

The Importance of Education Prior to Marriage.

by

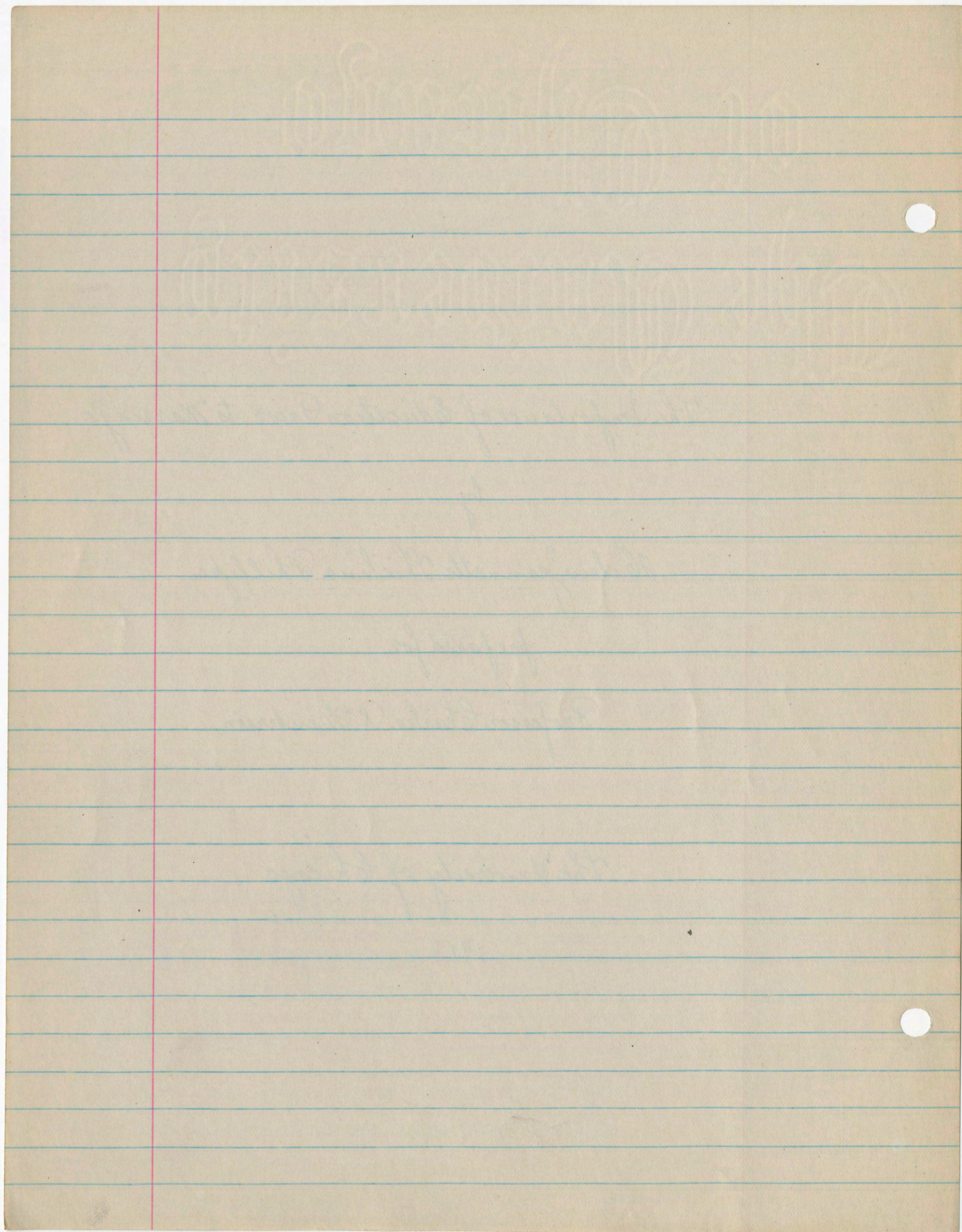
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prepared for

Professor Charles R. Henderson

The University of Chicago

1913

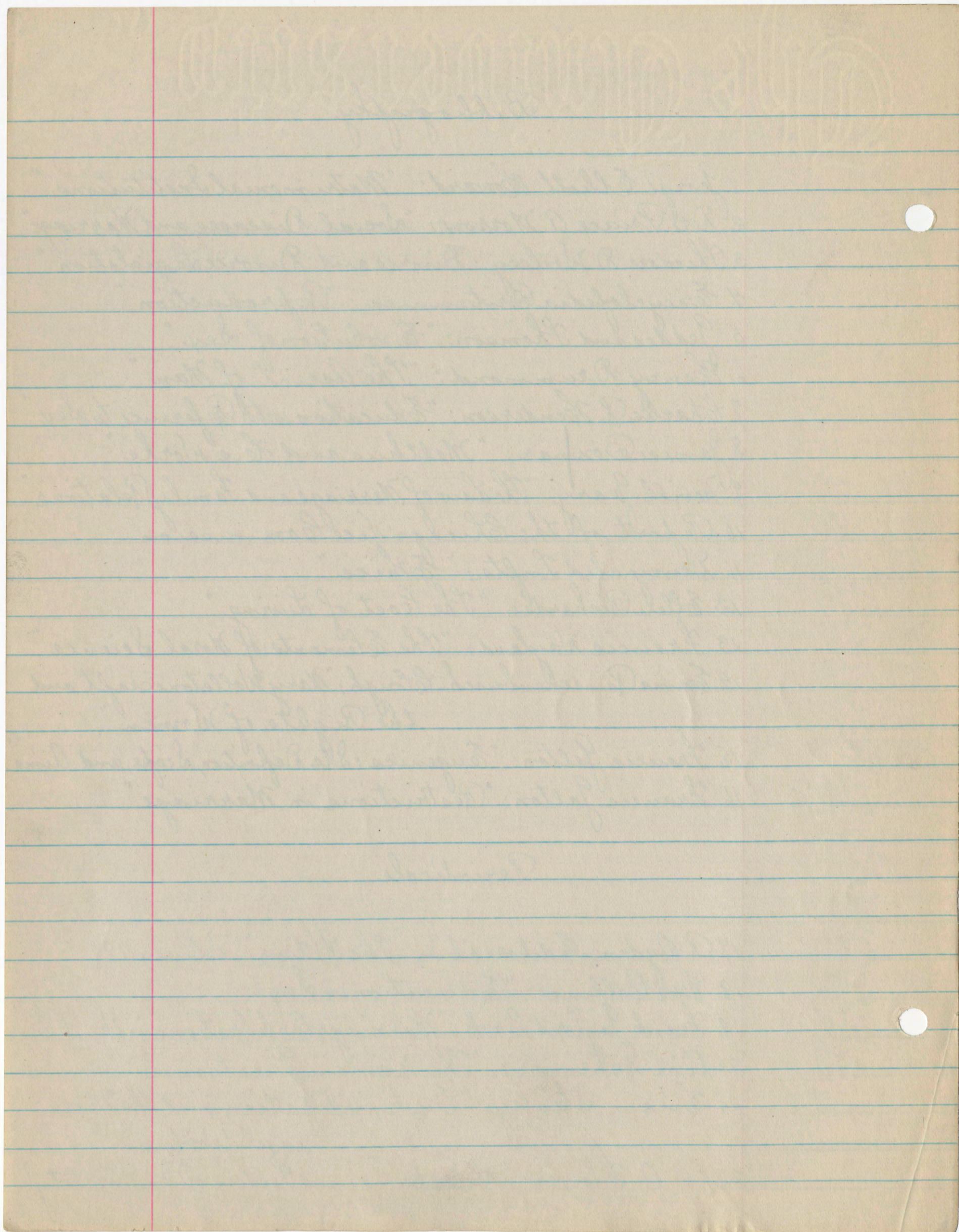


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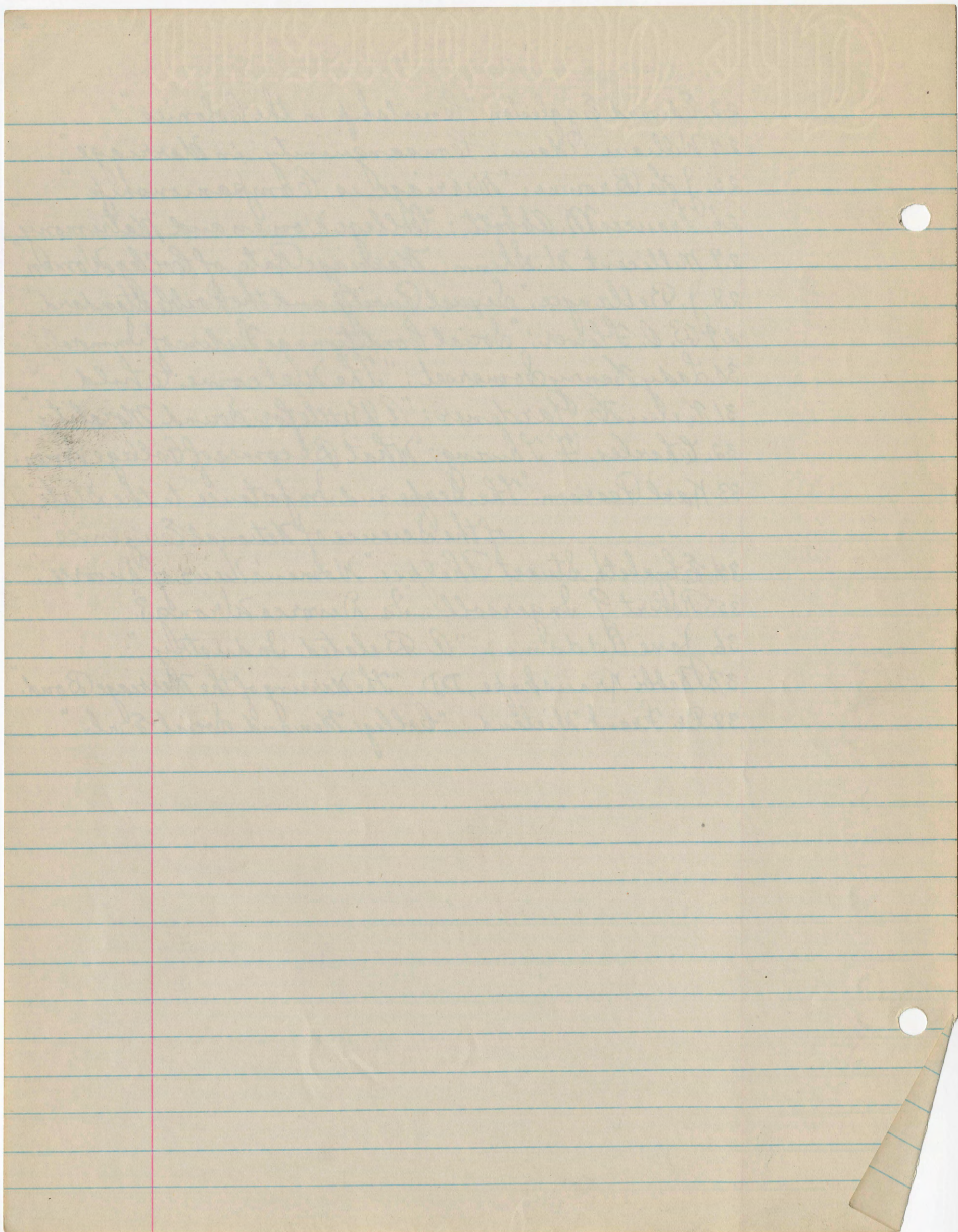
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25. J. H. Browne: "Marriage is Companionship."
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27. Millicent W. Shinn: "Marriage Rate of College Women."
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33. Karl Pearson: "The Scope and Importance to the State
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34. Elizabeth Stuart Phelps: "Women's Views of Divorce."
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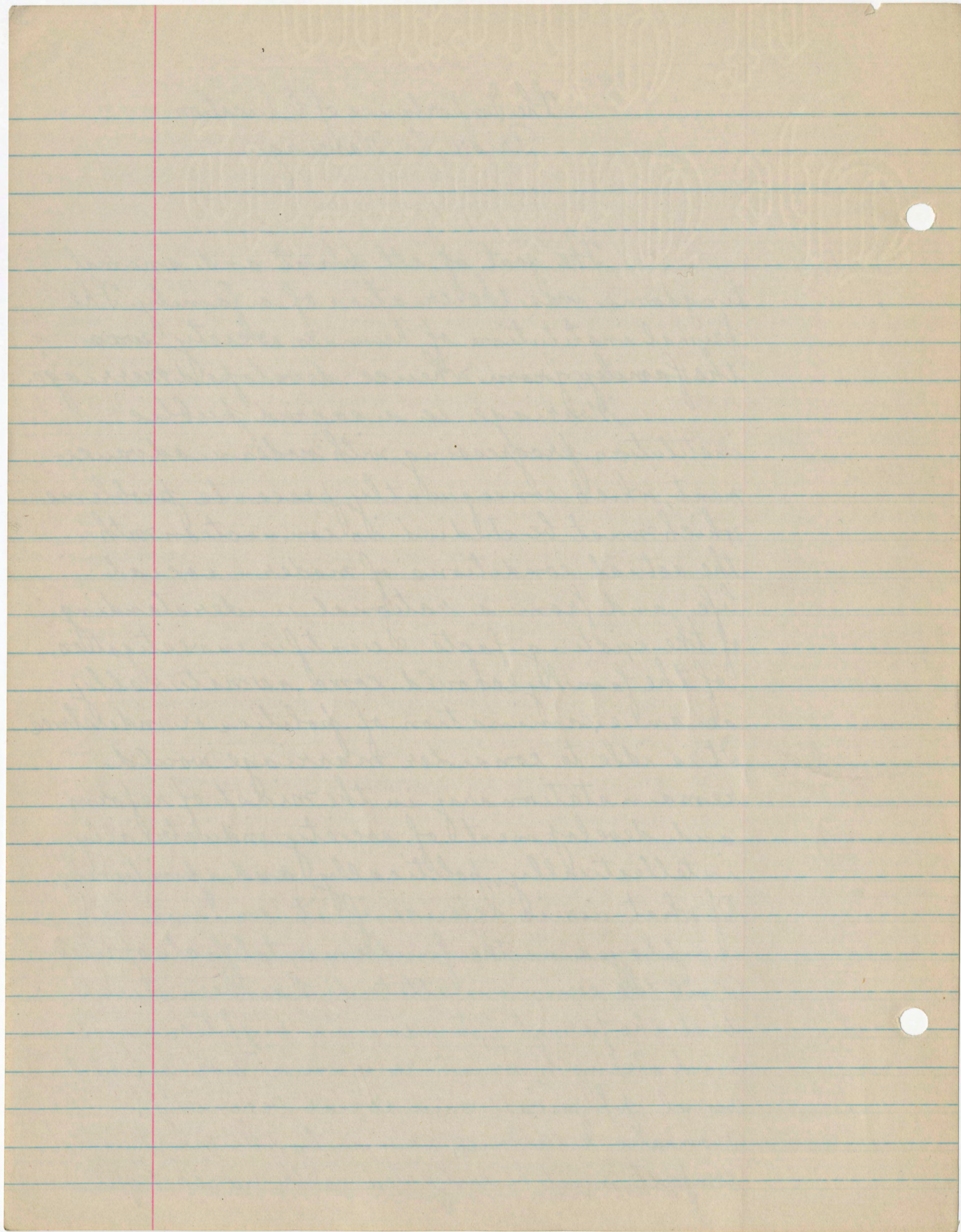


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The Importance of Education Prior to Marriage.

