefathers to be, but the direct results of

physical changes and abnormalities, usually due to some disobedience to Nature.

"What forces make for that health which the child, and the State and nation, on behalf of themselves and of the child, have a right to demand? (1) Healthy parents, free from disease; (2) an honest recognition of the child in the state of its prenatal existence; (3) a mother willing to fulfil her solemn obligations to the child and to the State during the nine months preceding birth; (4) parents with a sense of honour sufficiently keen to carry through the primary duties owed to their offspring during the first years of its life.

"These things apparently, and indeed actually, primeval in their simplicity, are, however, out of reach of the distorted lives lived by the classes to whom I have referred above. These classes exist on too low a level, intellectually and morally, to possess the balanced judgment, the perception of truth, together with the simple strength to follow out that truth to its source, necessary to save them from criminality. They are scientifically abnormal. Practically in this connection the criminal class is unfortunately the normal in these days, for the class.

"Unborn children, and children in the first years of life, are put to death by this criminal class with little hesitation. What they may and do suffer in life is not taken into consideration by their selfish and heartless progenitors. And so comes round once more the question, 'What causes lie at the root of this suffering and of these preventable deaths?'

Amongst the causes enumerated by Miss Brodrick are, disease in either parent *at the moment of conception*, including both mental and specific diseases, frequently concealed before marriage—and a tendency to hereditary disease; the belittling of child-bearing, till it comes to be looked upon as the degradation rather than the crown of womanhood; want of the sense of fatherhood—the father taking no conscious share in his own child but the accident of conception—an act of selfish pleasure, of which it is a mere unfortunate, often a most deplorable corollary; 'social duties,' with which may be bracketed, 'helping my husband,' and 'getting on in the world,' 'taking care of my figure,' and 'can't afford it'; wilful attempts to artificially prevent conception, and to kill the new life after it has been conceived.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)