



HOLLAND is the land where the stork is not an uncommon sight. The long, rangey bird may be seen here and there nesting comfortably in the eaves of the impeccable Dutch houses, and happy is the family whose dwelling-place he selects as a suitable abode for the Mrs. and the little storks. No better omen of good fortune could be vouchsafed.

All this, however, is in a strict and literal sense. Figuratively speaking, in no country has the symbolic stork - with his traditional predilection for dropping, regardless of welcome, small human bundles at unsuspecting homesteads - so little personal liberty. Nowhere as in Holland are his visits so effectively supervised - which is by way of saying that in this tiny country the individual citizens have to a remarkable degree looked the subject of the scientific limitation of population squarely in the face. They invite the stork in, quite hospitably, when they want him and when there is room under the roof for another little life. But they shut him out mercilessly and without hesitation when there is not, so that he must perforce fly all the way to China or to Russia to drop his unwanted bundles, altho often he has succeeded in making many landings in the poorer districts of England and Germany.

In point of natural resources, the Netherlands is the poorest country in the world. The very land exists only through the stubborn perseverance of the inhabitants who vigilantly keep it and themselves from sinking into the sea by an intricate network of dikes. But despite this, it is the most prosperous of the small countries, and it presents the striking anomaly of having at once the highest birth-rate and the lowest death-rate in the universe.

This is neither accidental nor paradoxical. It is absolutely logical when you know the facts. It means just this, that in Holland practically every child born is wanted, planned for ahead of its coming, and tenderly cared for after its advent. The stork brings no surprises, as elsewhere. Fewer children are born, but a greater proportion of them live - that in a nutshell is the alpha and omega of Holland's birth politics.

It is one of the most glowing, one of the most romantic pages in the history of feminine achievement that the person who brought about this right-about-face attitude on birth-control in Holland is a woman. It is a fact at once amazingly incredible and thrillingly true that a woman, single-handed and alone, hedged about by the thorns of prejudice that have existed since the Deluge, converted a nation into a radical way of thinking on a question which since the Year One has been more shrouded in mystery than the seven-veiled Isis.

THE story of the fight that Dr. Aletta Jacobs put up for a sincere conviction reads like the story of one of the early martyrs, only whereas they usually came to a violent end by being stoned to death or cooked on a gridiron, she has emerged in triumph and is regarded now as one of the First Citizens rather than as an outcast.

Of course, she has been on that most scorching of all gridirons which is kept burning bright by adverse public opinion, and she has felt the stones of the hypocrites and purists. But somehow she has got safely through and now not only have the results to her own country vindicated her long battle, but other nations to-day, desperately anxious to correct the evils of overpopulation, are looking to Holland for the pattern after which to model their own program of birth politics. One authority after another testifying before the Birth-rate Commission which is sitting in England to-day has expressed the hope that Britain will adopt the system that has been so successfully demonstrated by the Dutch people - a system under which the overcrowding that makes for dangerous social unrest and appalling human misery can never be brought about.

Briefly stated, what Dr. Jacobs did was to teach the women of her country that they need not - that they *should* not - have more babies than they could rear in health and comfort, and she did this, persuading the government miraculously to keep its hands off and holding at bay, at the same time, a whole army of fanatics, religious and otherwise, who snapped at her heels like a pack of hungry wolves.

IF THE story of Dr. Jacobs's crusade is to be told chronologically one must go way back to the early seventies. In those times it took a stout-hearted person, indeed, even to mention the subject of women's rights - political, social, or human. Higher education for women was thought neither necessary nor desirable - in fact, it was not thought about at all. "Birth-control," a phrase now uttered glibly by *débutante* as well as by matron, would have brought the blush of shame to the mother of twelve or fourteen children, which was a proper-sized family in those days. Malthus, with his far-seeing theory that populations would have to be held down if wars were to be prevented, was mentioned only timidly among scientists and radicals. Neo-Malthusians, who agreed with the great economist as to conclusions but thought inhuman his advocacy of populations restricted solely by the celibacy of men and women, were damned by the clergy and the public alike and dared not raise their voices.

