

Suppressing Criticism of "Constituted Authority."

"No picture will be permitted to show ridicule of constituted authority" is one of four prohibitions announced by Chicago's moving picture censor. What a moral weakling "constituted authority" must be! If its safety requires such an order then there is justification for ridicule. Moreover what is there in ridicule shown in moving pictures that is not just as bad when shown in stationary pictures, in cartoons, in public print or in public speech? Let one form of censorship once be tolerated and it will not be long before it will be regarded as justification for other forms. Ridicule is a form of criticism. To defend its suppression is to argue for suppression of all other forms. "Constituted authority" is a very broad term. It may easily include all public officials, without exhausting even then its possibilities. Government censorship is too dangerous a measure to be applied as a remedy to any real or imaginary evil. S. D.



Slaughtering the Innocents.

One of the interesting investigations to be made during the coming year is that of the Children's Bureau of the Department of Labor. Miss Julia Lathrop, chief of the bureau, will make an effort to discover why 300,000 babies die annually in the United States before they are a year old. There is reason to believe the investigation will not end in the publication of a many-volumed report to be hidden away unread, but that the public will receive honest information and practical advice. The annual loss of 300,000 babies in their first year, and as many more in the next four years, is an enormous economic drain on the country. The cause and the responsibility should be definitely fixed, and such remedy as is possible, applied. Such part as is due to ignorance should be made known, in order that our educational institutions may furnish enlightenment to those in need. And that part due to economic conditions should also be made plain. If economic conditions that encourage vice are found also to increase infant mortality, the fact should be made so plain that none can blink it. Miss Lathrop has a great opportunity. S. C.



LETTERS FROM THE PEOPLE.

No part of a daily newspaper is more worth reading than the letters from the people, and it should count to the credit and honor of the

press that they publish such letters with commendable freedom. Why these letters are of particular value and interest is a question which leads back to a more interesting question involving the progress of the democratic spirit. Let us see the connection. The subject is more important and far-reaching than at first appears.

I suppose no one will deny the statement that when we all have the democratic mind we shall value opinions for what the opinions are worth, or for what they seem to us worth. It is not so to-day. It is especially not so in the view of newspaper managers, editors and reporters. These, and in fact most of us, value opinions not for the intrinsic worth of the opinions, but in accordance with the notoriety, or the position, or the reputation of the person who writes or speaks the opinion. Naturally the newspapers want to print what will be read, and they know that a statement from a person of whom the chance reader has previously heard is much more likely to be read than a statement coming from a person of whom he has not heard. The words of a person of notoriety, or the words of a person in a position of notoriety, make "good copy" in the publisher's point of view. Nor does it matter very much to what the notoriety is due. It may come from position, or politics, or crime. Your essay on family relations may be extremely valuable and full of excellent suggestions, but it would hardly be printed, or if printed read. If, however, you should have ventured to kill your mother-in-law, you would find that next morning the papers would be keen to print, and the public to read, anything that you might have to say on the subject of family peace or family jars. Or if you have been elected to some prominent position, say Governor of the State, your words will be valued, even if you should drop a few opinions on the Greek drama or the nourishment of babies, or any other subject of which you are equally ignorant. In other words it is the fictitious you, and not the real you, whose opinions count. And, as I have said, this is especially true, naturally so, of the public press.

Now there are people, and I believe a constantly increasing number, who value a book, or a speech, or an article, or any statement, upon its merits, quite regardless of the notoriety of the author. And there are people who wish to promulgate their opinions even when these opinions are not sought by the publishers and reporters. Furthermore, there are people whose thoughts are worth while, even if they are not people of position. It is for such as these, and for the readers of independent mind, that the letters from the people serve a