

BABIES SACRIFICED TO THE IGNORANCE OF MOTHERS

Mrs. Frederic Schoff, President of the Mothers' Congress, Laments the Lack of Preparation for Parenthood, and Says Infant Mortality Can Only Be Checked by Mothers.

By EDWARD MARSHALL.

THE greatest industry of all since time began has been the mother industry. If women ceased the rearing of their children the world would stop, even if the birth rate did not vanish utterly. Mere child bearing does not populate the earth—it is the preservation of the children after they are born, their training, physical and mental—child conservation, which counts most. Motherhood means something more than partnership in productive matrimony. In all ages it has carried with it the responsibility of physical care; in the later centuries to this has been added the much greater charge of moral care; now there is still further added ethical care. Not only must the child be fed and taught—it must be trained. And there is a deal of difference between the teaching of a child and training it.

Lately it has been my fortune to talk with several experts in different branches of child training after it has passed out of the mother's direct care. Earl Gulick talked to me with high ability about some fairly discussed details of the public school system; Sullivan discussed athletic training; Dr. Kin told of the needs of Oriental childhood and Oriental motherhood, from the unexpectedly intelligent standpoint of a Chinese medical woman.

Now, the other day, in Philadelphia, I had a talk with Mrs. Frederic Schoff, who, of them all, is perhaps, best qualified to speak, for she is President of the Mothers' Congress, a body of industriously thinking women who have turned their industry of thought especially upon this subject of the possibilities of motherhood carried to their utmost.

"Child welfare," said Mrs. Schoff enthusiastically. "It is man and woman welfare; it is nation welfare, really. Let me tell you what trained motherhood can do."

"I thought motherhood," I interrupted, "was instinctive. I thought it alone, of all things, needed no training. I supposed it came quite naturally to the woman, as it comes to animals. Mother love! That certainly does not need training, and the

"Do you see the great significance of this? It is that during the time when the child is most exclusively beneath its mother's care it then is threatened by the gravest dangers. Nor has it, either, as great strength to combat them as will come with added years. The conditions which surround our modern life are such that dangers threaten children which did not confront them in the olden days.

Cut the Death-rate Down 13 per cent.

"Well, we began the training of these mothers, and, while the death-rate in the wards where no such work was done, that dreadful Summer, was 44 per cent, it decreased 13 per cent, in the one ward wherein the nurse worked with her practical instruction of the mothers. We went at it very thoroughly—we had the mothers bring their babies to us every week, and gave a course of lessons in child care. It shows what can be done. Let me say something—let me say it in Italian, if you please. Every year there are more infants sacrificed to ignorance than ever in all the years of the old world's existence have been sacrificed to war, and all of them, or nearly all of them, are babies' lives. A universal peace would be a splendid thing. I favor it and pray for it, of course. But humanity would gain more from the simple education of its mothers than it could from universal peace."