The goal of all plant and animal kingdoms was the creation of a family. The primal institution of human society was the family, from whence developed marriage.

Marriage is a sacred public institution progressing with modern advancement, which consequently presents problems which must be studied in connection with the actual conditions of modern social life, and from a rational understanding of the existing facts. Scientific investigation of the family should come as naturally as an examination of politics or industries. It is idle to consider marriage would remain stationary in the midst of reform and development of society, industrially, intellectually, politically, and spiritually. Of what use is science if it cannot be employed in the fundamental facts of life? But the common attitude has been such that the family, to gain in righteousness and strength, must rely on a "more efficient moral, physical, and social training." Domestic relations, primarily the marriage compact, must be subjected to the search-light

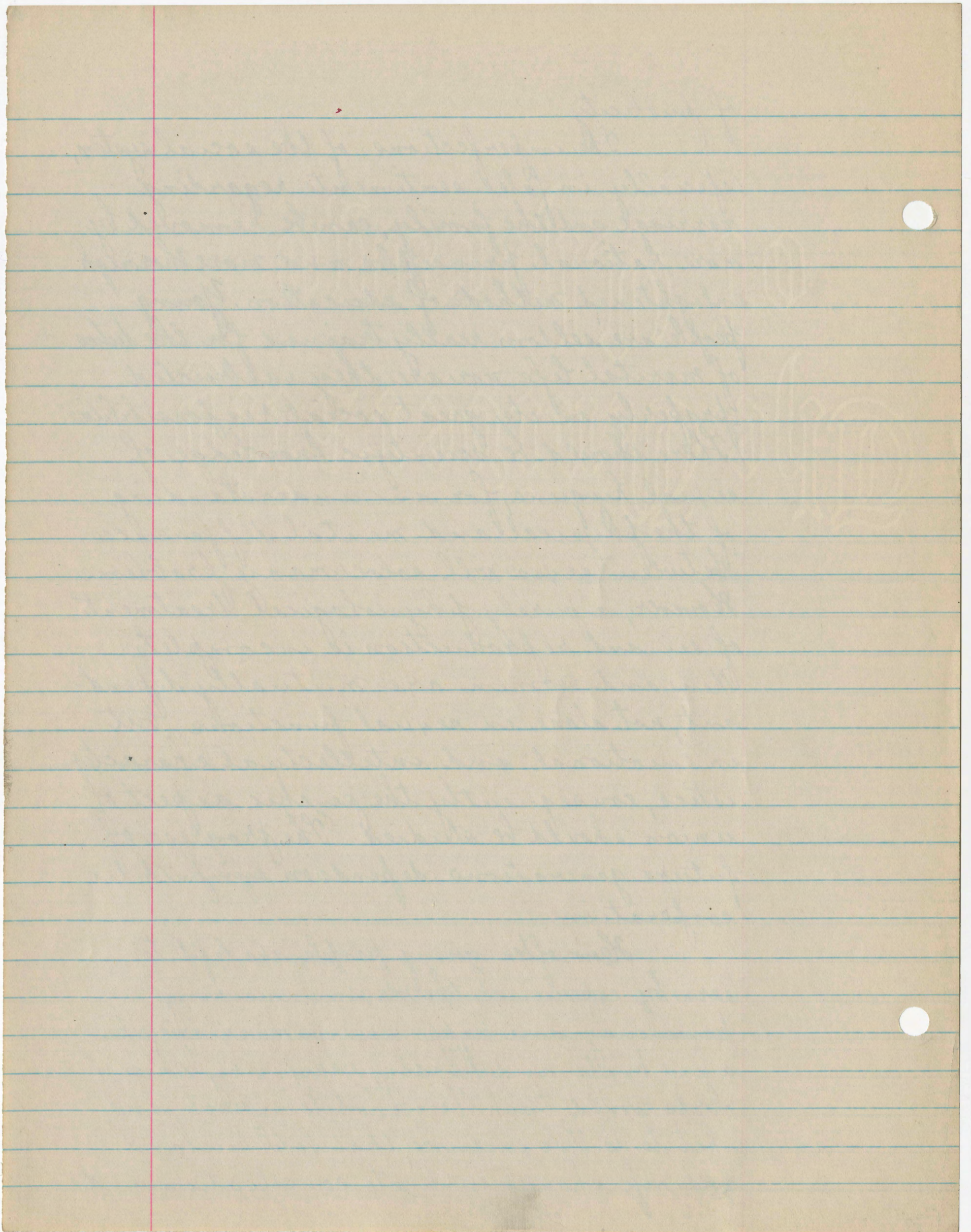


of publicity.

The imperfections of the social system, especially in false sentiments regarding marriage and the family, can be removed by more rational principles and more thorough enlightened methods of education. Young people are seldom really trained for the duties of marital life, nor are they instructed properly in its great social responsibilities.

There should be scientific knowledge of sexual hygiene, for an understanding of the physical and mental differences between sexes will solve many problems. However, a purely physiological treatment of sex and reproduction is incomplete. Men and women are mutually dependant, not alone in sexual functions, but in emotional and intellectual characteristics; consequently the psychic aspect of union should be studied. The progress of future generations depends on sympathetic cooperation.

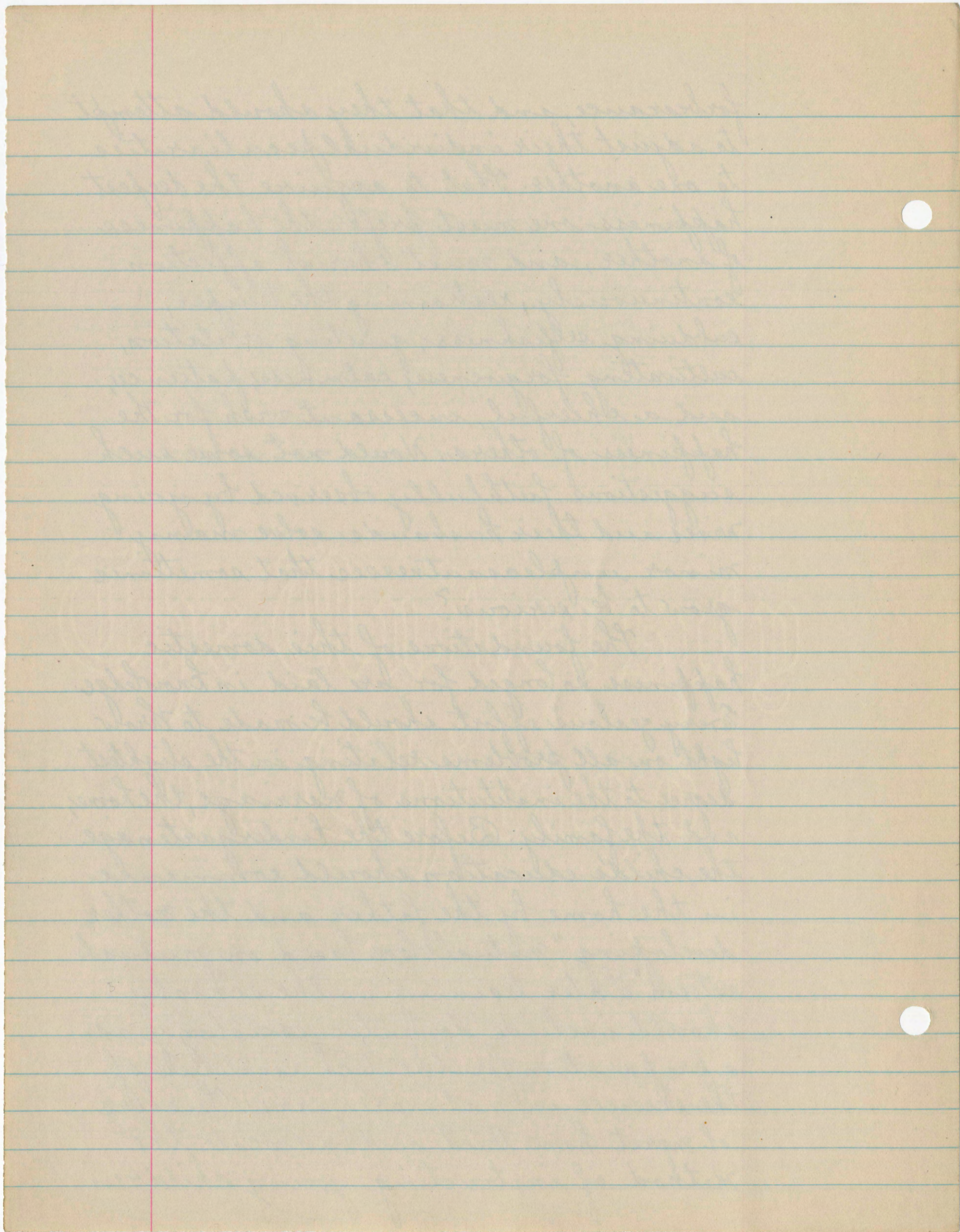
How often young people are left to learn by experience the maxims insuring permanency and happiness in marriage, when a few hints and kindly, carefully chosen words would teach them what to expect and what to do. For instance that both husband and wife should cultivate conciliation and



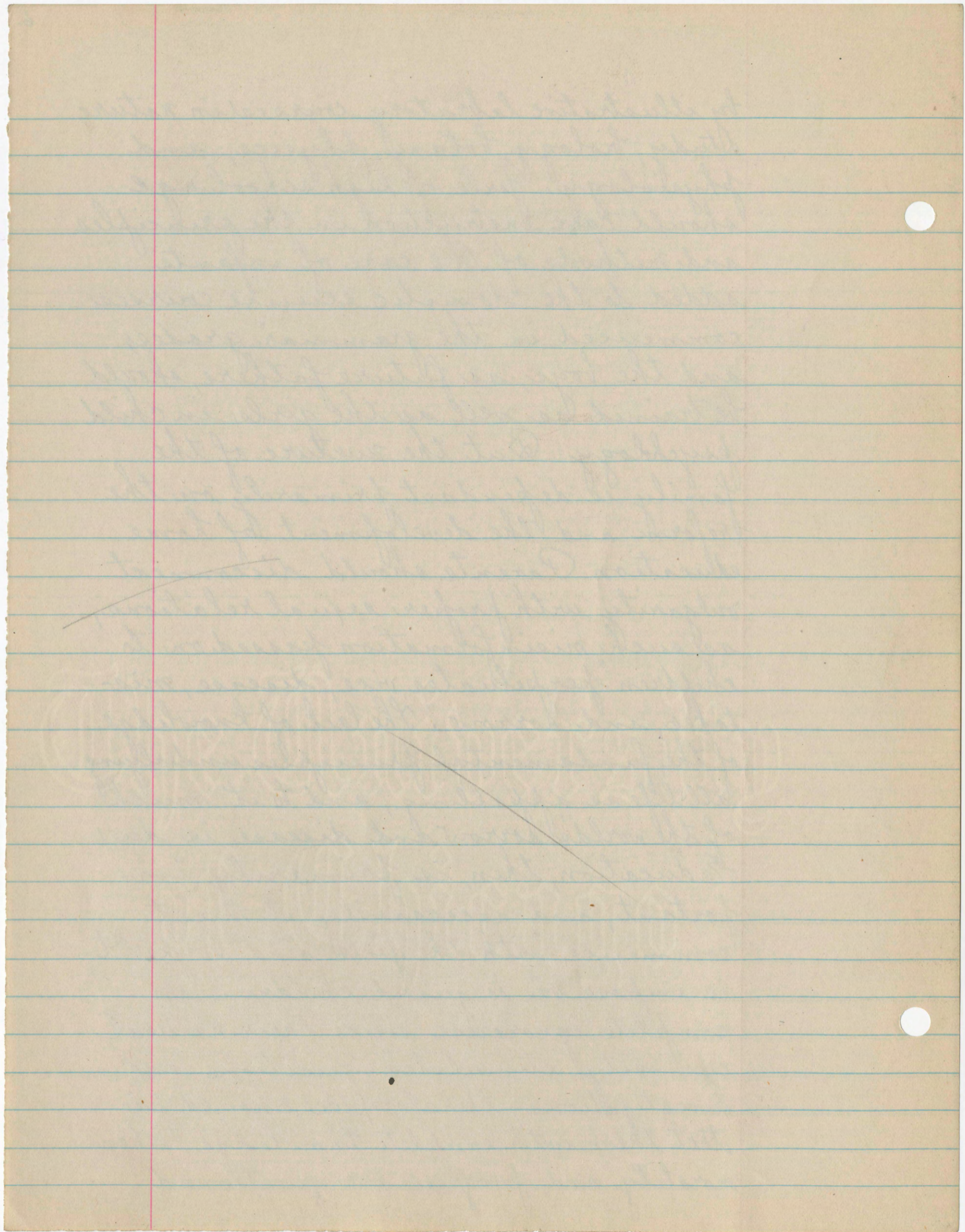
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forbearance, and that they should attempt to adjust their individual peculiarities to one another. That to acquire the deepest happiness one must prefer the happiness of another, and must cherish affection continuously, restraining the temper, subduing selfishness, quieting irritation, cultivating forgiveness, calmness, patience, and a cheerful, incessant wish for the happiness of others. Would not some such suggestions faithfully observed by young wives and their husbands solve many minor unpleasantnesses that sometimes grow to be serious?

