

is, of course, impossible for any single branch to pursue all the objects covered by the programme of the Union with equal diligence and zeal. To attempt to do so would be a wasteful dissipation of your interest and influence. But the comprehensiveness of your programme enables you to take action and to strike a blow for righteousness in this or that direction, as occasion offers, while in the main you follow out one or two clearly defined lines of policy. It is undoubtedly best for each Branch to concentrate its attention on such objects as circumstances indicate, while holding itself in readiness to bring its influence to bear in other directions as occasion demands.

I confess that I have had great difficulty in choosing a subject on which to address you this afternoon. When your President invited me to speak she gave me a free hand to choose, only suggesting that I might say something about peace and arbitration. I thought for a time that I might look up some of the history of international arbitration for you, and say something about its principles and prospects; but I considered that I had been making some reference to that subject in another place not so very long ago, and I felt that it partook less of a directly practical nature than you had a right to expect. And so, after much hesitation, I determined to take my courage in my hands and to speak to you to-day upon the most delicate of all the subjects that come within your programme, an aspect of the subject of social purity, which is included in your tenth department. I am going to say something about the Need of Instruction as a Safeguard of Purity. It is a subject in which I know you are specially interested. It is one in which the need of practical effort, the need of doing something, is great and urgent. And it is one in which, as women, you are capable of exercising a far-reaching and decisive influence. There are few occasions on which one may speak freely upon it; and I do not know that I would have ventured to choose it even to-day without the permission of such of your office-bearers as I have been able to consult.

A few weeks ago one aspect of the question of social purity was debated at considerable length in Parliament, and received considerable attention in

the public press. Attention was directed on that occasion to those fell diseases which are the consequences of impurity. Our legislators discussed the evil both from the side of treatment and of prevention. In the latter connection, with a view to prevention, they emphasised most strongly the need of education. They insisted on the necessity of spreading throughout the community information which should serve as a warning against the dangers, and so as a preventive against the ravages of disease. Now that is a necessary and most important aspect of the question. But there are other aspects perhaps deeper and more important. There is the question of the effect of impurity on character and on domestic life, the moral and spiritual ravages of the evil, and the sad shattering of many homes and of many young lives which results from it. In these connections, too, the need of instruction is clamant. Experience and observation alike impress me with the appalling extent of ignorance which prevails. It is extraordinary how many children, both boys and girls, are allowed to grow up without any effort on the part of those who are responsible for their upbringing to impart to them information which it is vitally important they should receive. They come to the age when "the mightiest of instincts wakes from its repose"; they do not know what to expect; they have not been warned against any dangers; no ideal has been set before them of the sacredness of the new functions which are developing; no true insight has been given them into the noblest meanings of chivalry and modesty. They are left to find out for themselves the nature and purpose of the new phenomena which are making their appearance in their own bodies; and they have to learn haphazard from each other or from any source of information they may chance to light on. The fact that their parents have never mentioned these things to them leads them to entertain false thoughts about them. They deem there is something wrong, something wicked about the whole business; and yet the very strength of their unfolding experience compels them to interest and enquiry. Is it any wonder that some delicate young souls are tortured with undeserved self-reproaches? Is it any wonder that some fall into dangerous

practices unawares; and that, even if the worst habits are not formed, their imaginations are polluted, their memories are blighted, and in their ignorance they lay up for themselves a heritage of lasting shame. I hold very strongly that children should learn from their parents' lips the holy secret of the transmission of life—the boys from their fathers; the girls from their mothers. It is a father's duty to instruct his son; it is a mother's duty to instruct her daughter. From none may a child learn the lesson so beautifully as from his or her parents. Very jealously should every parent guard the privilege which belongs to him or her to be the first to reveal the mystery to the little ones in the home. The father should teach the boys, the mother should teach the girls. But rather than let any outsider—any chance informant—have the opportunity, the mother may well teach both the boys and girls if she will.

The task is by no means so difficult as it appears, if it be undertaken in time. Our children are taught nature lessons in their day schools, and there they learn the secret of the reproduction of flowers. They know all about the seed-box, and the seed, and the need for the fertilising pollen, and many of the wonderful ways in which the life-kindling dust is introduced to the waiting germ. There is information in the child's mind already which we may build upon. Further, our children are familiar with the happenings of the poultry run. They have seen the hens laying their eggs in the nests; they have watched a setting placed under a brooding fowl. They have counted the days till the hatching, and they have welcomed with wonder and delight the little chicks on their emergence from their shells. There, I say, we have information to build on. And it is easy to add to that knowledge the idea that in the higher animals the young come from an egg, just as the chickens do, only God has built for them a nest inside their own bodies, where the egg may be hatched and the little one may grow for a time, where He Himself may fashion and perfect body and limb, and from which in due time He takes it and gives it into its mother's care. It should cause a woman no confusion to explain to her own child how God built that nest under her own heart