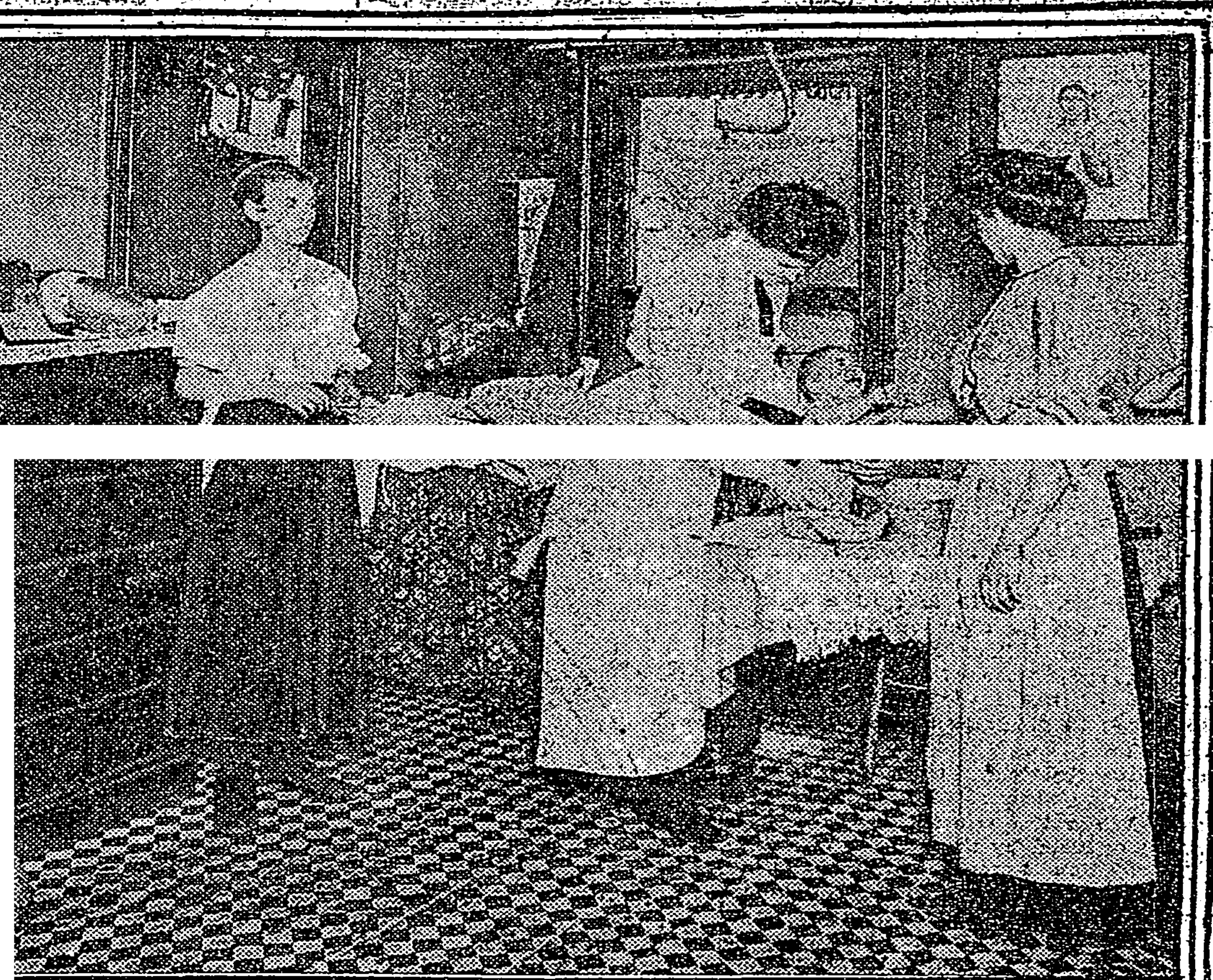
"There is something there," I ventured, "for Mr. Carnegie to consider?"

"There is something there," said Mrs. Schoff, who is a very clever woman, letting no chance slip to press her point, "for not only Mr. Carnegie, but every other human being with real brains to be very carefully considered."

"And if I am to tell the actual truth, I must go on and say that the slum mothers are not the only ones who need more education than they seem to have at present. It is not only in the tenements, but often in the mansions of the rich, and in the comfortable homes of those far happier folk, the middle classes, that mothers need more training. Let me tell you something startling—something you will recognize as truth as quickly as you



Mrs. Frederic Schoff, President of the Mothers' Congress.



A Trained Nurse Giving Health Instruction to a Mother.

by tried solemnly in a criminal court—a little girl, not eight years old!

"This called my attention to what was being done in Philadelphia. I then compared the city laws, and found how small consideration had been shown to children in them—how complete the lack of systematic attention to the young had been. The city had done much to insure education of the mind, but almost nothing to insure the education of the soul. There was no moral training, or, at any rate, there was very little. The Ten Commandments are not much to teach, but if you do not teach them the world suffers. Well, they were not taught in Philadelphia. And I found the prisons full of children.

"The movement which began then revised the laws of Pennsylvania so as to make the counties provide separate buildings for children awaiting trial, so as to put children's cases in the higher courts and make it impossible for Magistrates to send them off to reform schools to save parents who would like to rid themselves of the expense, the cost of which system proved itself. We did not lose back to the clutches of the criminal tendency 5 per cent. of the children who were placed upon probation after having been detected in a first offense. Think of what this saved the State and still is saving—saved in the cost of police, courts and criminal confinement! Ten thousand children every year passed under observation, and of these less than 5 per cent, became real criminals.

"Now, after eight years, I have fully made up my mind that there is no such thing as a criminal child. The children who were in our prisons, who are still in other prisons, were and are there because of circumstances over which they, themselves, had and have no real control. The true way to stop crime is to take every child who is detected in wrongdoing and give systematic help to it, so that it will, afterward, want to do right, instead of wrong. In order best to do this we must help the father and the mother by showing them just how to help the child.