The foundations of this domestic happiness so longed for are laid in knowledge. Every zealous effort should be made to throw light on all problems relating in the slightest degree to the institutions of marriage, the home, and the family. Before the kindergarten age the child's education should commence in the home by the father and the mother developing "mutual love based on mutual esteem." Later training in the schools should include domestic sociology as a preparation for the technicalities of the science in maturer years. Teachers of merit have tried and advocate the method of instructing young children



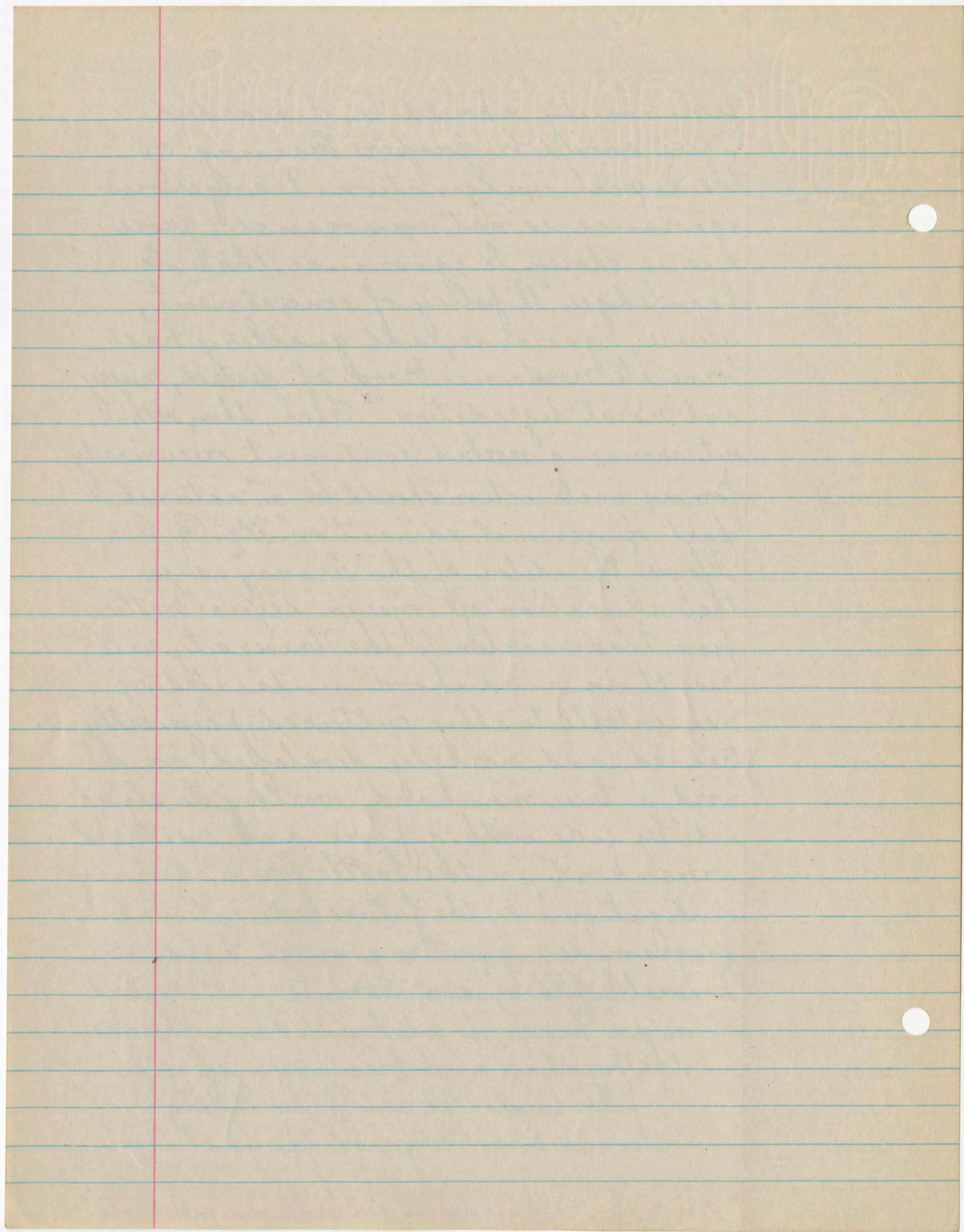
by illustrative laboratory courses in nature study, biology, botany, physics, and physiology. Girls of high school age should have instruction in the principles and methods of the care of infants added to the domestic science courses commenced in the grammar grades, and the boys, as future fathers, should be trained as well as the girls in child psychology. But the nurture of the family is dependant primarily on the reform and the development of home education. Parents should disconnect vulgarity with proper sexual relations, as such misinformation passed on to children "perpetuates vice, disease, mistakes, and sorrow". The lack of knowledge of the fundamental principles underlying all life is appalling, and to it much of the world's sorrow and disease is due. Education, then, is primarily important, and necessarily it must commence with the girls and boys. It is impossible to guard children in complete ignorance since their natural curiosity stimulates questions and investigations; therefore, we should protect them with complete knowledge. When morality and progress are questioned



fake modesty should be discarded.
 There should be proper training of
 the sexual imagination. Dangerous
 ignorance is not innocence; grosse-
 ness is closer to ignorance than to
 knowledge. "A policy of concealment,
 silence, ignorance, and quackery has
 borne its monstrous brood of disease, misery
 and moral degradation" ^x Teach, then, with-
 out arousing morbid excitement or curiosity,
 for sex instruction should be a "natural
 part of general education." Mr. B. C.
 Flower, the editor of the "Arena," says
 that education of boys in sexual matters
 from kindergarten to the University will
 result in a manhood "untainted by
 vice, intellectually cultured, physically
 trained, and morally developed; in a
 word, a true manhood, worthy to stand
 side by side with a pure and cultured
 womanhood in the battle for a diviner
 civilization." In the future educational
 program sex questions must hold an
 "honorable place," and parents will regard
 it as an honor to instruct their children
 in the beauties and blessings of life.

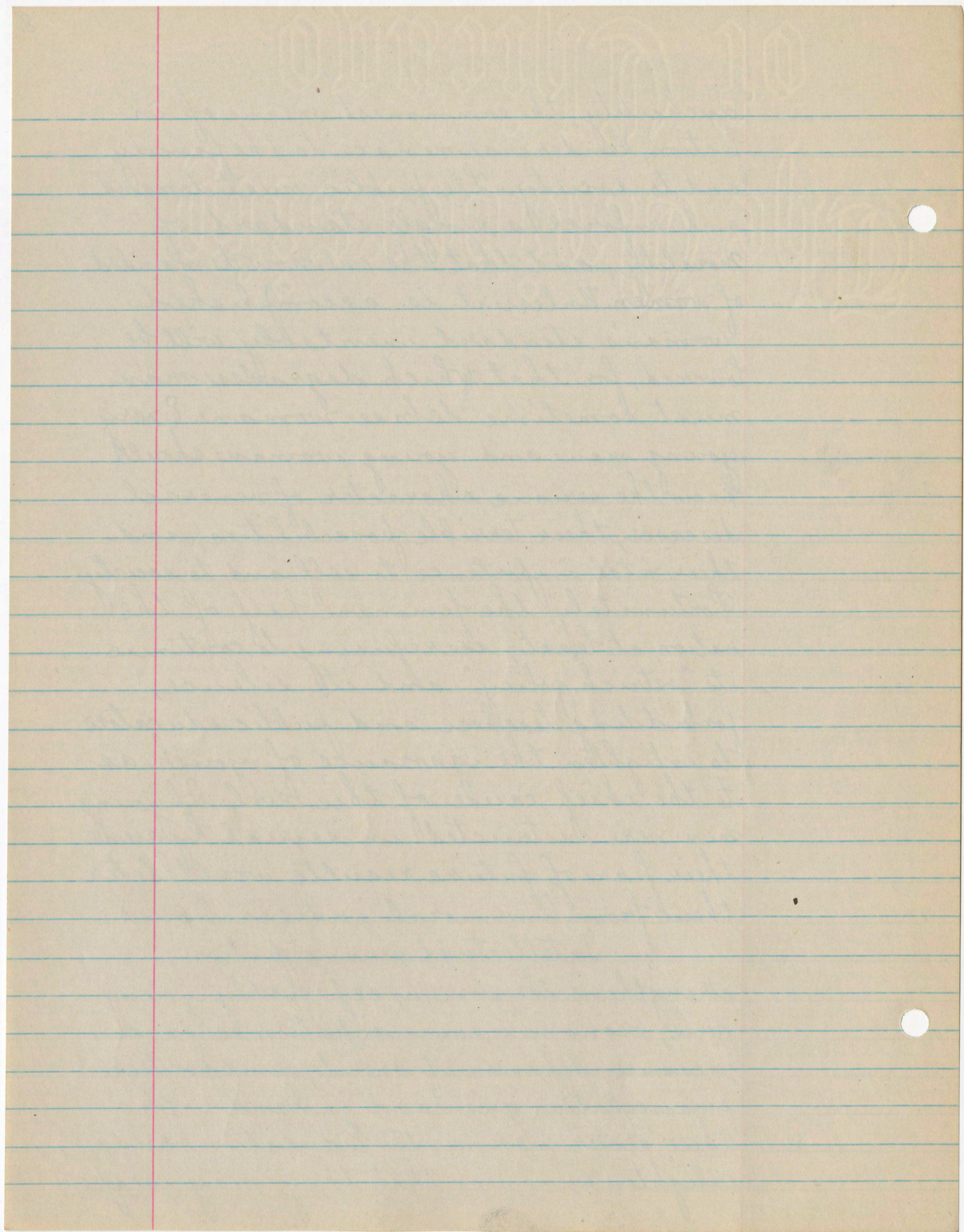
The first step in preventive
 education is knowledge of the fact that

^x Dr. Helen C. Putnam in "Sex Instruction in Schools."



unchastity, the commonest means of infection, renders a menace to the family and to society. The public must demand and enforce a single standard of morality, and that the one now demanded of women. Unless it is accomplished woman's standard inevitably will be lowered, for that which degrades man must sometime debase woman. Every young man and young woman should know the serious character of venereal diseases, their terrible possibilities, and their vital importance to self and to society. Fortunately the feminine half of the nation, at least, is refusing to continue its "ostrich policy" and its silence, forbidding teachers and public educators to enlighten the ignorance of youth as to the chief cause of this evil. If young men were instructed in sexual hygiene their fear of future results would deter them from immoral indiscretions.

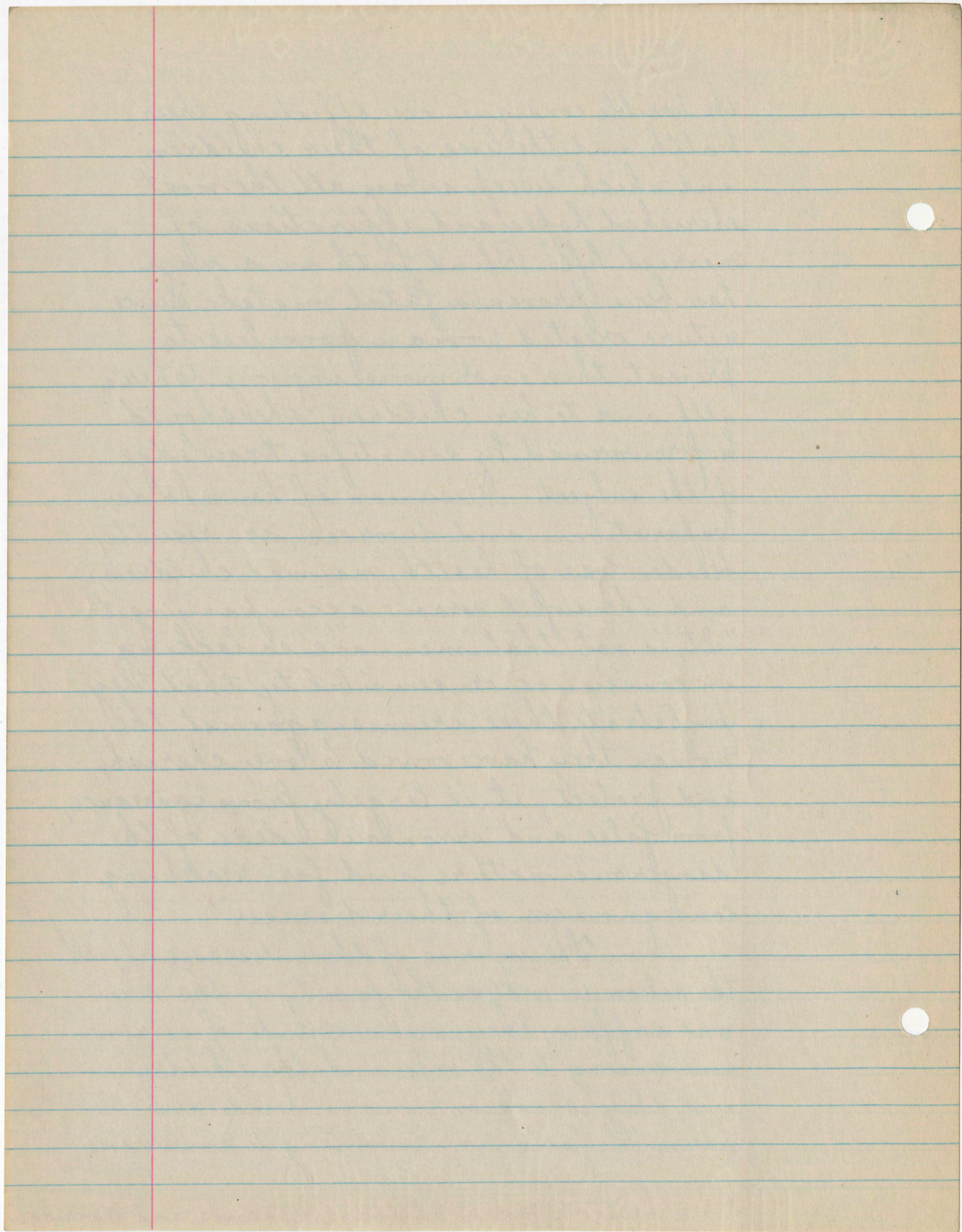
Intellectual emancipation strengthens the women, especially young girls, economic emancipation is in a measure dependant on it, and political emancipation goes hand in hand with these sister movements. Education should enlighten women so that they may escape



the terrible consequences affecting their health and the lives of their children, and which "sweep away all the most cherished hopes and aspirations of married life." Blind faith in a man has been proven a fatal mistake. Since nature created woman powerless to prevent this enormous injury to herself and to her children, she should be forewarned by scientific knowledge of the subject. Disunion of households, separations and divorces, are results, besides loss of health, maimed children, and the awful sorrow accompanying it. "It is not that men are so lacking in conscience or sensibility that they perpetrate these crimes against the women they have vowed to love, cherish, and protect; it is largely from ignorance, from false and erroneous ideas of the dangerous nature and far-reaching consequences of their disease." ^x

The injuries of these diseases affect the nation as well as the family of the man who suffers; they are a source of sorrow and misery to the wife and the children, and they occasion serious hereditary harm. The facts are revolting to an extreme,

^x Dr. Prince A. Morrow in "Social Diseases and Marriage."