This was the situation then, in 1871, when a young and ardent Dutch woman, the daughter of a doctor in the north of Holland, where even to-day the old customs are more strongly entrenched than anywhere else in the country, elected to study medicine. There were no restrictions against women doing this sort of thing, because it was never thought that a Dutch woman could conceive the idea. Therefore, before the officials could recover their breath, she had entered the University of Groningen and in due course of time completed her studies as far as that establishment was concerned. She then moved on to the Town University of Amsterdam. Finishing her work there, she spent another year in London for the practical experience to be gained in the hospitals for women and children. Now only was she ready for the colossal task she had set herself.

Back to Amsterdam she went - the capital and most populous city in the Netherlands. There she hung out her shingle as a general medical practitioner, trained to handle all sorts of cases, but convinced that her greatest scope would be in the field of gynecology.

It was an uphill fight gaining the confidence of the women who stood so sorely in need of her, but when it became known that not only were her advice and treatment free to those who could not afford to pay, but that she had the knowledge and power to relieve the sufferings of the few who had been bold enough to consult her, her clientele grew accordingly.

Holland, flanked by Germany, had already imbibed of that country's dominant theory that to be prosperous and powerful it was necessary to urge upon women that their patriotism could best be expressed by beating the women of other nations in increasing the birth-rate. The wealthy classes, to whom information on any subject is usually accessible, regarded this as a perfectly proper theory - to be put into practice by the lower classes.

As the intimate confidant of the poor women who were visiting her in increasing numbers, Dr. Jacobs saw at first hand the misery that excessive child-birth was causing not only to the mothers, but to the fathers and to the children already born, and the conviction grew that the time was ripe to take a step bolder than any she had ever taken before.

She therefore, in 1884, opened the first public birth-control clinic the world has ever known!

Imagine it, in Holland where the women typify "domesticity" to the rest of the world. But Dr. Jacobs felt that this domesticity, which included usually a baby every year regardless of the health or economic status of its mother and father, was deserving of some condemnation along with all the praise it was receiving. "Be fruitful and multiply" seemed a mandate more worthy of application to the under-populated age in which it was uttered. It was all right for Noah, who with a single family had to re-create the world. But it did not appear to this logical, sympathetic young Dutch woman as exactly the right sort of command to put upon a woman, living on a very populous earth, who was already burdened with more young ones than she and her husband could support. It did not seem sensible to apply it literally to one whose husband was suffering with tuberculosis, or diseases even more menacing.

AND there was another angle, too. The drastic punishment of social ostracism, that since the world began has fallen upon illegitimacy, has not prevented the birth of children out of wedlock. No stronger advocate of marriage and motherhood than Dr. Jacobs could be found, but viewing this phase of the question, her honest mind could not prevent the query - would not society as well as the unfortunate unmarried mother be immeasurably bettered if the conception of these miserable little human lives was prevented?

To her the answer was unmistakably in the affirmative. Clearing her thoughts of all the underbrush of ancient prejudice, religious fanaticism and the doctrines of statesmen who require, or think they do, innumerable people for the furtherance of their imperialistic ambitions, she concluded that there were several perfectly justifiable reasons on medical and sociological grounds alone why the knowledge of scientific birth-control should be freely given to women of all classes. And, having arrived at this conclusion, she started in a very brave, but a very humble way to demonstrate that she had the courage of her convictions.

Without noise and without blatancy she opened her small clinic in Amsterdam and her first visitors were drawn from that timid little army which had begun to consult her about their physical ailments. Almost reluctant to trust a woman who had so far forgotten her femininity and her "place" in the scheme of things as to study and practise medicine, they nevertheless were impressed by her tremendous earnestness and her undoubted interest in their welfare, and, in time, they did for her and for her work, more than the most carefully planned advertising campaign could have done.

Mevrouw van Vliet, in her stiff lace cap and eight or nine petticoats, passed the good word along to Mevrouw de Wit as they sat together knitting the interminable gray woolen socks which to this day seem inseparable from the Dutch housewife's leisure hours. The young doctor knew a thing or two! Of that they were convinced. Moreover, by this time the young doctor had a husband of her own and she had had a baby, too, so that she was in an even better position than before to obtain the trust and confidence of the vrouws of Holland.

