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THE

MORAL AND PHYSICAL EVILS

LIKELY TO FOLLOW IF

PRACTICES INTENDED TO ACT

AS

CHECKS TO POPULATION

BE NOT STRONGLY

DISCOURAGED AND CONDEMNED.

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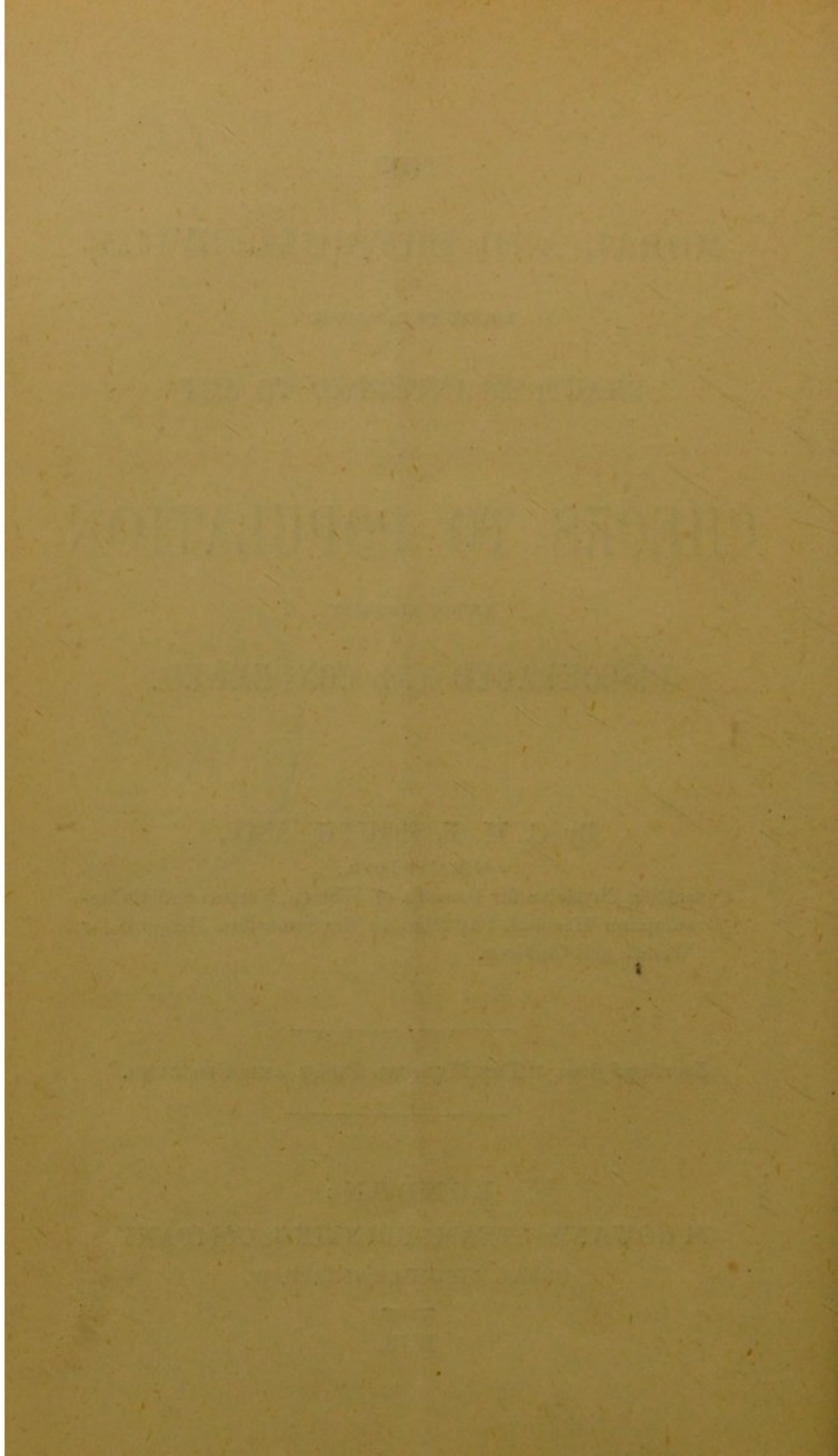
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CHECKS TO POPULATION.^(a)

