

The Midwife.

RATIONAL BIRTH CONTROL.

The question of birth control is one which, whether they desire it or not, is forced upon the attention of nurses and midwives, and they should be ready to give a considered opinion upon it in its many aspects. The Malthusian League, 124, Victoria Street, S.W. 1, since 1877 has been teaching the duty and methods of hygienic family limitation, and is now about to open a maternity and child welfare clinic under medical and nursing supervision.

From a series of articles published in the *Malthusian*, the monthly paper of the Malthusian League, and republished in pamphlet form, we learn something of the founder of the Malthusian doctrine, which we publish below.

MALTHUS AND THE MALTHUSIAN DOCTRINE.

So many misconceptions and representations have been in circulation concerning Malthus and his doctrine that a few details of his life and work may first be given.

Thomas Robert Malthus was born in 1766, at the Rookery, near Dorking, in Surrey, and was privately educated until he went to Cambridge, in 1784, and graduated as ninth wrangler in 1788, being elected Fellow of Jesus College in the year 1797. He then received holy orders, and became curate of Albury, in Surrey. At that time the flood of Utopian ideas following upon the French Revolution was at its height, and Mr. Daniel Malthus, the father, was much impressed with the writings of Condorcet and of Godwin, who, in his "Political Justice," sought to prove that human happiness was easily attainable by just institutions. The son, however, disputed this, pointing out that Godwin and Condorcet had overlooked the difficulty of the expansive force of population, and his father urged him to publish his views. In 1798, therefore, appeared anonymously the first edition of the "Essay on the Principle of Population," putting forward the principle that population tended to increase in a rapid geometrical progression, while food could only be increased much more slowly, and possibly more nearly in a steady or arithmetical ratio. With this principle Malthus proceeded to demonstrate the unsoundness of Condorcet's and Godwin's views, and thus began the conflict between the population doctrine and idealistic humanitarian schemes which has always caused it to be so detested by advocates of the latter.

Despite the vehement attacks on his work, Malthus was able to refute all objections, and he greatly increased the value of his Essay in later editions by travelling abroad and gleaning first hand and historical evidence in favour of the existence of powerful checks to population in the form of starvation, disease and war, on the one hand; or of prudential abstinence from marriage or avoidance of childbirth, on the other.

The second edition of the Essay appeared in 1803, and in 1804 Malthus married Miss Harriet Eckersall, being soon afterwards appointed Professor of History and Political Economy at Haileybury College. The Royal Society elected him a Fellow in 1819, and he published a treatise on Political Economy in 1820; and formed, with Grote, Ricardo, James Mill and Tooke a Political Economy Club in 1821. He died from heart disease in 1834.

Malthus's life has been recognised by all writers as a most ideal one, and as being in perfect accord with his principles. The anonymous, and by no means highly sympathetic writer in the "Encyclopædia Britannica" says of him:

"Malthus was one of the most amiable, candid and cultured of men. In all his private relations he was not only without reproach, but distinguished for the beauty of his character. He bore popular abuse and misrepresentation without the slightest murmur or sourness of temper. The aim of his inquiries was to promote the happiness of mankind, which could be better accomplished by pointing out the real possibilities of progress than by indulging in vague dreams of perfectibility apart from the actual facts which condition human life.

"It will be observed that Malthus did not marry before the age of thirty-nine, in conformity with his own principles. We do not know the age of his wife, but there appear to have been only three children, two of whom survived him. The tales which are commonly told of him as having had a large family are pure inventions."

SOCIETY FOR CONSTRUCTIVE BIRTH CONTROL AND RACIAL PROGRESS.

A Society with the above object was established at a meeting held recently in the Hotel Cecil, of which membership is open to all who approve of the objects, and subscribe to the funds, without regard to nationality, religion or politics. The objects of the Society are (a) to bring home to all the fundamental nature of the reforms involved in conscious and constructive control of conception and the illumination of sex life as a basis of racial progress; (b) to consider the individual, national, international, racial, political, economic, scientific, spiritual and other aspects of the theme, for which purpose meetings will be held, publications issued, Research Committees, Commissions of Enquiry, and other activities will be organised from time to time as circumstances require and facilities offer; (c) to supply all who still need it with the full knowledge of sound physiological methods of control.

The President is Dr. Marie Carmichael Stopes, D.Sc., Ph.D., F.L.S., the Hon. Secretary Councillor H. V. Roe, and the Hon. Treasurer Aymer Maude, Esq. A temporary office is being provided by Councillor H. V. Roe and Dr. Stopes at 61, Marlborough Road, Holloway, N. 19.

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