Daily the plight of many of the women of the poorer classes wrung her heart, and it was from them that her own views on woman's rebellion against enforced and continual pregnancy were confirmed. To some of them the coming of another child meant taking the bread out of the mouths of those already born; to others it meant even worse things. Desperate women, driven to distraction by unwanted pregnancy, prayed to her to "get them out of trouble," but tho they gained her sympathy, she, like all accredited birth-

control advocates, had nothing but harsh words for the dangerous, illegal methods that constitute abortion. She could help them to avoid a repetition of the cruel plight however, and that is what she did.

EVERY morning from nine until one, her clinic was open. Here she told women the fundamental facts of their anatomy, of which many seemed in the darkest ignorance. Mothers with large families had sometimes but the scantiest knowledge as to how their own children had actually come into being. Some regarded their children not as a blessing, at all, but as a sort of punishment inherited from Mother Eve.

Dr. Jacobs explained and demonstrated. She charged them nothing, and when they could not afford the small sum necessary for the simplest contraceptives, she supplied them.

Thus the little clinic became a very big one indeed. Upper-class women, to whom in those early days information was not so accessible as it is now - tho, of course, it was available if diligently sought - hesitated to risk their social prestige by appearing publicly at the morning clinics. But they implored Dr. Jacobs for private appointments in the afternoon at her home! And so, from the fees of the rich she extended her work among the poor.

Naturally, it was not long before the expected howl arose. Prototypes of the late Anthony Comstock have their being in every country. Holland was not free of them - is not free of them to-day, in fact. Purists and whited sepulchers, who were practising in private what they denounced in public, heaped abuse upon the woman who had dared this awful thing. Women as well as men were loud in their denunciation. One influential vrouw whom she had befriended, who in truth had sought her for information and profited by it, became her most rabid detractor. Conservatives gnashed their teeth. Clergymen and religious fanatics hurled the Scriptural texts at her. From Genesis to St. Paul and back again she was proved a heretic and a sinner. For years she walked a veritable way of the Cross, and it is not strange that her bitterest, most implacable enemies were the doctors and midwives.

You see, all unwittingly, she was hurting their pocketbooks. This propensity on the part of the citizenry to reproduce with consistent regularity provided the bulk of their income. From certain families, doctors and midwives could reckon with unwavering certainty on a confinement fee annually. Imagine the outcry when they saw this profitable and sure source of income threatened! Petitions were got up, public sentiment was appealed to, and the indignation of the moralists was rampant.

With rare forbearance in a government, Dutch officialdom decided to mind its own business. Possibly it had the foresight to interpret the trend world events were taking. Germany was in the full flush of its famous, or infamous, "Bevolkerungspolitik" (birth politics). As a result of Prussian Junkerdom's careful fostering of the idea that it was woman's patriotic duty to keep her country well supplied with fighting sons, birth-rate statistics were leaping up. From 1871 to 1900 the population in Germany jumped from 41,958,792 to 56,367,178. Already the "Fatherland" had grown too cramped for its children and Pan-German dreams of national expansion and world supremacy had undoubtedly taken shape.

It is just possible that the leaders of the Dutch nation, which is essentially peace-loving despite the war-like chapters of its history, were wise in their generation and construed in advance the headlong plunge that awaited the German people at the end of the road they had chosen. At any rate,

tho the population of Holland took a decided halt as a direct result, it is claimed, of Dr. Jacobs's teachings, she was not spied upon or clapped into jail. On the contrary, her experiment was watched with the placidity of which only Dutch burghers are capable. And, presently, a great many people, whose voices with the years grew more and more numerous and eventually all but silenced the denunciators, were saying that what she had done and was

doing was not only a very humane and philanthropic thing, but a very canny thing from the point of view of the nation's welfare. Dr. Jacobs, herself, has never justified her course on any but social and medical grounds.

"People say now that this is of great economic value to us," she told me when I visited her recently at The Hague, "but I have no answer to that. What I have done I have done as a doctor and as a woman. I believe it the *right*, but *not* the duty of every woman to have a child. I think it cruel to withhold from poor, uneducated women the knowledge that rich, intelligent women find it so easy to obtain. And is it not a crime for children to be brought thoughtlessly into the world, when there is no money to feed and clothe and educate them?

"Then, too, there is the question of disease. Only healthy men and women should have children, but even if it were desirable, you will never be able to keep the unhealthy from marrying.