"What I have been able, so far, to get time to study, has made me even firmer in my conviction that the crime is the parents' fault, of ignorance; second, it is the community's fault, of ignorance. And if you educate the parents you will have educated the community—so there is where the Mothers' Congress comes in as a necessary national movement. We must learn how the various States are doing, and offenders must be treated before we can do certain, actual good. The prisoners are almost unanimous in their opinion that our present system is all wrong. Do not send children to reform schools, almost every one of them exclaims, 'for so-called reform schools are invariably really academies of crime. Many of us learned all the rudiments of evil knowledge in such institutions.'

"The whole question of building up this Nation is largely that of child study. Developed children make the Nation. Therefore, at the present time, far more important than the education of the child is the education of the parents and of the official community which has the handling of the children. If the parents and the Government do not rightly train our children, whence, then, shall we get, in future, our supply of well-trained citizens?"

"Nov, voluntarily, I wish to make a brief arraignment of my sex, with the hope that it may help to rouse some women of the vast indifferent class. We women, really, are principally responsible for immorality among ourselves, and among men; on us must rest the burden of the whole world's crime. When a mother holds a little newborn babe clasped in her arms he is as pure as is the little baby girl who nestles in the fond embrace of the next mother. But the little girl, in the majority of instances, stays pure, while, in the majority of instances, the little boy does not.

"It is the mother's fault."

"Why?" I asked, somewhat agitated.

"Why Mothers Are to Blame."

"Because mothers do not understand their boys and do not always try to un-

derstand them. They object to his restlessness and noise, which are as natural to him, in fact, as his desire for food is. Good women, through sheer ignorance, often send their sons away from the healthy influences of their lives because they do not understand them, are not patient with them, do not help them. Mothers do not keep the confidence of their young sons."

"You are the President of an organization having 30,000 mother-members," I suggested. "Please send a message to the mothers who are not yet joined, through the medium of this interview."

"She shook her head a little sadly. 'We could have a million members instead of eighty thousand if we only had the money with which to send out organizers,' she commented. 'We need money. I have the women who will take the necessary message to the mothers of America, but I have not the wherewithal to send them out. Briefly, and without attempt to polish, the message would be this:

A Message to the Mothers of the Land.

"To be a mother is the greatest work the good God gave to woman to accomplish. Be proud to be a mother, be as good a mother as you can, and it is in the power of every woman to be perfect as a mother.

"The children of the world are given to the keeping of the women of the world. The continuance of their life here depends on the intelligence of the mothers and their hope of life hereafter lies very largely in their mothers' keeping. We do not gather harvests without first sowing seed; the building of our children's character lies largely in our hands. God put motherhood into all women's hearts, and whether they have children of their own or not, the highest work which they can do is to apply their mother love to little ones. The mother love which starves does so quite unnecessarily, for there are always the neglected who can be enfolded in it. Up to this time very little mother love and mother thought have gone into the preparation of the laws which govern children and are planned to offer them protection. No State can have upon its statute books the proper laws unless the mothers and the fathers work together, plan together, think together, to devise a proper system to protect each phase of childhood's needs. Not one township, city, county, or State in this whole Union has given half enough attention to this vital matter, and they never will until the women wake up to the situation and work hard and with intelligence.

"In a recent trip I met the Governors of many States and spoke to many Legislatures. I said to the North Carolina Legislature what might be said with truth to all:

"You are making all these laws on which you labor so industriously, without the least consideration for or true conception of the raw material of which all citizenship is formed—the children."

"That was quite true, and it is the duty of the mothers to correct it.

"We have too many earnest, careful thinkers who are dealing wholly with broad generalities, and too few who walk down to the corner, take little children by the hand, and lead them to a quiet spot where may be studied the development of human souls."

What Should Be Done.

"What definitely should be done?"

"The mothers cannot come to us, so we must go to them, for they surely must be educated if the Nation is to live. If we had a faculty of experts in the physical and moral care of children, say a dozen, (or two in each State who would stay a year and then change States, if that is better) to organize the mothers and to speak to mothers and to fathers, good truly infinite might be accomplished. Our Congress now is the 'Mothers' Congress.' It should be 'The Parents' Congress,' and include the fathers. The Government of the United States now sends its agents to rural sections to teach agriculture; if the Mothers' Congress could send experts to teach motherhood and fatherhood, there would be as much improvement in our human stock as the other admirable method is now producing among cattle. The Mothers' Congress now is the only organization in this country dealing with the Nation's most important of all crops, and it should have more help."

"And the decrease of the birth rate?"

"It would help to check it."

"Theodore Roosevelt, who coined the phrase 'race suicide,' and warned the Nation of its perils, is, I am proud to say, my friend and this great movement's friend. The promotion of our work would help to teach the wrong of it, but men are quite as much responsible for the American tendency toward small families as women are. Thousands of women who want children are denied them by their husbands.

