

by it, and the mass of miserable existence remains unchanged where it might be greatly lessened. The fact that, on the average, the largest families are found among the poorest workers, is a proof, not that poverty causes fecundity, as some think, but that fecundity goes with ignorance, and helps to make poverty. This is not only a labor question, it is a physiological question for myriads of women who through sheer ignorance are condemned to a life of chronic suffering and constant slavery, where a modicum of information and guidance would work a world of difference.

I have said that there are only two arguments worth consideration against the statement of the law of population. But a good deal of use has lately been made of an argument which, though it does not deny the evils of over-population, suggests that these are less than the evils which might come of family limitation. There is a danger, it is said, of prudence being carried too far. In France, in some years, there are more deaths than births, and this is set down to the excessive practice of family limitation. But the truth is that the people of France are thus prudent by reason of the enormous burden of their taxation; and if their rulers want a larger population, they must just lighten the financial burdens and give more freedom to the industry of the people. What happens when the births are fewer than the deaths is, that foreign population tends to come in. But this has been happening in France for centuries; it was traced last century, in respect of population coming from Switzerland and the Low Countries; and so long as the total population does not fall away, there is no real decline in French wealth and power. Meantime, it is in every way better that the births should be lessened than that children should be born who, in the terms of the case, must grow up to misery. And there is a certain clear gain from the present state of things. Patriotic anxiety is leading the French people to take more care of what children they have, and in recent years their infantile death-rate has been noticeably reduced. On the whole, we may be pretty sure that there will always be births enough, relatively to the comfort possible for parents and children. In Great Britain, the trouble is that, though fortunately the birth-rate *has* fallen a great deal within the past ten years, there are still far more births than there should be, and accordingly far more misery than exists in France. And those who encourage such misery in order merely to keep up the census figures are really unworthy of being listened to on social problems.

Apart from all the above forms of argument against family prudence, we are constantly met in practice by the protest that such prudence is "unnatural;" and some very coarse people tell us that the conveyance of the necessary knowledge is indecent. This kind of protest has been flouted by men of the most grossly vicious lives. To these we need offer no answer. But to decent people, who, through simple modesty, shrink from the subject, the answer is easy. Firstly, if the restriction of families be unnatural because it is a divergence from animal instinct,