

THE SECRET OF BIRTH CONTROL.

To those who love Nature and listen to her teaching she is apt to reveal her secrets, and in the July issue of *Harper's Magazine*, under the heading "Is Birth Control the Answer," Mrs. Mary Breckinridge, Voluntary Director of the Kentucky Frontier Nursing Service, has an illuminating article on Birth Control. Most of us are profoundly conscious of the necessity for such control, but are equally conscious that the last word has not been said on this subject. The methods advocated for the most part are too intricate, and are repugnant to many people, who realise moreover that the key to most problems lies with simplicity.

Mrs. Breckinridge affirms that she is against existing legislation in the United States of America restricting birth control information, and that it is not a sign of enlightenment, but one of barbarism, that the American people still hedge themselves about with so many regulations covering the citizen's private acts.

Has she, in the fastnesses and solitude of the Mountain ranges in far Kentucky, child of its soil and people, in sympathy with Nature, warm-hearted lover of human kind, come near to solving the problem?

She tells us that since 1790 her people have lived in Kentucky—nearly all of them on the soil—in the economic and political development of which they have taken a vigorous part, and that her earliest childhood recollections go back to discussions of national and international problems as they affect country life, and the responsibility of meeting them.

Later, when she looked for a form of service in accordance with her family bias the primitive, even primordial things like birth and death, disease and disaster gripped her most. The tragedies of childbirth in lonely places, the helplessness of misdirected infancy, sickness neither prevented nor alleviated, weedy looking children struggling to acquire knowledge with brains starved from malnutrition, and bodies devoured by intestinal parasites—these things preyed upon her mind.

After years of preparation, followed by work and observation in such countries as France, England and Scotland, she got together a group of friends, and six years ago they began.

The Frontier Nursing Service, Inc., of which Mrs. Breckinridge is Hon. Director, is the child of their beginning. From nine widely separated nursing centres the Frontier Nursing Service maintains twenty-eight skilled Nurse-Midwives, who travel on horseback to attend women in normal childbirth, and average now a baby a day to the

Service, nurse the sick, practise the tenets of public health and teach hygiene. The Service has its own doctor and dentist in co-operation with the State Board of Health.

These economically poor districts have, Mrs. Breckinridge states, unquestionably too high a birthrate. What about birth control? Would it solve the problem? She is of opinion it would not.

"Old Mother Nature gives physical fertility in inverse ratio to mental and spiritual endowments. In low orders of species like fish we find almost infinite multiplication, and almost no infancy. In higher orders of mammals there are few offspring, and the childhood and education of the young occupy years.

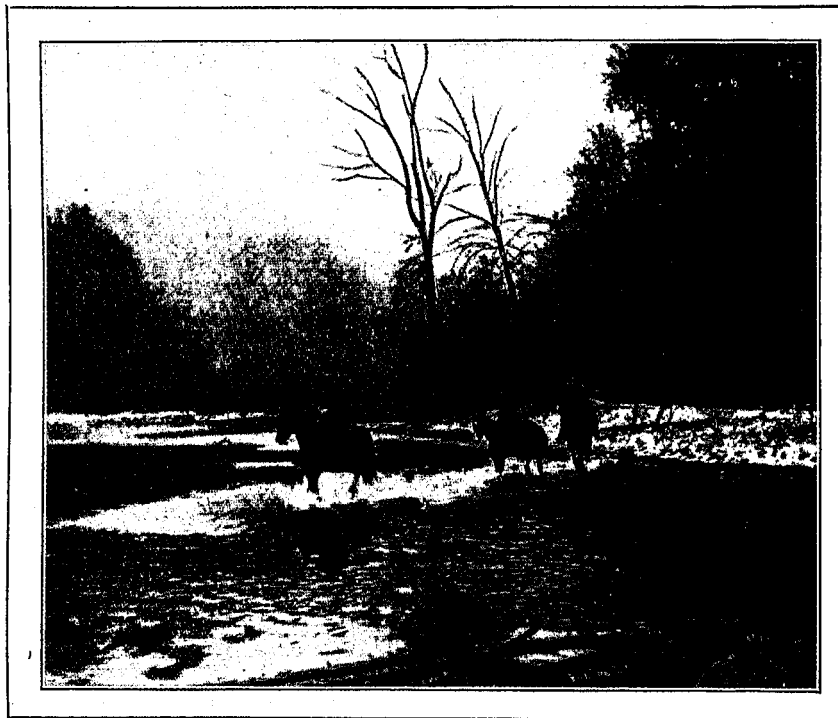
Call it sex, if you look down, or call it life, if you look up. There is a unity in Nature. On the loom of creation is woven but one stuff. If a girl in any walk of life marries in her early teens she marries at Nature's most productive age, and she probably will be fertile. If the same girl puts

her adolescent fertility into sports and college and marries in her twenties she will be relatively infertile. If she is a dull girl her fertility is thereby increased, and if she is brilliant she will have fewer and better children. But this is not determined, as she may think, by her own will. The laws of creation are working themselves out in her and cannot be gainsaid. If she wants five children she will probably find to her astonishment that she can have only three. If she wants three she may have to content herself with one. My readers, of course, can all cite exceptions. An occasional woman does achieve active work

and a large family. She is endowed beyond the common run.

As a law, let us express our thought thus: The fertility of the race is in inverse ratio to its intelligence, plus the prolongation of the period of education past the adolescent stage. We see this strikingly represented in men of genius. As a rule they are sterile, or have small families of feeblar intellect than their forebears. It seems to take so much of Nature's creative force to produce a genius that none is left afterwards for his progeny; and it is not uncommon for a line of intelligent people to reach a peak either in a superior generation or in one great man, and then cease to exist as a family of distinction.

Finally, let us carry this analysis one step farther. Spiritual attainment is of the same creative stuff and is arrived at only by paying the price. How often do we listen to the sneers of those who talk about the suppressed sex life of a spiritual genius! Would it be possible for any other love to live in the consuming religious fires of a Saint



NURSES OF THE KENTUCKY FRONTIER NURSING SERVICE
FORDING A RIVER.

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