



Fighting for Life (New York Review Books Classics)

S. Josephine Baker

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New York's Lower East Side was said to be the most densely populated square mile on earth in the 1890s. Health inspectors called the neighborhood "the suicide ward." Diarrhea epidemics raged each summer, killing thousands of children. Sweatshop babies with smallpox and typhus dozed in garment heaps destined for fashionable shops. Desperate mothers paced the streets to soothe their feverish children and white mourning cloths hung from every building. A third of the children living there died before their fifth birthday.

By 1911, the child death rate had fallen sharply and *The New York Times* hailed the city as the healthiest on earth. In this witty and highly personal autobiography, public health crusader Dr. S. Josephine Baker explains how this transformation was achieved. By the time she retired in 1923, Baker was famous worldwide for saving the lives of 90,000 children. The programs she developed, many still in use today, have saved the lives of millions more. She fought for women's suffrage, toured Russia in the 1930s, and captured "Typhoid" Mary Mallon, twice. She was also an astute observer of her times, and *Fighting for Life* is one of the most honest, compassionate memoirs of American medicine ever written.

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