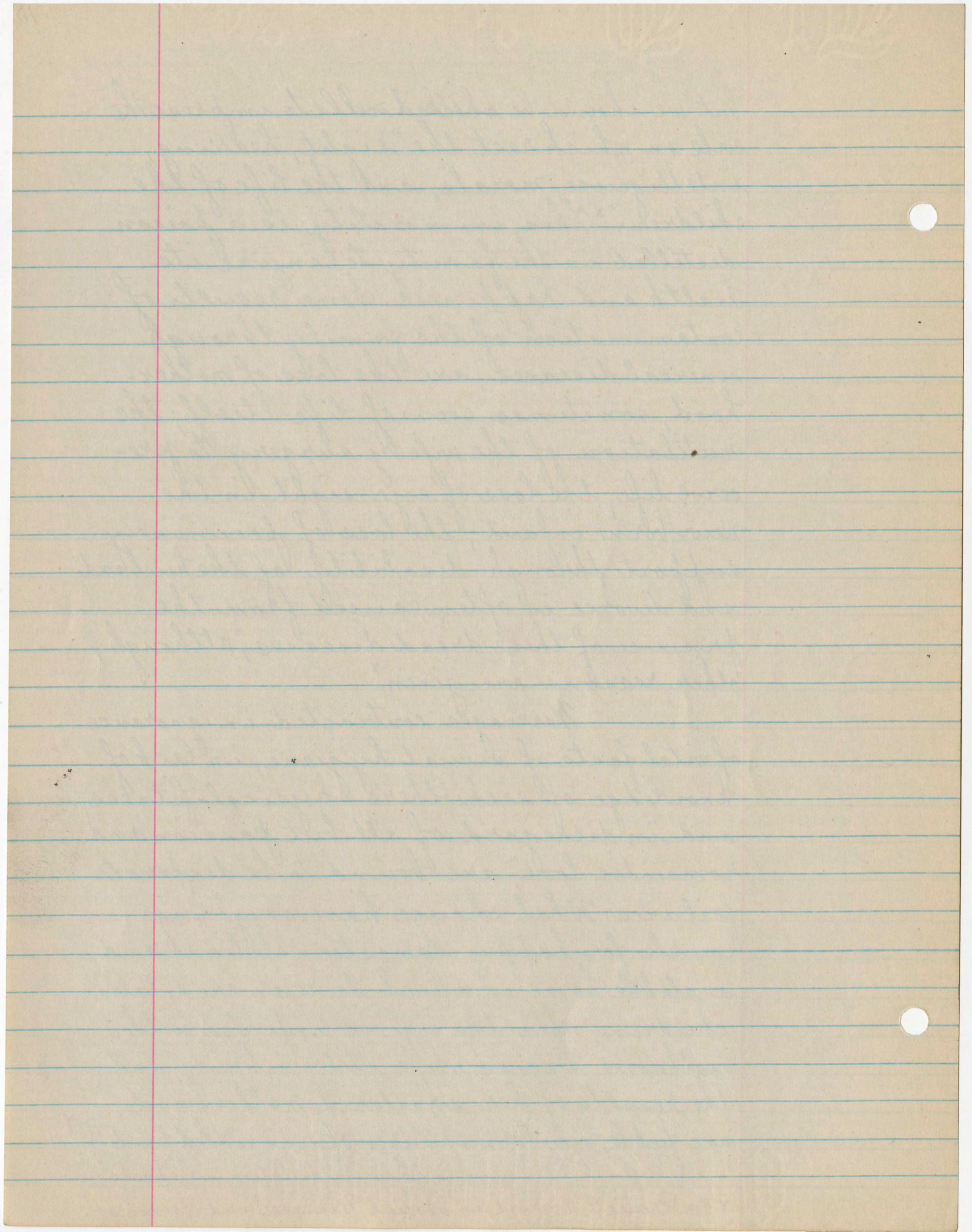


but we should be shocked ~~would~~ to impress the evils on which rest the "right, hearing, intelligence, morals, and the life of the children." ^X This immorality is a poison distilled in the family to injure its health and happiness. Some results of contamination of the family through venereal diseases are the loss of motherhood, sometimes even of life itself; the mutilation of the wife by surgery to preserve life; the loss of eye-sight in the new-born infant; the loss of pecuniary support through disability of the husband; and divorce is often caused from the presence of these dread diseases, although other reasons are given. ^X

Marriages contracted in ignorance of vital facts of sexual hygiene, in lack of knowledge of each other's physical fitness, and in disregard of all but passion and romantic love, are bound to be desperate failures. What chance have a young couple for happy domestic relations and a stable home in which to rear creditable children, when the wife is infected with a loathsome disease while still a bride, and the results of her shattered motherhood are "feeble, base-born children of unbridled lust" ^{PY}

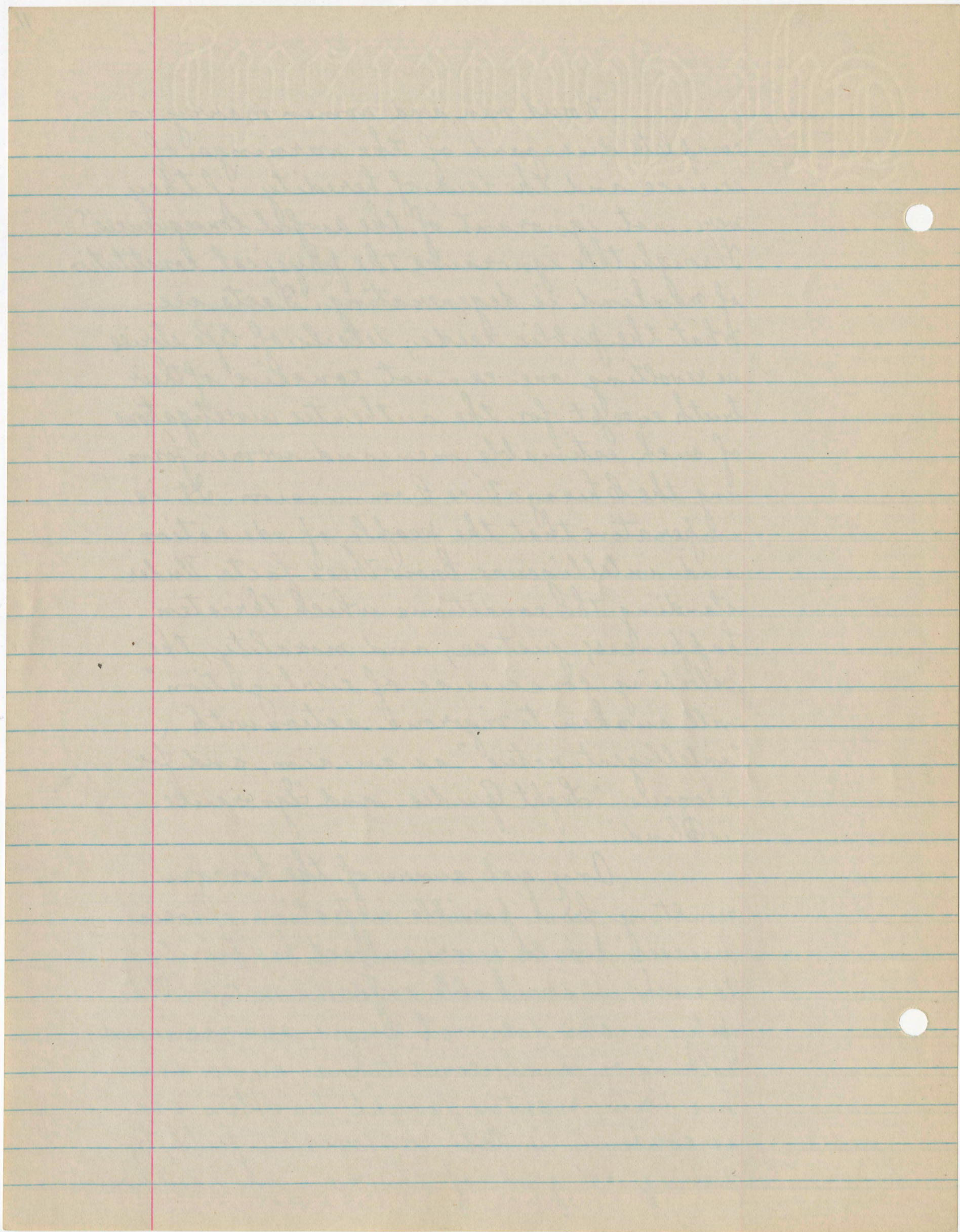
X Dr. Helen C. Putnam in "Sex Instruction in Schools."

Y Dr. Prince A. Morrow in "Social Diseases and Marriage."



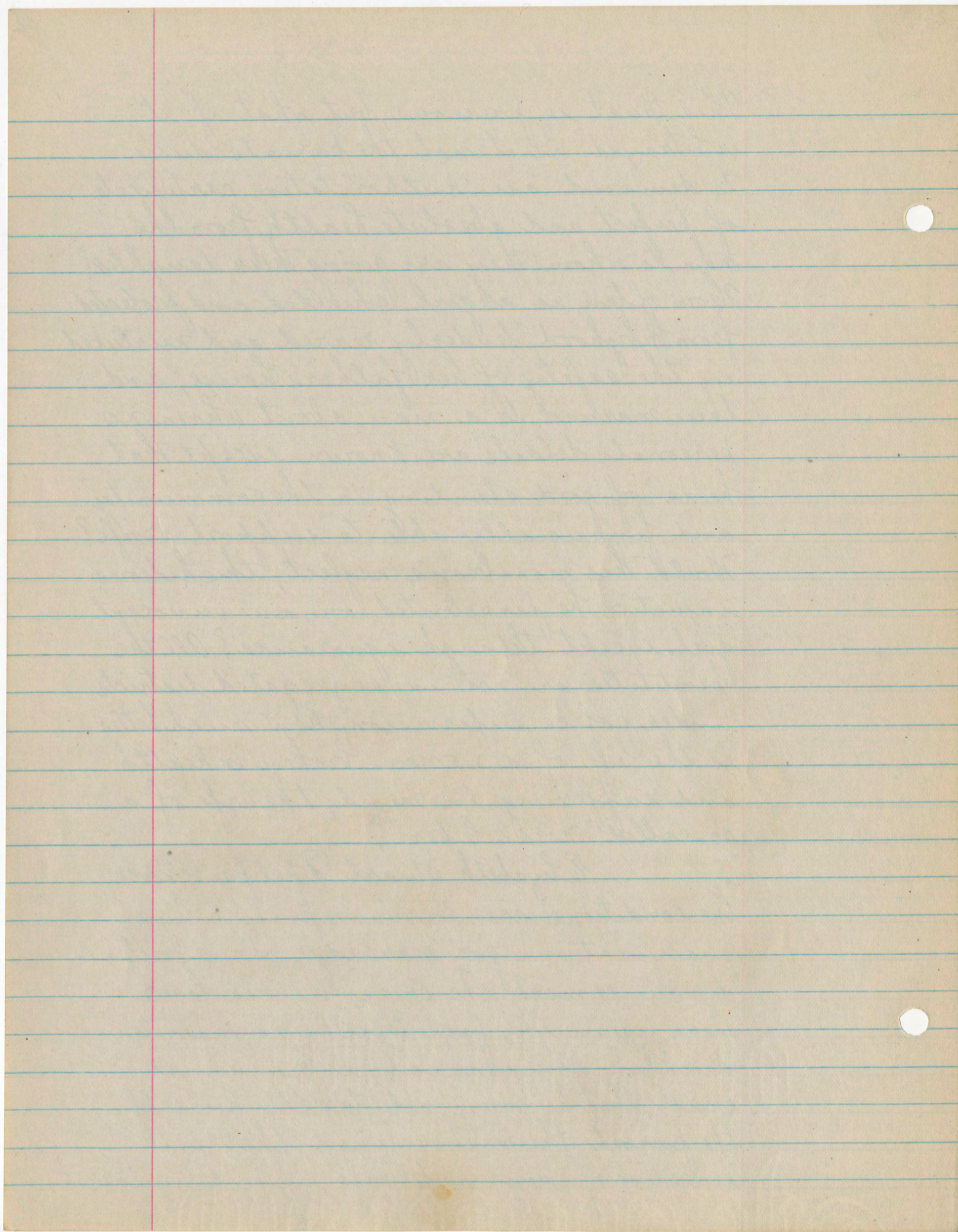
Would men and women marry in complete disregard of the warnings of science and the laws of heredity if they were not ignorant of the awful consequences? Through this ignorance the physical constitution of mankind is degenerating. Facts are what the public needs; details of life stories so revolting one cannot conceive of their truth except for the authentic investigations of such estimable men and women forming the Chicago Vice Commission. It is imperative that the people of education and intelligence know these facts. Understanding the conditions which threaten happiness, justice, and morality, the "sleeping conscience of civilization" will awaken to vigorous action with "intelligent virtue" as an aim, and for slogans "Light Guides", and "Ignorance is Blind."

Any girl aware of the horrors resulting from possible infection of "social diseases" would never subject her purity to such unspeakable contamination. The pity is she does not know, she has heard nothing of such conditions; or, if she has been rightly taught, too often she is content to take her lover on faith, believing all good of the man she has chosen.