It has been reserved for the present day to adopt a system of philosophy, falsely so-called, whereby checks to population shall not only be advised, but, what is worse, fully carried out. Such economists would have us believe that they are, after all, only more advanced Malthusians. Such a profession, however, is founded on error. The disciples of Malthus, and his immediate followers, repudiated immorality, and based their doctrines mainly on the following grounds :—

1. The productions for the maintenance of humanity, *i.e.*, the means attainable for the support of life, exist in the arithmetical proportion of 1, 2, 3, 4, &c., while generation, *i.e.*, the actual power of increase of the human species, exists in the geometrical proportion of 1, 2, 4, 8. Indeed, it is asserted without fear of contradiction, that a quarter of a century will, under favourable circumstances, such as were those of America at its discovery, suffice to double the population of a

(a) Being an address spoken before the Obstetrical Section at Bath of the British Medical Association.

country. But even under more unfavourable circumstances, the increase of population far exceeds the means of support, and hence it is—

2. That excessive population leads to poverty, distress, and crime, and more especially criminal abortion and infanticide.

3. That over productiveness is injurious to a woman.

To these three recognised influences, which the school of Malthus adopt, the more modern economists have added two more :

(a) That poverty and increased fecundity always go together in women ;

(b) Whereas wealth increases the sexual passion of men.

And so it happens that while Malthus taught we should—

1. Discourage *improvident* marriages ;

2. Ameliorate the condition of women ;

3. Do all we can to increase the productions for the maintenance of mankind.

The so-styled modern Malthusians have been obliged to add a fourth desideratum :—To provide channels for the increasing sexual passion which shall have other results than those of procreation.

The consideration of each of these points, of themselves, would occupy hours of debate.

In regard to the first, I must remark that the increase of marriages always indicates the greater prosperity of a nation. This fact is incontestibly proved by the returns of the Registrar-general. To arrest these, is therefore to arrest the prosperity of a nation.

2. To ameliorate the condition of women. Upon this point I wholly concur, not indeed with a wish to

diminish her fecundity, but because it is one of the noblest attributes of man to help the weaker vessel.

3. As to the wisdom of the third proposition, all must concur. But this, commerce, science, and increased enterprise, must effect.

But it is quite a different thing when we come to consider the two additional dogmas propounded.

4. It is doubtless true, that among the very poor, more children are born than among the rich. But then this comes from other causes—less luxury, less sexual vice less conjugal frauds ; but as the children of the indigent are generally less long lived, they cannot be said to increase population.

The remedy here, is in carrying out firstly, the second proposition.

5. I do not believe it to be true that increased prosperity necessarily increases the sexual passion in the male. Is man, because more civilised, more at ease, and better educated, necessarily more carnal in his appetites ? Is increased moral and religious knowledge and deportment, which progressed *pari passu* with civilisation, not rather restraint to all excesses in this direction ? I deny, therefore, the fifth proposition *in toto*. But supposing it true—is the remedy proposed either correct or philosophical ? Let us see. We are told we must provide for the increased sexual passions, specially of males, channels which shall have other results than those of procreation.

Gentlemen,—It is upon the last point (and then only, upon one side of the question) that I wish to direct your attention to day. For this proposition has two sides to it, and both have been advised and attempted to be supported by argument.

The first side of the question, is that for those classes among whom you discountenance marriage, you shall provide by a system of license and sanitary inspection, clean prostitutes for their use. Hence, those odious contagious diseases acts, about which I shall not further speak to day.