"This, though, like the other things, may be corrected by a proper scheme of education. And that work of education lies, I am convinced, within the power of the women of this country, and must be planned and executed by them. We must be the mothers of the Nation as well as mothers of our families."

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Teaching Mothers How to Care for Their Children.

mother who loves her children will take care of them, won't she?"

Not Instinct, but Training.

"You are like the vast majority of men," she answered. "You yourselves know nothing thoroughly through instinct. You expect far more of us than of yourselves. You wouldn't trust your fancy dogs to untrained care, no matter how devotedly your groom loved dogs, yet you would trust your children, to have the world intrust its children, to unskilled hands because their touch was flowing, to ignorant brains because they were affectionate. That this, since time began, has been the way, is one of the great handicaps beneath which humanity has staggered. That things are bettering now is scarcely to your credit—they should have bettered long ago.

"The training of the mother, after she has had her baby, is as necessary as her proper medical treatment when the baby comes, the nursing of that baby when it happens to be ill, the teaching of the baby's mind so that it will not grow up an ignorant, the development of its soul so that it will not mature a monster.

"Indeed, upon the mother's training depends, to a very large extent, all the escapes which I have mentioned for the baby.

"Let me tell you what mother training has already done, just for the babies' bodies, and not counting minds or souls at all. The mother alone can prevent high infant mortality, and the untrained mother cannot do it. I shall give you an illustration, showing what a difference there is between the work of trained and untrained mothers. Here you will find directly illustrated the educated and the ignorant mother.

"When we first began our work in Philadelphia we took one of the city's wards and put to work there one of the best trained nurses we could get from the New York City Board of Health. This nurse confined, the development of its children under five years old and to one ward. The situation, when she went to work, was startling. We had worked out the statistics for a certain period. There had been, in all, 418 deaths of babies under five years old in one month. Of these, 348 had been less than one year old, 52 had been between one year and two, and the percentage of deaths had gone on, in decreasing ratio, as the child grew older. This merely proved, and gave us details of what we all had known—that the first year is the perilous year for babies.

hear it, but something you have never thought about. Do not italicize it, but cut it up into short paragraphs. That will emphasize it, and it needs much emphasis.

"Nothing in the modern training of a girl or woman fits her for her motherhood."

"Eighty per cent. of the women of this country marry, yet there is no course of training, in any school or college in this Nation, from Atlantic to Pacific, from Canada to Mexico, designed to teach them how to meet their supreme test, their holiest responsibility, the high duty which is theirs, and in which must depend the future of the human race. Note this:

"The care of human lives is really far more important than the higher mathematics, but it gets much less attention than the highest and least studied mathematics."

As Mrs. Schoff said these things to me, she leaned forward in her chair in the fine drawing room of the roomy and refined old mansion, down in Philadelphia, which is her home—that home of which she must so frequently deny herself the pleasures, in order to keep up the work of education of which she voluntarily has assumed the burden.

A Course in Motherhood.

"Much less attention," she repeated, with impressive emphasis.

"Is there a possibility of a definite course in motherhood?" I asked.

"Of course there is," she answered. "In the normal schools of France children are brought in to classes and taught to care for them. They are carefully instructed in their bathing, in their feeding, in their general care, and, furthermore, in the psychology of the child. These classes are known as Les Ecoles Maternelles—the schools of motherhood. The whole nation is interested in them and the best brains of the nation are devoted to them. France has had to do this. Her death rate is so high and her birthrate is so low that she has been aroused to thought and realizes that the future of her national life depends upon the conservation of what infants she produces and can raise. She knows that she cannot afford to waste a single baby. Our waste of babies, on the other hand, is frightful, and the only body which is working toward their conservation is the body of which I at present have the honor to be President—the National Congress of Mothers. The public is not in the least aroused to the real gravity of

existing conditions, although—and this should be italicized, beyond a doubt—our birth rate also is decreasing and our death rate among infants is absolutely frightful. The doctors have been warning us for years, but we have paid no heed. Shall we allow ourselves to fall into a state like that which has come near to driving France into a panic?"

"Is nothing being done?" I asked.

"We have done something through the Mothers' Congress," was the answer, "and hope to do far more, but not enough has been done yet, and many years will pass before enough is done. The Nation suffered, has suffered, and will suffer, because mothers have been, are, and will be ignorant, because we pay far less attention to the breeding of our children than to the breeding of our cattle, because the child is the one really domesticated animal which, nowadays, is not reared scientifically by intelligent breeders."