"These are the thoughts that have influenced me - these, and, also, the problem of the unmarried mother. The world was a very unkind place for her forty or fifty years ago. It is still so, only not to such a great degree. Who are we to say that she shall be so drastically punished? It is not as tho she alone bare the brunt. The innocent child suffers, society suffers. People who argue that the knowledge of scientific facts about birth-control will lead to immorality, forget that we have always had immorality. If the world is to continue with the old point of view of visiting punishment upon the heads of innocent children, why should they have to come into the world to receive this unmerited punishment? "

But altho she has left it to others to consider the economic aspects, they do nevertheless exist. The little country has less than 13,000 square miles of Continental territory - agricultural, all of it, not, however, by virtue of the natural richness of the soil, but because the Dutch people are the cleverest nation in the world at artificial fertilizing. There's an old saying that God made the earth but the Dutch made Holland, and a trip to the country substantiates, at least, the marvelous enterprise of the inhabitants. But they realize that there's a limit to the number of newcomers who can be properly cared for.

THE war has demonstrated more forcibly than all the utterances of economists in the past that it is a good thing for a people to be self-supporting, at least as far as the food supply is concerned. Holland had this brought sharply home to her during the great conflict through which she remained a neutral. With many of her ships commandeered by our country and the Allies, and with her imports held down to a minimum on account of the blockade against the Central Empires, she felt the war less than any other neutral, despite the fact that she was in its very theater, cheek by jowl with Belgium and but a stone's-throw from the bloody Meuse. Some people were hungry due to the fact that without her normal quota of imports, Holland had to yield in many cases to Germany's demand for food, because of her dependence on that country for coal. But what was just an uncomfortable pinch for her 6,000,000 people would have been a veritable tragedy for ten or twelve millions, that she might have had.

For fifteen years Dr. Jacobs maintained her clinic at Amsterdam. During that time, hundreds of thousands of women were instructed by her, and finally she found it no longer necessary. Doctors and midwives, many of them, had at last swung around to her way of thinking, and those who had not, found little profit in opposing a growing movement against which even the government did not take steps.

As a confirmed feminist, there was much other work for Dr. Jacobs to bend her remarkable energy and vigour to. Just how remarkable these qualities are you appreciate when you see her and talk to her. Her alert brown eyes seem even morose as they snap out at you from under a wealth of snow-white hair. Let your conversation be in English, French, Dutch, or German - she is equal to it (even if you are not)! Years of exhausting fight have left her fresh.

She has been around the world with Carrie Chapman Catt. Jane Addams is her friend and so was Anna Howard Shaw. She is the president of Holland's Woman Suffrage Society, a strong organization built up by her in spite of frightful obstacles, and already the woman's emancipation bill has passed one of the houses of Parliament. In a few months hence she confidently expects to see her countrywomen enfranchised. When I visited her the week of the signing of Peace, she was preparing not to rest on her laurels, but to go into Germany to study the result of the undernourishment of the children and to see what she could do about it!

So widespread did the influence of her clinic become, and so remarkable was the government's policy of non-interference, that many people are under the impression to-day that Holland has state-controlled bureaus for the dissemination of information on the subject of the limitation of the population. As a matter of fact there is actually a law somewhere on the statute books which forbids the giving of such information publicly or unasked for, but despite the opposition of the clerical element to Dr. Jacobs and her followers, which exists to this day, this law seems to have atrophied from disuse, its only merit being that it served the praiseworthy purpose of driving the quacks and their harmful advertisements to cover.

THE Neo-Malthusian League, with headquarters at The Hague, has, under the energetic secretaryship of Dr. J. Rutgers, worked faithfully along with Dr. Jacobs. A large corps of special nurses have been instructed by the medical members of the League in the most hygienic methods of birth-control, and they have been dispatched to every town of any size in Holland where they dispense such information as may be desired at a purely nominal charge. Their offices really constitute the "public bureaus," mistakenly called "state-controlled clinics" that one hears so much about. The intensely virile activity of the people of Holland, aroused by the efforts of Dr. Jacobs and the League, has crystallized to such an extent on the subject that it assumes the proportions of what looks to outsiders like a national movement.

