

### EXTRACTS FROM FIRST LECTURE (INFANCY) IN THE COURSE ON "THE NORMAL LIFE OF MAN"

To Be Given by Edward T. Devine in Baltimore Under the Auspices of the Social Service Corporation.

I HAVE thought that it might help us to get both unity and proportion into our study, and perhaps to see some old problems in a new light, if we should take for our background the normal individual life and, following it through from beginning to end, try to determine what are the social conditions and social provisions which are essential at each stage to securing it. In doing this we shall necessarily review much that is familiar to us all; in fact, I can promise nothing new in itself; but I hope that you may find, as I have, a fresh interest in many subjects while considering them from this point of view.

On this plan we shall interest ourselves in the positive rather than the negative aspect of life, in normal development rather than pathological aberrations, in healthy participation in organized human society rather than in waste, pauperism, criminality and degeneracy. We shall never be very far, I fear, from the abnormal and subnormal; never quite free from the consciousness of that incessant warfare between beneficent germs and pathogenic germs of which the human body is the choicest battlefield, and which has its analogy in spiritual struggle; never able to forget that a normal life is vouchsafed to us—any of us—only as an ideal.

The normal life of man rather than abnormalities, prosperity rather than misery, health rather than disease, will furnish at least the framework of our discussion.

The phrase "the normal life of man" suggests to all of us here, I venture to say, and to all of us who make up the great mass of Americans, a pretty definite picture, and one that is the same in its essentials, however much it may vary as to details.

#### As It Should Be.

We think of a child born, without congenital defects, into a home where it has been lovingly expected and prepared for. We see it carefully, if not always scientifically, tended through its first delicate years, weathering various minor ailments and "children's diseases," though probably with one or more narrow escapes, learning its first lessons in self-control, getting its fundamental ideas of material things and of human relations—in short, enter into its "social heritage." Next comes a happy period, made up of school and play and home life, some acquaintance with racial traditions of religion and morality, and more or less acquaintance through travel and otherwise with the outside world.

Childhood past—whether at fourteen or sixteen or twelve or ten—there follows a period of preparation for the responsibilities of manhood and womanhood.

Arrived at maturity, equipped to earn a living and to spend it, we picture the young man or woman marrying, surrounding their children with rather more comforts and advantages than they themselves had, giving them a longer period for education. We think of them as living to see their children established in homes of their own, and their grandchildren growing up; gradually relinquishing active duties to the younger generation, while keeping lively interests and a place of usefulness; their support provided either by savings or by their children's care; and at the end leaving the world—reluctantly, to be sure, for it has been an agreeable place—but with a sense of satisfaction, as at the close of a full day of work and wholesome pleasure and friendly intercourse.

#### As It Too Often Is.

There is no place in the picture for blind babies, feeble-minded girls, syphilitic young men, neglected orphans, child workers, ignorant and inefficient men and women, repulsive and lonely old people; there is no place for dependence on charity, for long disabling illness or accident, for prostitution, drunkenness, vice or habitual crime, for neglect of children or other disregard of natural obligations, for premature age or early death.

To insure a fair start in life for the individual—a normal beginning of the normal life—reliance must be placed chiefly on the individual and the family. Society may to a limited extent, by conscious effort, determine what kind of children shall be born, and what kind of care they shall receive after birth, but in the main the important services of society at this stage are indirect and advisory; the provision of such education as will make individuals lead clean and wholesome lives and choose wisely, when the times comes, about marriage and parenthood; of such industrial and social conditions as will make it possible for women to bear healthy children without exhaustion; and of such assistance, chiefly in the way of advice, as will enable them to care intelligently for their babies after they

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The following extracts are samples:

"My first argument against suffrage is that the women would not use it if they had it. You couldn't drive them to the polls."

"My second argument is, if the women were enfranchised they would neglect their homes, desert their families and spend all their time at the polls. You may tell me that the polls are only open once a year. But I know women! They are creatures of habit. If you let them go to the polls once a year, they will hang round the polls all the rest of the time."

"Did George Washington ever say 'votes for women?' No."

"Did Elijah, Elisha, Micah, Hezekiah, Obadiah and Jeremiah ever say 'votes for women?' No. Then that settles it!"

But does it, dear suffragist?

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are born. The selection of parents for the next generation is at present in America, and is likely to continue to be, left to individual choice, and the only satisfactory method that has yet been found for getting babies safely through the first year of life is the individualistic plan of attention to each one by its own mother.

There are really three distinct sets of problems involved in this one of a normal beginning of life, according as they center about (1) parentage, (2) the period before birth, and (3) the life of the child after birth.

#### Heredity, and What It Means to the Community.

Heredity is a fact of human life of which not merely the individual in his private relations, but the community in its broader social relations, must take account. Normally like tends to beget like. It is sound human policy to prevent the conception of human beings who are to be cursed from the very origin of life with an irredeemable handicap. There is no blessing in the motherhood of an imbecile child. There is no inalienable right to be the father of tainted, diseased, degenerate offspring. As to the early steps in this particular policy of social construction the evidence is all in. Modern science has demonstrated that no feeble-minded mother, no syphilitic mother, no alcoholic mother, and no mother of a child whose father is alcoholic, feeble-minded or syphilitic may expect to give birth to a normal child. I do not say that it never occurs. In the old polytheistic days a human mother sometimes gave birth to a divinity, and there are about equal chances of a similar miracle in the bringing forth of health from degeneracy.

That unfit marriages should be prevented, and also such illegitimate births as would be barred by a marriage deemed unfit, is the foundation stone of social control. That is only the beginning, but perhaps it may be also the end of compulsion in the regulation of marriages and births. For there are many things that can be done through the voluntary principle. The state is but one among many agencies of social action. The responsibility for wise mating, for actual improvement of the racial stock through judicious marriage, would better remain where it is for the present—on the parties to the marriage contract, their parents, and their match-making friends. Education is needed; improved facilities in parks and parlors for legitimate courtship are needed; more rational standards of living, in which substantial values and genuine necessities receive more emphasis and artificial luxuries less; but all these things are to be secured through discussion, through the survival of sensible ideas, through the contagion of high ideals, rather than by any form of coercion. A social program does not necessarily mean a program of legislation.

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