2. You shall recommend artificial means, whereby *ab initio* you will prevent fructification ; in other words, advise *sexual fraudulency, conjugal onanism* ; and the mischief is that such measures are advised under the garb of humanity, medical science, philosophy, and the like. I look upon the whole transaction as a base and moral crime, against which the whole body of the medical profession should protest with abhorrence and disgust.

The first mention we have of the crime occurs in Gen. xxxviii., 8, 9, 10 : “ And Judah said unto Onan, go in unto thy brother’s wife and marry her, and raise up seed unto thy brother. And Onan knew that the seed should not be his ; and it came to pass when he went in unto his brother’s wife that he spilled it on the ground lest that he should give seed to his brother. And the thing which he did displeased the Lord, wherefore He slew him also.”

And yet our French medical contemporaries, who see so much more of this system than we do, are very condemnatory of this vile habit. Thus, Bourgeois, in his work on the Passions, says : “ Conjugal onanism is a real social pest. Every fraud is a choked germ rendered unproductive—an indirect infanticide ! ” Indeed, for the full development of this crime we must look mainly to France. Great and noble as that nation has been, and I know yet will be, it has tasted deeply of the pleasures of immo-

rality. It can scarcely be otherwise when wholesale crime is licensed and encouraged by the State.

Onan was a criminal and was sorely punished in consequence. But now-a-days science has devised other fraudulent aids. Nor will I dwell upon them ; suffice it to say, that Onan's crime is imitated ; coverings are used by males, plugs and injections by females, to complete their shame. It is almost defilement even thus cursorily to allude to these vile practices.

It has been reserved, however, for some of our own people to discover a fifth method. In a debate before the Medical Society of London last session on the use of intra-uterine stems, devised originally for uterine diseases, we were credibly informed that they were also used by some ladies of high position, and continually worn by them, with a view to *prevent* conception. Thus often it happens that malicious art perverts good intentions. An instrument calculated, if worn for a time, to dilate a constricted os uteri and the uterine canal, and when removed to place a woman in those conditions most favourable for conception, is thus used for the opposite result. For it is manifest that conception during the time these stems are retained in utero, is well nigh impossible. I do not say it *always* prevents impregnation, because I have known of two cases where conception did occur while the stem was in utero, and pregnancy went on to the full period. But, under ordinary circumstances, such a result would prove, I imagine, of very rare occurrence. Still, there is the fact. To find them placed in proper position, and with this intent, implies the assistance of a person of some skill, and shows to what a degree of degradation some men have fallen. The question naturally then presents itself, "Who put them there?"

There is yet a sixth and baser method practised, of which I have met a few examples ; but it is too gross to refer to before you, nor would it serve any useful purpose.

First, let me state that I look upon conjugal onanism as a great moral crime. It is perverting a noble attribute to vicious propensities. It is feeding a lustful impulse, and in the most degrading manner lowering the status of a woman. It is even doing that which an animal actuated solely by instinct would never do. It is destroying in the beginning what, under God's blessing, might have matured into a living soul, and proved a blessing to humanity. Masturbation is mean and bad enough, and much to be reprehended, because it is fostered by a filthy spirit which can no longer control the sexual impulses. But here, at least, there is no partner in his sin, and no pure woman is degraded thereby. Conjugal onanism places both the man and the woman below the instincts of the brute creation.

But, secondly, like all crimes, it cannot be, and it is not, practised with impunity. The effect on the health of both men and women is very injurious. The subject has been fully treated in a very philosophical work written by Bergeret on sexual fraud. It was to be expected that true science and moral worth could not stand by and see a practice almost universally carried out in any country without remonstrance. Written in a true philosophical and inquiring spirit, and among those who are so little ashamed of their vile habits, that they freely confess them, Bergeret had a vast field before him upon which to ground his conclusions. He shows that sexual frauds produce *acute* metritis in the woman, of which disease he details nine cases and two deaths. 2. That