Where the American Mother Fails.

"I have seven children and seven grandchildren," she said, half apologetically, "and this thing has taken hold of me."

"Do American mothers actually neglect their children?" I inquired.

"It would be, perhaps, unfair to say that," she replied. "The American mother does not, perhaps, actually neglect her children, but she does not give them the best care and service she might give them, because she does not take the trouble to learn how to do it—because it has not yet become the custom for girls to learn how to be mothers as carefully as men learn how to conduct the business of their lives, as thoroughly as they themselves prepare themselves for other work and for accomplishments. The mother's work, in many ways, is, really, as highly specialized as the physician's, and it is vastly more important when you come to really analyze it. Yet no physician would attempt to practice medicine without much previous study, while few mothers have the slightest training for their vastly important task. The physician keeps humanity alive, the mother makes it worth his trouble. If he succeeds and she fails the world is not the gainer, but the loser, by his work. No stock raiser or gardener would expect to produce good animals or plants with as little knowledge of his business, as the average mother has of child-production and child-culture.

"Do not let me give you the impression, though, that I am blaming the poor

—the world habit. They are not individually responsible for their faults. The mothers, anyway the mothers of the classes having few advantages, are doing quite the best they can under infinitely adverse circumstances. The world itself must wake up to the fact that it is more important to educate the mothers and the fathers of its children than it is to educate the children. Teach the little ones to read and write—that is a universal slogan. It is the card before the horse. First teach their parents how to make them well and strong, how to preserve them and make them capable of learning. Knowledge of a high school course is of little value to the child that dies just as it graduates, and the child who dies at 12 before my mind an utterly new vista of educational detail.

"I am working hard this minute," Mrs. Schoff replied, "to get a National endowment for a school—and university—extension plan, with headquarters at Washington, for the education of Americans in parenthood. Knowledge of it has as yet been only partially disseminated.

"This article of yours will be the first widespread announcement of it, yet I am literally deluged with requests for information concerning it."

Before I had left her I had promised to do everything I could to interest folks in it. Mrs. Schoff has a convincing way. She is not only an enthusiast upon the subject of motherhood in general, but she has been herself an enthusiastic mother. Her enthusiasm is contagious.

"How far has this organization of American motherhood really progressed?" I asked.

"What the Mothers' Congress Is."

"Far," said Mrs. Schoff. "There are organizations in all the States and twenty-five general State organizations. I cannot give you offhand our total membership, but here are details which will indicate it. I organized the Tennessee branch in January of this year, and now, in April, it has 1,200 members. The President of the Tennessee branch had long opposed the purchase of an auto by her husband. Just as we organized he bought one. Now she writes that she is glad he did, because it offers her a vehicle in which to go about with facile speed to visit rural districts and teach mothers. We have 8,000 members in Texas, 6,000 in California. And all this has been done without an organized financial scheme. We have done it without money, at our own expense. If we had reasonable public support—and when was there an object to which the public's help—we could have organizations everywhere and everywhere be offering to the eager mothers just the education they require and yearn for, which should help them to build up their happiness, their children's strength and intelligence, and through these things, the vitality and brain of the whole Nation. You can no more expect a mother who does not understand the science of it to turn out a child quite worthy as a citizen than you can expect a workman who knows nothing of his lathe to turn out a properly shaped chair leg."

"No nation has given the thought to child-production and child culture that it should. I attribute almost all the wrong in the community to bad child training. The corruption in our politics is due to it, the immorality of our cities is due to it, the dishonesty of our conduct of life is due to it. Parents do not teach their young, the lessons which will tend to better things, and the reason that they do not teach them is that they do not, oftentimes, know how to teach them, or, themselves, dream of the importance of the education. Unprepared and untaught mothers may reasonably be expected to be incompetent mothers. Lack of home influence is responsible for the social evil, for unhappy marriages, and for divorce, as I have said. Bear this in mind. If we form we will not have to reform."

The Children in the Prisons.

"About ten years ago I became interested in bringing children then in prisons. There were 600 under fifteen years of age then in prison in the Christian City of Philadelphia.

"It was that awful situation which first led me into work outside my own particularly happy home. The knowledge, suddenly acquired but gradually appreciated, filled me with abhorrence. Six hundred children under fifteen years of age in prison! Not in reform schools and such institutions, mind you, but in actual prison and subject to all the evil influences which association in community of punishment with vile criminals would be sure to exert on their young minds! One little girl, under eight years of age, had been a criminal, and actual-