This trust is precious, but what if it is betrayed? Is it not the parents' duty to demand an authoritative certificate of perfect and absolute health from the man to whom they are giving their daughter? How often is a girl shielded and protected from babyhood, tenderly reared and nurtured in the safety of her father's house, and then married to a man about whom no personal details are known except that he is "of good standing in the community" and financially able to support a wife? Would this monstrous neglect, this hideous injustice be perpetrated on an innocent girl except through ignorance? All the prostitutes are not in segregated districts under police supervision. How much better is the life of a woman broken in health and suffering in mind, the wife of a so-called "moral leper"?

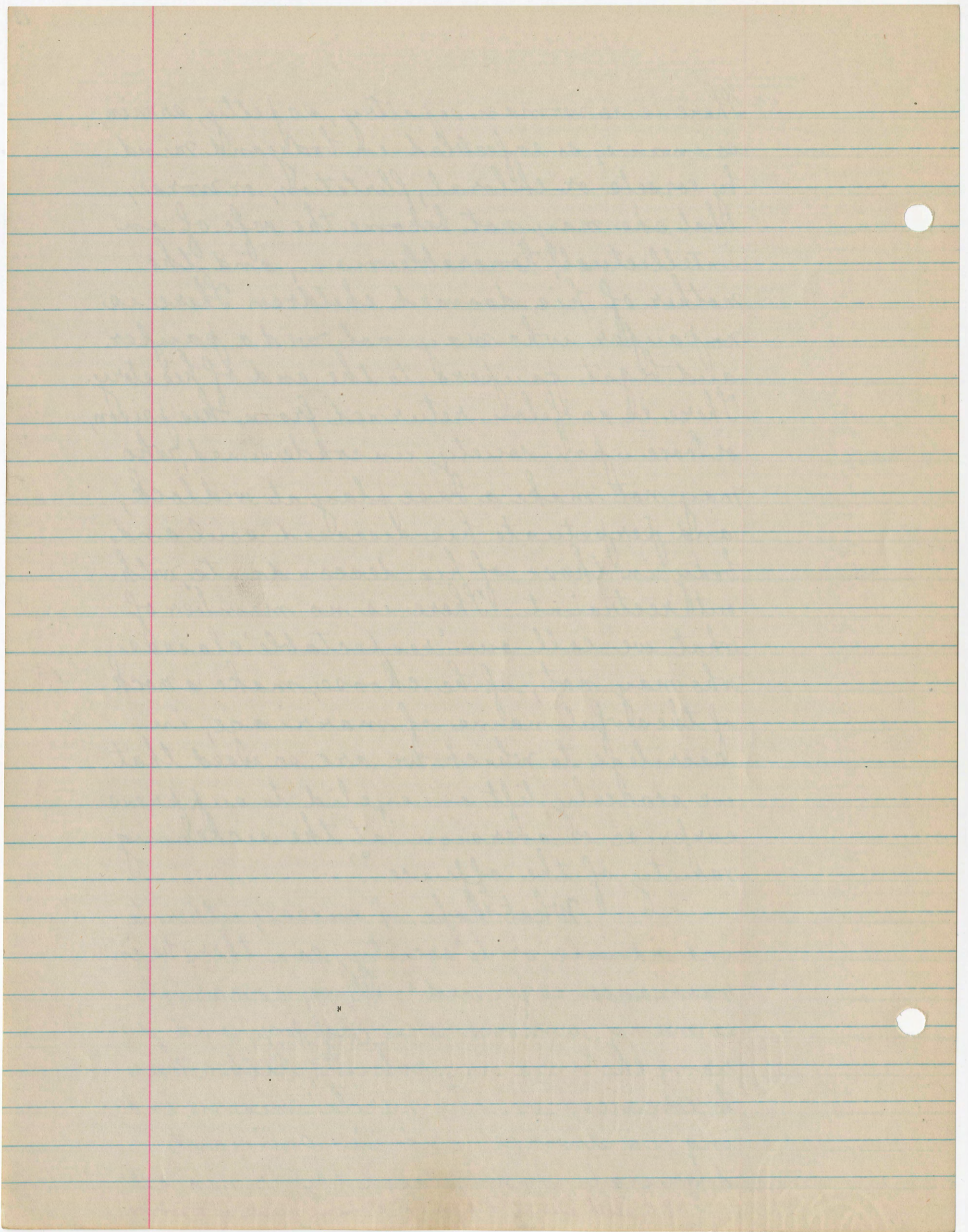
Elizabeth Stuart Phelps believes the conditions are due to imperfect legal qualifications for marriage. In a bitter denouncement she cries, "As our laws stare us in the face there is no man so drunken, so immoral, so brutal, so cruel, that he may not take to himself the purest, the most refined, the most sensitive of women to wife, if he can get her."



There is no woman so paltry, so petty, so vain, so inane, so enfeebled in body and mind by corsets or chloral, flirtation, or worse, that she may not become the wife of an intellectual, honorable man, and the mother of his doomed children. There is no pauper who may not wed a pauper and beget paupers to the end of his story. There is no felon returned from his prison, or loose upon society uncondemned, who may not make a base play at wedlock, and perpetuate his diseased soul and body in those of his descendants, without restraint. There is no member of what we call our 'respectable' classes who may not, if he choose, make a mock of the awful name of marriage, in sacrilege to which we are so used that we scarcely lift an eyelid to suppress surprise or aversion at the sickening variety of the offence." ^x

What hope of success, either to individuals or to society, can there be in marriages so formed? It is a marvel so many unions are happy, and so many children are robust, rather than to comment on the marital misery ending in divorce, and the deficient, degenerate, and diseased children in over-

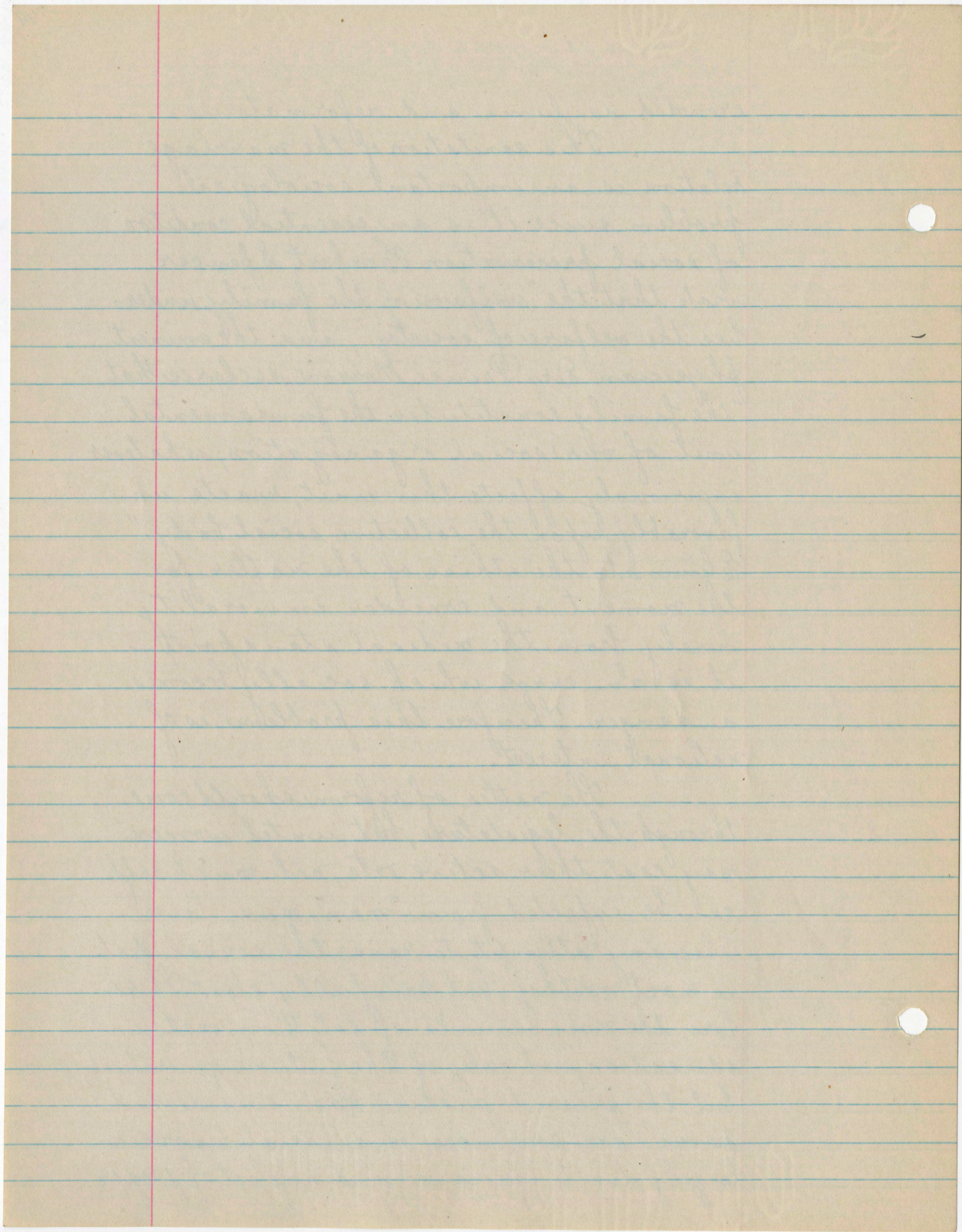
^x Elizabeth Stuart Phelps in "Womens Views of Divorce."



crowded asylums and reformatories.

This sanitation of the marriage relation is an important sociological problem since it is an essential condition of social preservation. Herbert Spencer wrote that the "welfare of the family underlies the welfare of society," and the eminent physician Dr. Prince Morrow declares that "the family constitutes the fundamental unit of our social organization; whatever injuriously affects this unit, reacts unfavorably upon the collective social body." Eliminate the ethics of the matter for the moment and consider immorality merely from the medical standpoint—it is an error which socially becomes a danger. Therefore this problem is of national interest.

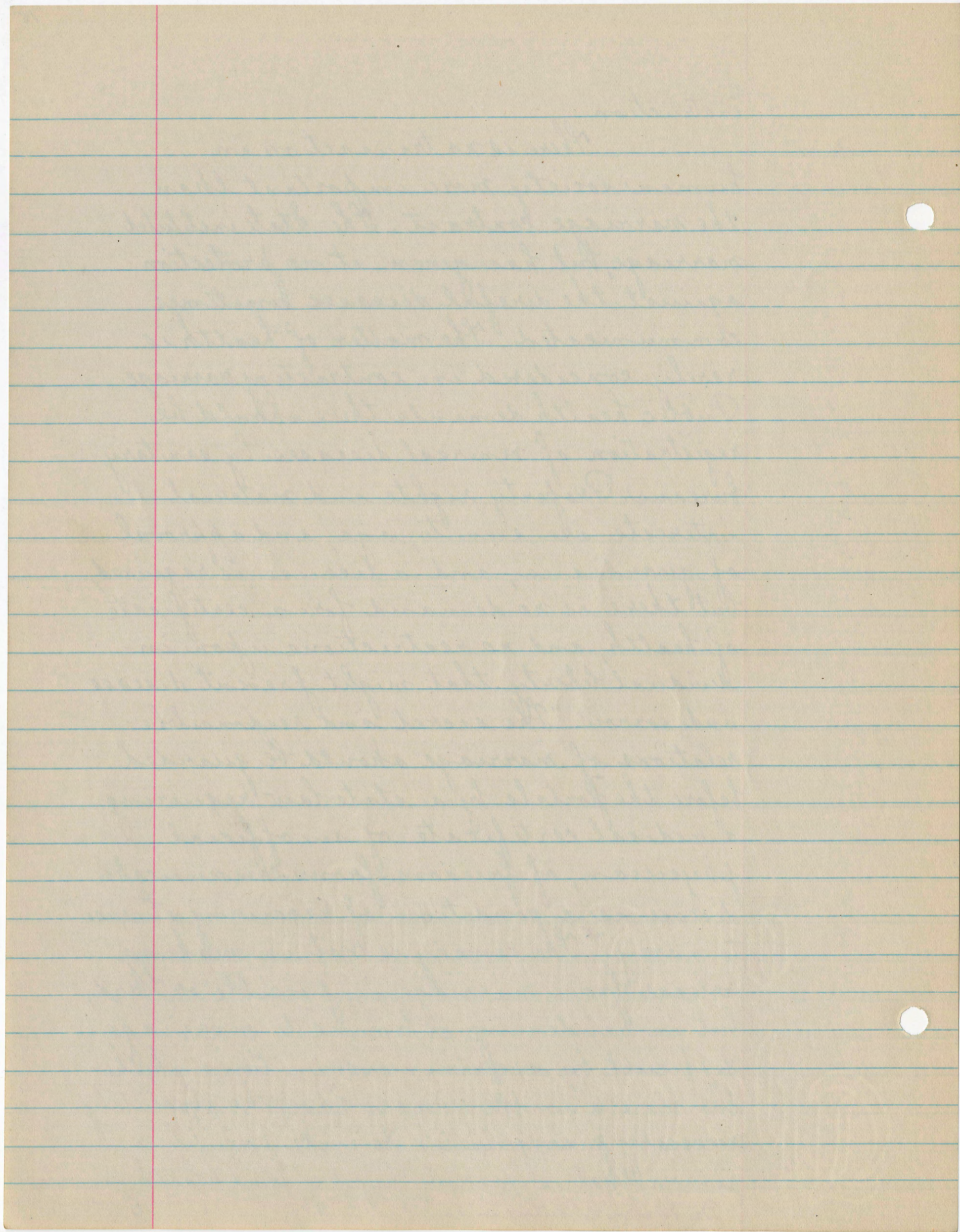
The matter of reform should come through the legislature, but until women may cast their active vote, not much help can be expected from "man-made laws." Also, any attempt to raise the social ideals is most worthy, but painfully slow. Therefore, the main source of solution rests in education, not only of the future generations, but the present public. Race suicide and divorce are evidences of a social disorder largely due to ignorance and neglect of proper



instruction.