conjugal onanism is a frequent cause of chronic metritis, of which he also narrates several cases. 3. Leucorrhœa, as would be primarily suspected, is frequently a result of it. 4. Also menorrhagia and hæmatocele, of which he instances five cases. 5. Eleven cases of hysteralgia and hyperæsthesia of the generative organs are also given. 6. Cancer in an aggravated form, assuming in such examples a galloping character, so rapid is it in its course, of which nine cases are given, is another form of disease which this baneful practice induces. 7. Ovarian dropsy and ovaritis are also commonly produced by the habit. 8. In cases where severe results are not observed, the generative organs become so changed and chronically diseased that absolute sterility results. Lastly, mania leading to suicide and the most repulsive nymphomania, are induced thereby in many cases, of which several examples are given.

Among men, general nervous prostration, mental decay, loss of memory, intense cardiac palpitations, mania, conditions which also lead to suicide, are given as the results of conjugal onanism.

I may say that these opinions are not singular. They are confirmed by several French authors. (a) Dr. Mayer in his work on "Conjugal Relations Considered in Relation to Population, Health, and Morality;" Dr. Bourgeois, in his work "On the Passions;" Richard, in his work "On Generation;" all confirm these views. Let me guard myself, however, while yet confirming these opinions. I do not say all and every one of these diseases may not often be produced by other causes, but when

(a) "Des Fraudes dans l'Accomplissement des Fonctions Génératives." Par L. F. G. Bergeret, Médecin-en-Chef de l'Hôpital d'Ardois Imas. Baillière & Fils. 1877.

they occur in persons who, before they adopted such habits were free from any such complications ; when they are met more frequently among conjugal onanists ; when they assume a peculiarly severe type in such persons ; when the sufferers themselves tell you that they can trace the occurrence of their troubles soon after the adoption of such baneful habits ; and, finally, when, in some of these cases, the very moment the habit is abandoned and a pregnancy occurs, all the bad symptoms disappear, and health of body and mind results, *then, and then certainly* I think it would be unphilosophical to deny that the several diseases were produced by these habits. Let it also be borne in mind that in England we have not yet reached that shameless mental perversion which leads men to take credit for their filthy habits, as I have often heard Frenchmen do, and say that they are not so silly as Englishmen in having large families and bringing them up in poverty, but that they understand these things better in France than we do in England ; also, that as conjugal onanism is practised very rarely, I believe, in this country, we are not, as professional men, open to receive the confessions of the unfortunate victimised women as the doctors are in France. But if we are raised in our tone of conjugal morality above some of our neighbours, it behoves us, as medical men and moral men, to protest strongly against the ingress among ourselves of habits that can only add to our national shame and must increase the category of our national diseases.

I will, however, go further. These habits are injurious in other ways. 1st. They lead to a diminution of population. 2nd. They produce a deterioration in the physical strength of a race, and they bring about great demoralisation.

1st. They lead to a diminution of population. In a paper read by Broca before the Academy of Sciences, in 1867, he proved that the marriages in France were becoming less productive, and that the women were more diseased. Thus he states that the proportion of births to the number of inhabitants for the following countries was :—

Russia	...	1 in 18 or 19	Prussia	...	1 in 25
Venetian States	„	„ 22	England & Switzerl'd	„	28
Bohemia	...	„ 24	France	...	„ 33

The same fact is enforced in another way by Bergeret (*op. cit.* p. 214).

At the end of the last century the number of children to a marriage in France was 4 to 5. At the beginning of the present century it was 4·3 ; to-day it is only 2·9. The following is a more particular return. 1819-32 in France there were 3·73 births to every marriage. 1832-46 only 3·28. Between 1847-60 only 3·28. But in Paris and some other places it was much less. In 1865 it was for all France, 3·10 ; for the department of the Seine, 2·65.