The objects of the League are, frankly,

1. To spread among the people, by all practicable means, a knowledge of the law of population, of its consequences, and of its bearing upon human conduct and morals.

2. To urge upon the medical profession in general, and upon hospitals and public medical authorities in particular, the duty of giving instruction in hygienic contraceptive methods to all married people who desire to limit their families, or who are in any way unfit for parenthood; and to take any other steps which may be considered desirable for the provision of such instruction.

The principles in the platform of the League are,

1. That population (unless consciously and sufficiently controlled) has a constant tendency to increase beyond the means of subsistence.

2. That the checks which counteract this tendency are resolvable into positive or life-destroying, and prudential or birth-restricting.

3. That the positive or life-destroying checks comprehend the premature death of children and adults by disease, starvation, war, and infanticide.

4. That the prudential or birth-restricting check consists in the limitation of offspring (1) by abstention or postponement of marriage, or (2) by prudence after marriage.

5. That prolonged postponement of marriage - as advocated by Malthus - is not only productive of much unhappiness, but is also a potent cause of sexual vice and disease. Early marriage, on the contrary, tends to insure sexual purity, domestic comfort, social happiness, and individual health; but it is a grave social offence for men and women to bring into the world more children than they can adequately house, feed, clothe, and educate.

6. That overpopulation is the most fruitful source of pauperism, ignorance, crime, and disease.

7. That it is of great importance that those afflicted with hereditary disease, or who otherwise are plainly incapable of producing or rearing physically, intellectually, and morally sound children, should not become parents.

8. That the full and open discussion of the Population Question in all its necessary aspects is a matter of vital moment to society.

A visit to Holland to-day emphasizes the sanity of its birth politics, especially if you go as I did, direct from London where the miserable slums with their dirty, ramshackle tenements literally exude white-faced, undernourished, barely-clad youngsters, who look as tho they have never known a square meal or worn a whole garment.

Rotterdam, Amsterdam, The Hague - they have their poor, of course, but it is a very different sort of poverty from that to be witnessed in London, New York, or Chicago. Dutch children may wear patched clothes and wooden clogs, for want of the more expensive leather shoes, but their little legs are sturdy, their cheeks rounded. I saw none of the drab misery that is to be witnessed in the Whitechapel or Bethnal Green districts of England's capital. Those who have watched the effect of the birth-control propaganda in Holland, even through one generation, are enthusiastic over its appreciable benefits.

"I remember in my youth," Dr. Rutgers told me, "the houses of our poor were deplorably overcrowded and the slums of the big cities were a disgrace. Most of the families now are held down to one, two, or three children, and to see how decently people in the most modest circumstances now rear and educate their young is to realize at once the wonderful results of the movement.

"The chief aim, of course, has been not the lowering of the birth-rate, primarily, but the prevention of unwanted child-birth. A nation can't have too many well-to-do, energetic citizens. They are always a benefit to a country and find their way in the world. But the children of exhausted mothers, diseased parents, they are a drain on civilization. The difference between our country now and as it used to be is so marked that one can not but wonder that other nations are blind to it."

AS a matter of fact there are signs that nations both in the East and the West are waking up to the national importance of considering the question of population from a wholly different angle than heretofore. Britain seems fully aroused, even the Church of England, from the published utterances of many of her leading bishops, appears to have somersaulted its one-time rigid opinions. France, whose very peasantry practised birth-control in pre-war days, may, owing to the cruel depletion of its man-power, reverse its policy for a time, but it can only be a temporary measure. Even the German women of the lower classes, since the revolution have demonstrated an active curiosity, and a practical tract put out by the Neo-Malthusian League at The Hague has been translated into German, as well as into English and Esperanto. Quite recently, too, a Chinese doctor asked Dr. Rutgers for a pamphlet for his missionary hospital! Possibly, in time, the arrests of Mrs. Margaret Sanger, and the raids on her Brooklyn clinic, may seem to us an anachronism.

At any rate, in other countries at least, the old conspiracy of silence raised against the poor, ignorant mothers is breaking down, and judging from the expressions of gratitude she has received, thousands of them have learned to call blessed the name of Aletta Jacobs - hardy pioneer - who saw the light while the world was still wallowing in Mid-Victorian sentimentalism.