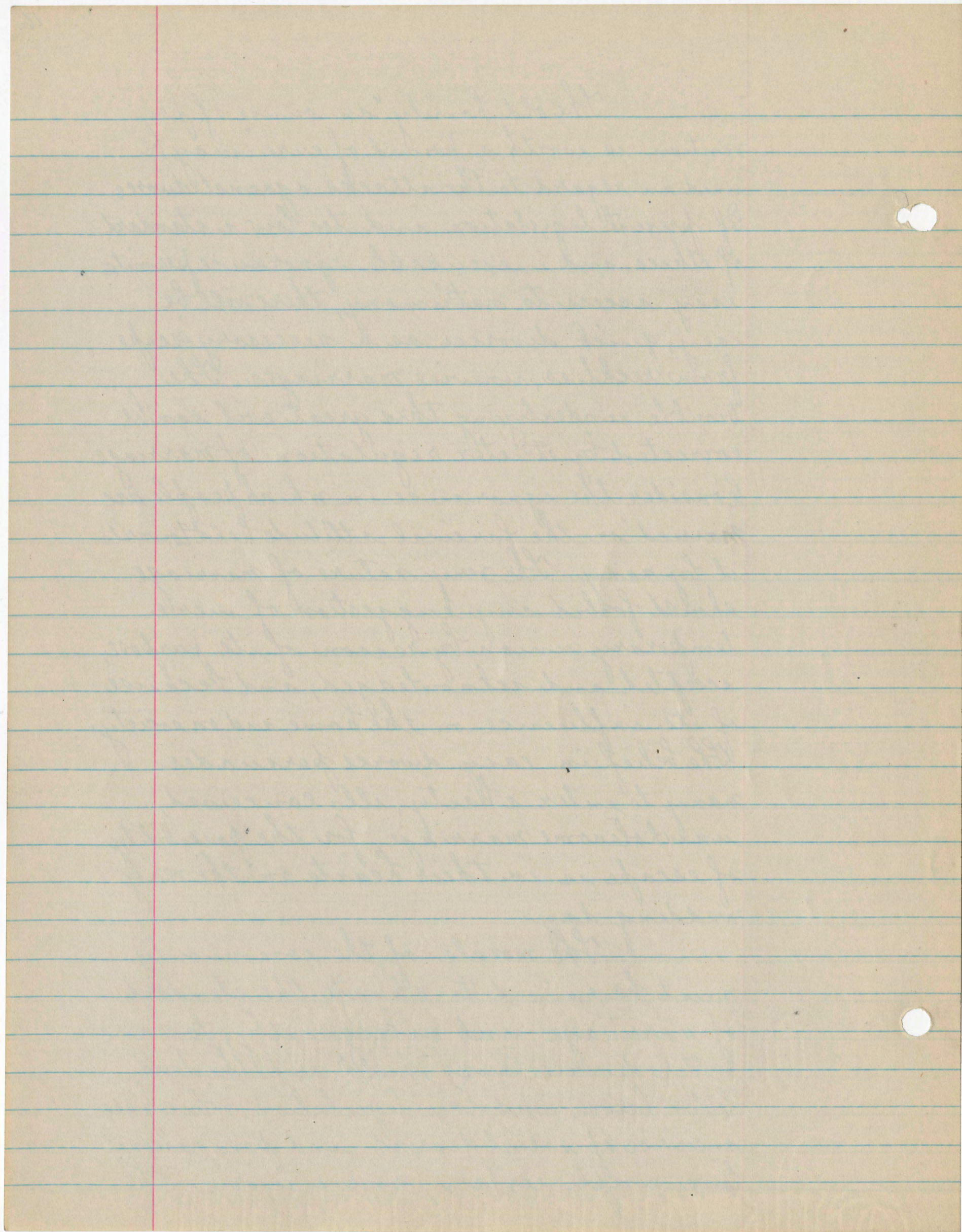
There is no transaction in human society more important than the marriage contract. The State instituted marriage, but has given it no protection against the direful diseases sometimes communicated. The matter of health is rarely considered in contracting marriage. Public health demands there should be registration of venereal diseases by sanitary bureaus. Property rights and material interests are seen to, age, and approval of guardians, and a license is required, but there is no demand for a certificate of health, and no restrictions upon individual liberty that might prevent disease and sorrow. "The sacred and responsible relations of marriage should be guarded before the portals by a state law requiring a medical certificate of an official physician, of freedom from communicable disease as a condition of receiving a license to marry." ^x The remedy is not in making release from marriage impossible or hard, but in rendering entrance to marriage difficult by ascertaining in time whether the man and the woman have the absolutely necessary prerequisites to make possible a union that is sacred, happy, and healthy.

Dr. Helen C. Putnam.

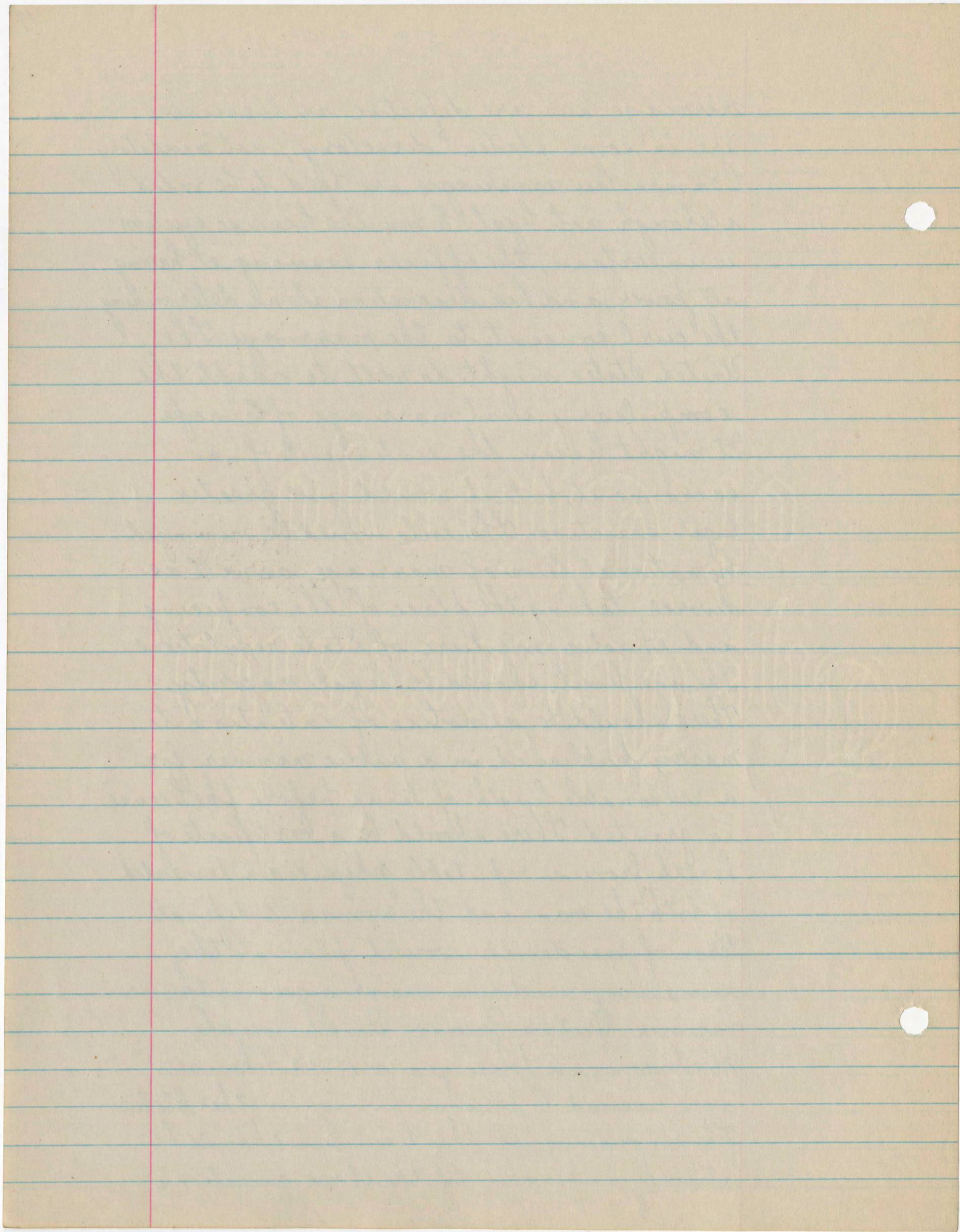


The old homily "an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure" may be used in regard to the attacks against divorce. If present legislation and too low a standard of ethics and inexcusable ignorance permits easy access to matrimony, there will be easy, quick divorces as a necessary escape from reckless, unwise marriages. The trouble underlying this great evil can be corrected by stricter regulation of marriage. Consider the ignorance in which people are married or the farcical attitude held towards it by many. The very nature of marriage should forbid any suggestion of mere temporary union by reason of its purpose, accepted and acknowledged, and because of its influence on the home and on society. The belief in easy divorce persuades many to enter a hasty, ill-conceived, unwholesome marriage, for the possibility of escape is in their hearts on the very wedding day.

The morale of the community must be raised to elevate the standards of marriage, and subsequently, to secure better divorce laws. Wield out the dead-letter laws, and lay legislation, which are a source of social discord, and pass rational laws, simple, certain, and uniform. The



marriage laws are defective as licenses are in some states "directory," not "mandatory." Common law marriages are held to be valid, although not legal. Even the license system is uncertain, the officer issuing it having all power and his discretion alone determining the civil consent to the marriage. The United States might do well to adopt the compulsory civil marriage of Europe. It might lessen the sentiment of a sacrament, but it would give greater legal sanction. The evils would be minimized by national laws of marriage, as well as divorce, taking the place of the confusing and chaotic mixture of State regulations. The age limit should be legal majority. There should be a notice of intention to marry published in a public manner for a reasonable length of time before the license is granted. There should be a certificate of health from a reputable physician demanded of both the man and the woman. A definite term of residence would prevent the runaway sudden marriages in the various Gretna Greens. In St. Joseph, Michigan, in four years 1594 licenses were issued to persons living in other States. The recording of the licenses should be strictly enforced. Of the three questions

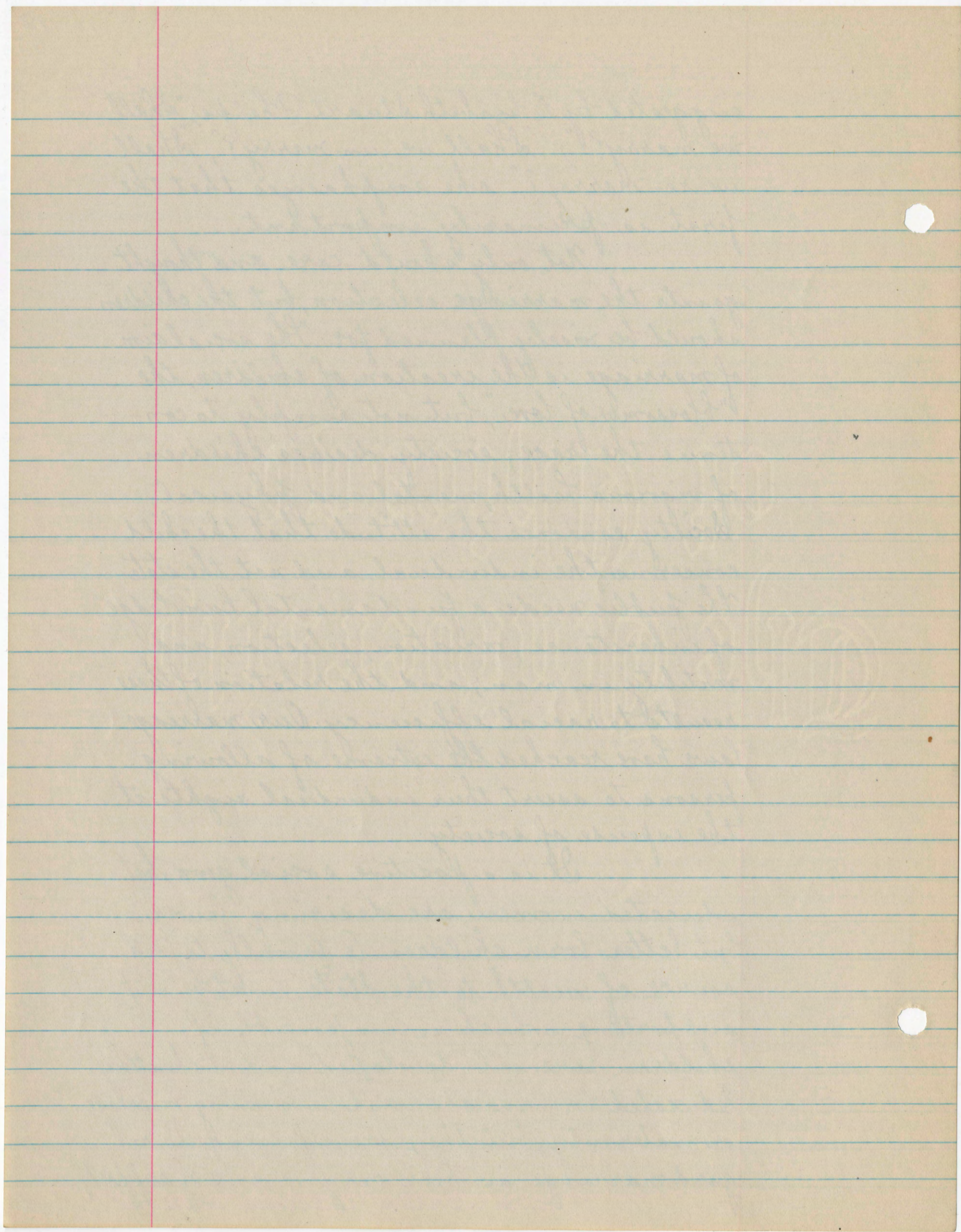


suggested by Elizabeth Stuart Phelps, "shall we marry?", "shall we un-marry?", "shall we re-marry?" she emphasizes that the first is primarily important.

Not only should care and thought go into the marriage selection, but the children should be wisely planned for. The social aim of marriage is the creation of children, the "blossoms of love," but not simply to continue the race; society desires children of vigorous health, mental and physical.

