

## The Midwife.

### "MOTHERCRAFT."

At the present time the preservation of every healthy infant born to the Empire is of the greatest importance, and therefore the publication of a new and enlarged edition of "Mothercraft" by the National League for Physical Education and Improvement is opportune. For, in the end, the preservation of infant life depends mainly on the care bestowed by the mother, and neither instruction nor affection are equal to the task if they are not enforced by intelligence and knowledge.

In this book there are gathered together a selection from courses of lectures on infant care, delivered under the auspices of the National Association for the Prevention of Infant Mortality, some of which have already been reported in these columns, and they contain an immense amount of information, given by experts in the subjects discussed, of the utmost value to all concerned in the care of infants and young children.

The chapter of "The Problem of the Future," in which Dr. Saleeby discusses the question from the point of view of population, of national survival and of eugenics, is of great importance. While subscribing to the eugenic theory that those who are best qualified to survive become the parents of the next generation, and that the survival of the fittest involves the extinction of the less fit, he strongly repudiates the deduction that those who stand for infant care are preparing for the degeneration of the race, because they have not the courage to face the stern necessities of the laws of life.

Dr. Saleeby contends that "the process of infant destruction is a hideous counterfeit of natural selection. Natural selection either slays or spares, but this process is one which slays and spoils—damaging many of those who survive. Many of the processes which cause infant mortality, such as the slum and the public-house, are not natural, but hideously unnatural."

"The best thing to do is to care for all the babies we have, and also to care for all mothers that are, and all healthy mothers-that-may-be. . . At the time of the Boer War and afterwards we found that it was the men that mattered. Men with long lost teeth, or suffering from the consequences of rickets, were of no use to us." After a Royal Commission in Scotland had sat on Physical Training it was realized that no amount of physical training could bring back those lost teeth; then "it was realized that children came to school already damaged in health, so more attention was directed to the infant, and gradually, as taught us by France and Belgium, to the expectant mother. The whole thing is the history of a military problem. Men were wanted.

By slow stages Parliament, the public, and the press are being brought to realize that life is continuous, that every second of life matters, that the needs and consequences of life are continuous. We cannot get soldiers or men ready made. We must go back to infancy and motherhood."

After discussing the racial poisons, and their influence on infant mortality before and after birth, Dr. Saleeby says that probably not less than half of the mortality before birth is due to syphilis. This is not natural selection, and has nothing to do with weeding out rubbish. It is taking good stuff and rotting it. Many human races have been destroyed by these racial poisons before now. Syphilis is not alone. In alcohol, for instance, it has a faithful and trusty ally.

"The future of our race and of the Empire depends on the subject with which we are now dealing. I can with difficulty conceive of any process whereby all the happy lands which fly our flag can be for ever maintained from a Motherland of forty-five million people, as against for instance, seventy million Germans. We can only maintain that Empire by peopling it. This is the world problem of the future. The war will demonstrate the importance of sheer man power in peace as in war. Let us live remembering that all men once lay in cradles, and were carried hither from cradles not made with hands, temples holier still, the *sancta sanctorum* of life."

In an addendum, writing in January last, Dr. Saleeby points out that "the vital statistics of the past year are the most deplorable in our national history. Our losses in men are unprecedented alike in quality and quantity. The birth rate was the lowest on record. Meanwhile, our Empire has been immensely enlarged, and our future responsibilities proportionately enhanced by those very military processes which cost us in the first year of war no fewer than 80,000 deaths.

The "problem of the future" now becomes the problem of "saving the future" thus imperilled. The mere accumulation of the elderly, due to the modern lengthening of life will not avail us. We must save the new and coming life. It is deplorable beyond words that, without meteorological excuse, the infant mortality should have risen in 1915, though the nation made such generous allowance for the children of its soldiers. Thanks to the heathen deity whose temples adorn all our street corners, and to the racial poison poured out in libations to him, the future has too often been killed by the very means which the nation had allotted for saving it. If we are to be true to our holy dead and the cause for which they died, we must establish, and that right early, a modern mother-and-child worship which shall save our infants through their mothers, the natural saviours of infants, regarding each as a potential

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