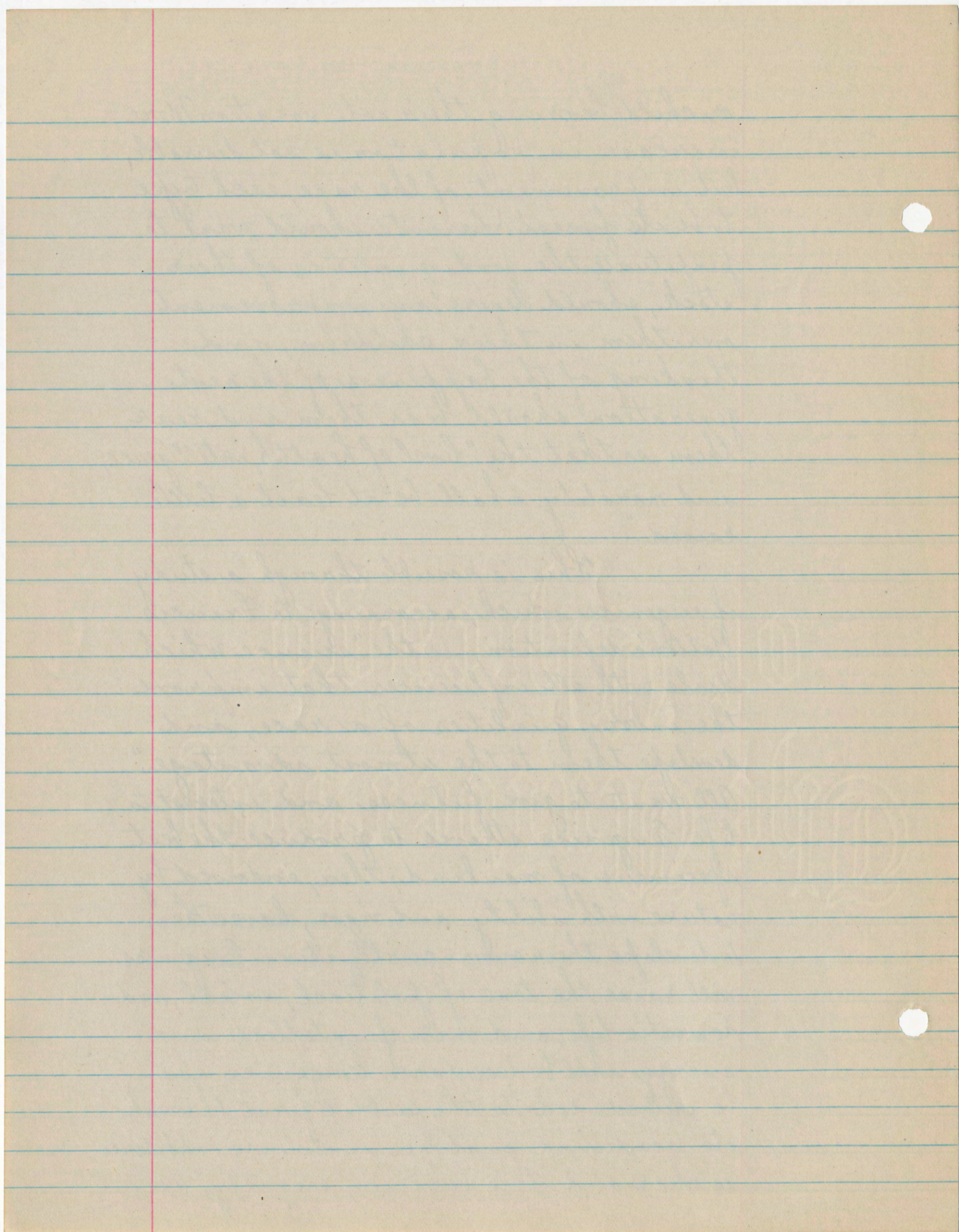
Society condones the attitude that the child concerns the individual and not the state. The public needs a fundamental knowledge of inheritance, variation, selection, and fertility in man, and the relation of these results to racial efficiency. Our marriage laws have reached the extreme of allowing persons to assert their individual rights at the expense of society.

It is a positive social good that educated women are desiring fewer but better-born children. A family to be a source of wealth to the state must be self-supporting which is impossible if children are ill-developed and unhealthy. Educated women are not avoiding marriage or maternity, but they are refusing to regard marriage as their only means of support,



or child-bearing, their sole vocation. Mere increase in population is not desirable, but improvement of the race, each type to be its finest. Parents should want to perpetuate the good qualities of their stock, should desire an improvement over them in their children, and, thinking of the happiness of the next generation should bear them and rear them so that the "level of health, intelligence, and morality shall be at least a little raised."

This is possible through a study of eugenics which, according to Francis Galton's definition, is the "science which deals with all influences that improve the inborn qualities of a race, and develop them to the utmost advantage." All want to give fulness and interest to life. Eugenics strives to produce the best specimens of mankind; then, endowed by nature with ability and vigor, leaves them to develop their own civilization. Eugenics will raise the tone of political, social, and domestic life, and men of intellect and energy will be less rare. Eugenics can be introduced to the public first through its academic qualities until its importance is clear and it is believed, secondly, as a



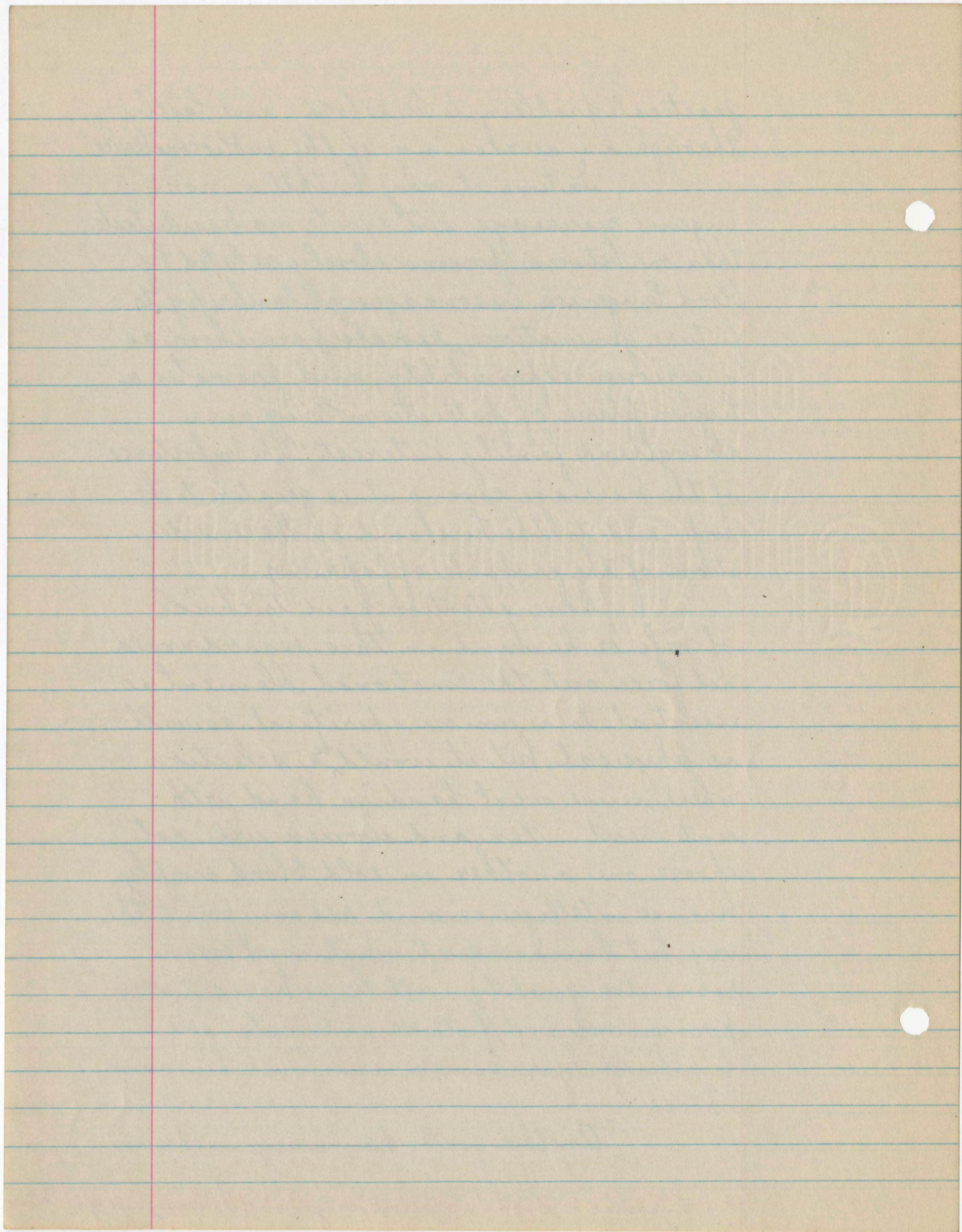
practical problem to be solved, and lastly through an awakening of the public conscience.

In time it may be that a non-eugenic marriage will excite no less distaste than one between persons closely related by blood. Eugenics encourages philanthropy to future generations; reveals parenthood as a serious responsibility, and promotes a higher plane of patriotism. Eugenics strengthens family interest. The importance of the marriage covenant is greater to the wife and to the husband on the consideration of the probable offspring.

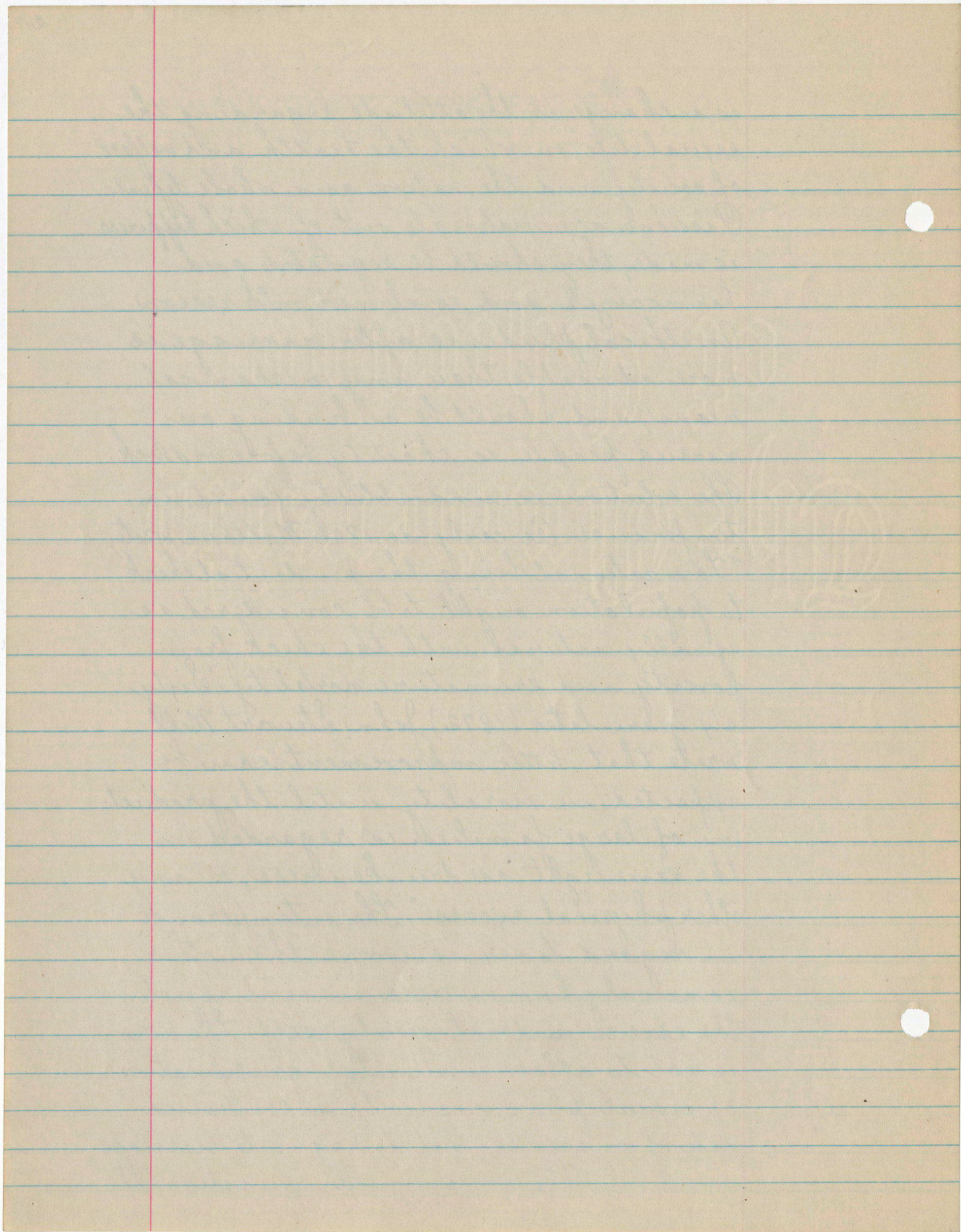
Some attention paid to choice of wife or husband in this regard would not force out the emotional element so essential to a union spiritual as well as physical, but it would ^{be} a selection where sense went hand in hand with sentiment. "Men and women will not choose one another in cold blood simply because intelligence and reason point the way, but human sentiment and every romantic quality will be enhanced when permanent and future interests are furthered by a saner and finer human choice." ^x

Another factor primarily important

^x Dr. Thomas D. Wood in "Some Controlling Ideals of the Family Life of the Future"



is a change in the attitude regarding the sexual life on which the health and welfare of society and the nation as a whole depends. Passions are materials out of which happiness is made; they should be regulated and harmonized and combined with reason. An ethical prudence after marriage is more advisable than any mechanical means, and should be as binding on married people as chastity before wedlock. The solution is undoubtedly found in temperance. As early as 1806 Malthus wrote, "To a rational being the prudential check to population ought to be considered as equally natural with the check from poverty and premature mortality." Sixty-six years later (1872) John Stewart Mill wrote that "little improvement can be expected in morality until the production of large families is regarded in the same light as drunkenness, or any other physical excess." The intemperance in regard to sex is worse than other commonly known vices since it affects the species and not merely self. The aim is not to allow unlimited gratification of sexual pleasures with a controlled rate of increase, but to regulate marriage. The women need education. The

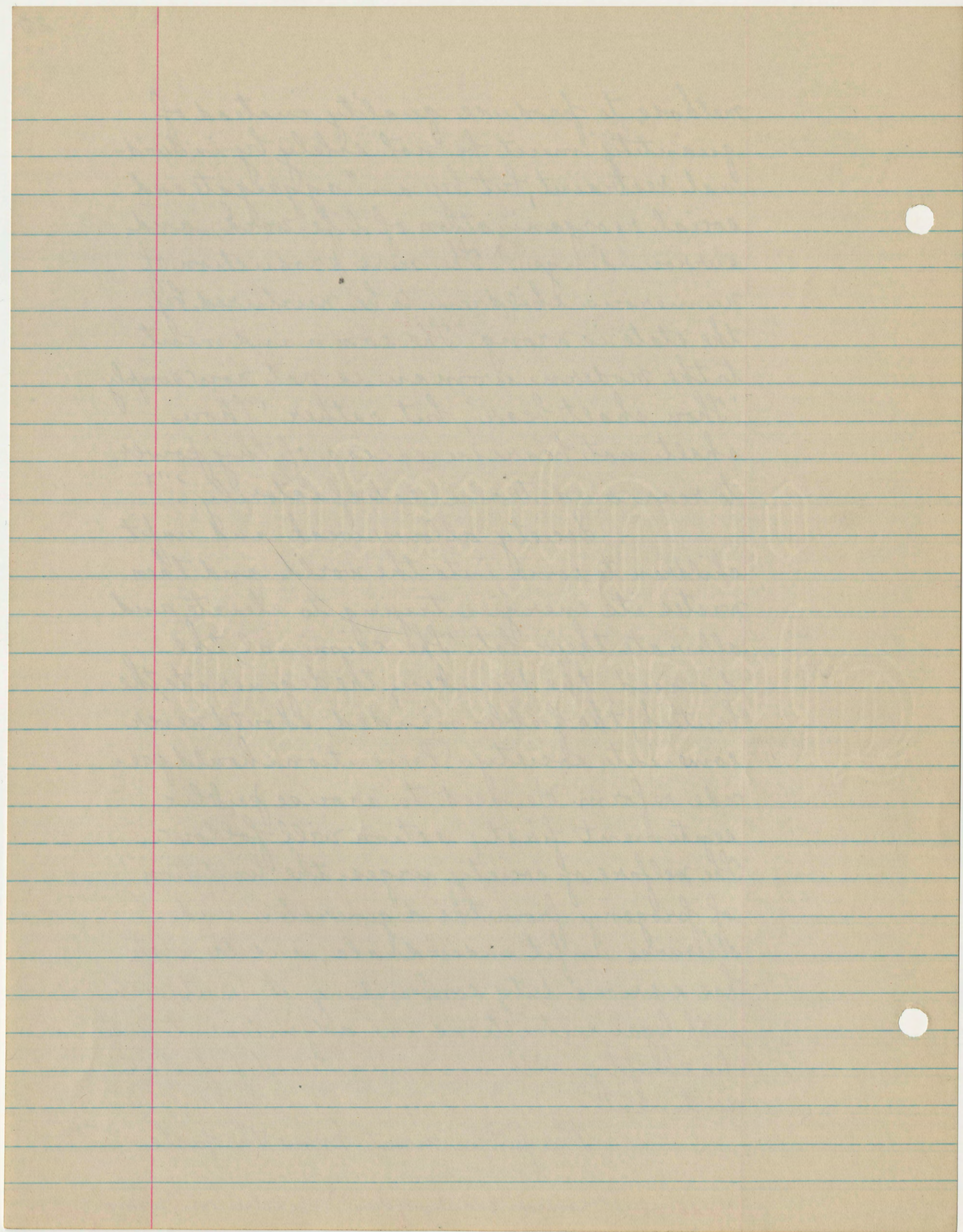


methods to produce quality instead of quantity must be not solely by individual restraint, but by an "aggregate and social reorganization of life, work, and surroundings."^x The mere production of numerous children to be nurtured by the state is wrong. "The commandment to the modern woman is not now simply 'Thou shalt bear', but rather 'Thou shalt not bear in excess of thy power to rear and train satisfactorily'."^y

Society allows weak and unfit children to come into the world and then wastes its energies trying to elevate and alleviate their lot. The criminal, the diseased, the drunken, the degenerate, the brutish, the feeble-minded, should never come into society. Preventions should precede reform. We need to arouse public sentiment first; action will follow. The welfare of society urges the limitation of progeny from the degenerates and otherwise unfit individuals, and the state has a serious duty confronting it. But, even with legal restrictions, the adjustment must lie chiefly with an enlightened popular sentiment.

The public must know the facts

^xJeddes and Thomson - "Evolution of Sex." ^yOlive Schreiner in "The Woman Question."

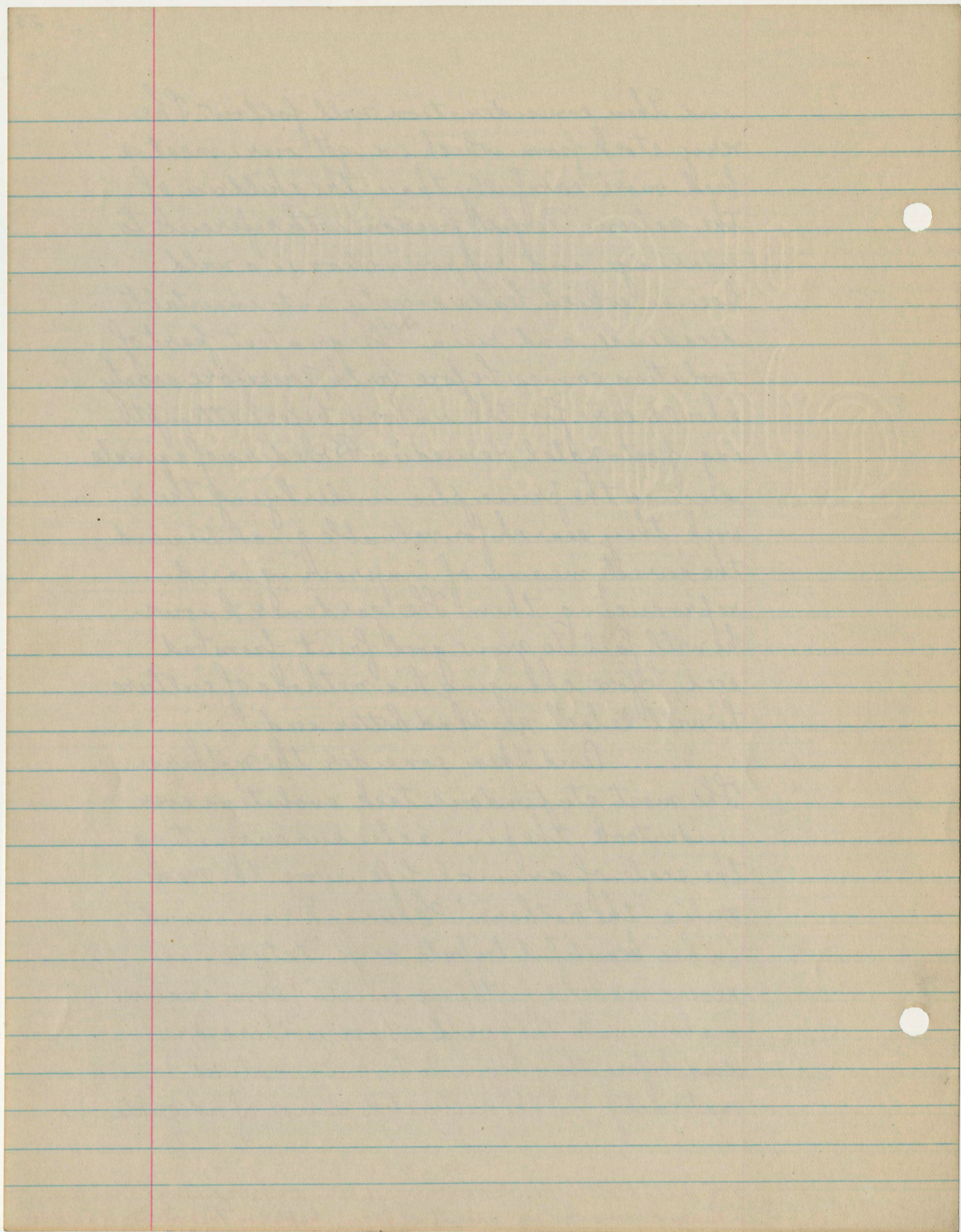


and then consideration will follow. The very stock from which we get our meat is bred more carefully than the children of the nation. "Perfect freedom with reference to marriage and reproduction is a wild license which leads society into inevitable decadence and ruin." ^X The greatest part of evolution comes before birth, therefore society should care for the unborn before attempting post-natal remedies. Breeders of animals discuss the principles underlying their work, they search for valuable qualities and the surest means of improving and reproducing them. The gardener knows he will fail to grow good fruit from bad seed, before changing his methods of culture he will select ~~new~~ and better seed.

And then, consider the mothers. The most stupendous task evolution ever undertook, the pinnacle surmounting the scale of animal life, was the mammalia, "the mothers." Henry Drummond in his beautiful tribute says "Nature has never made anything since." ^Y Some creatures are born into the world whose mothers are dead before they begin to live. In nature maternity, in the restricted sense of adequate

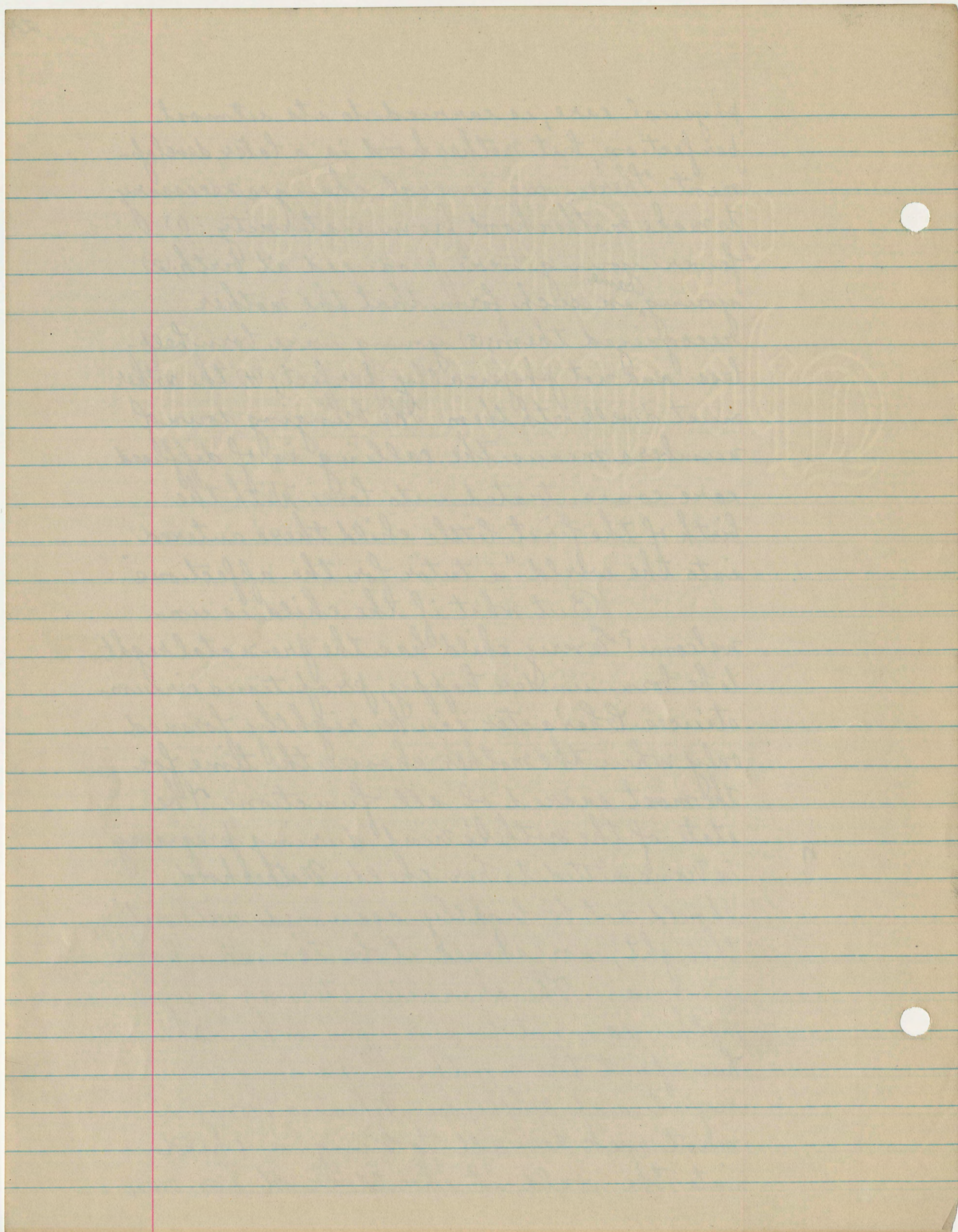
X Hiram Stanley in "Our Civilization and the Marriage Problem."

Y Henry Drummond in "Ascent of Man", chapter on "The Evolution of a Mother."



physical care, is carried to its utmost perfection; but motherhood is a later development. There were several changes necessary to make motherhood from maternity: (1) fewer young were produced at birth; (2) young ^{came} in such form that the mother recognized them; (3) young were born helpless and not physically perfect; (4) the mother must dwell with them. The bringing down of numbers means the calling in of diffused care concentrated into love. With the birth of the first little child there entered into the world "a tutor for the affections".

But what if the child is unwelcome? Every child has the pre-natal right to be born under happy, propitious circumstances. Character can be rightly formed only when the mother chooses the time for the most sacred of all functions. The state of the mother's mind during pregnancy is transmitted to her child. Motherhood should not be lightly assumed without thought, nor should it be thrust upon a woman. The characteristics of a true mother can not be developed when she has spent the months of waiting in regret and rebellion. When a woman must risk her all to bring a child into the world it should be at her own



olution. How much greater then will be her tenderness, gentleness, sacrifice and patient sympathy, and the child because well born will merit the unselfish loving care.

These ideals are coming through the awakened interest of the popular mind, and education and knowledge of facts will accomplish great things, for, knowing, the people will act. College women wish a union of solidarity which is not based on sexual attraction alone, but a bond joining heads as well as hearts, resulting in purer family life. College men and women are not different from society in general except that their advantages have placed them in the van. It will come to be that for all the highest ideal of marriage is to establish the highest type of family and the noblest conditions of parenthood. The little love god has two clear far-seeing eyes if the bandage blinding him were but removed. The true concord and harmony of souls, with no trace of discord, "the uniting of two mornings that hope to reach the night together",^x is marriage that is indeed a sacrament, a contract where each gives to the other a heart.

^xRobert G. Ingersoll.