And so the population of France diminishes ; and but that the mean duration of life has increased from the ages of 36 to 38, owing to better sanitary measures and more ease of the population, that population to-day would be rapidly diminishing. And a diminution of population now-a-days cannot be taken as an indication of prosperity. England and America are far more prosperous now than they were. The prosperity of a nation depends on plenty of population, and plenty of work for that population. The Anglo-Saxon race is fortunately pre-eminent in these respects throughout the world.

2nd. They produce a deterioration in the *physique* of a race. Common sense will lead one to suspect such an

influence. Those who expend by excesses their virile power must engender a weakened offspring. The beauty, the stature, the strength, and necessarily the courage and powers of endurance, must diminish. When we read that out of 1,000 births in France, in 1770, 583 were alive at 5 years old, and 502 at 20 years ; between 1817-30, 720 were alive at 5 years, and 638 at 20 years ; 1840-59, 723 were alive at 5 years, and 640 at 20 years ; it is a terrible mortality. Mayer believes it due to the excess of births, whereas if less numerous, the children would be better cared for. This may be true in measure. But is not something due to hereditary weakness, weakness engendered by parents debilitated by sexual excesses ? One of the papers on Infant Mortality, by Dr. Drysdale, proves how precarious the life of the little children in France has become. Note also, the French armies conquered the world under the first Napoleon. The very Prussians were overcome. Under the third Napoleon how was the position changed ! If the generals proved less competent, the men, accustomed to waste their strength in unholy debauches, were like the luxurious nations of old, less able to cope with the sturdy sons of the North, and in their turn they were conquered ; and the Commune proved that brutality had taken the place of courage and Socialism of manliness.

But, lastly, such habits tend to demoralise a nation. Here, again, common sense will foresee what result must inevitably follow. A man who is accustomed to gratify without restraint his lustful desires, is not likely to improve in moral tone. It is a passion, and like drunkenness will know no bounds. His conversation, his habits, his business, will become tainted by the moral perversion, and he will seek in baser debauches for new channels

wherewith to gratify his baser desires. The very woman will become contaminated. Thus it is that while the number of *registered* prostitutes in Paris, because of the surveillance of the police, diminishes, that of the *un-registered* has greatly increased, so much so that syphilis is more rampant than ever.

In 1865 there were 3,313 registered prostitutes, which, in 1869, had diminished to 2,782 ; while the clandestine prostitutes were estimated at 40,000 ; and M. Lefort lately advised that a body of police should be provided to arrest 50,000, the present increased number, of these clandestine prostitutes and keep them in brothels. But it does not stop here. Apart from the filthy exhibitions of nude persons which France allows, apart from the frightfully immoral theatrical performances which are acted in most of the theatres, so that no unmarried modest woman can frequent them, houses for the commission of unnatural crime exist, and one practitioner alone, Tardieu, could collect 302 such cases upon which to found medico-legal inquiries upon their pathological peculiarities. Could the whole British profession, if called upon in a legal inquiry, cite half-a-dozen similar cases ? Assuredly not. Thank God, we have not yet as a nation attained to such depravity.

No, gentlemen ; if checks to population are ever desirable, if men have not the means to marry and bring up a family, let us not become the slaves to habits of infamy. There is such a thing as moral restraint. "Greater is a man that ruleth his spirit than he that conquereth a city." The man who habitually keeps down evil thoughts, and who allows integrity and a Christian sense of honour to rule him, is a noble creature. He is free to do everything which is grand and glorious,

and we have a right to expect great things from such a character. The habitude of doing well necessarily entails distinction. Let the passions be kept down by athletics, hard mental work, and industrial occupations ; and if we cannot afford to keep a wife, let us not seek to gratify sexual lust by unholy and debasing practices. Let us not lower the character of a woman by making her the lewd plaything for our vices. Let us remember they must hereafter bring up our children. If the married cannot continue to increase their families, let them do as St. Paul advises, "Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time that ye may give yourselves to fasting and to prayer, and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency" (1 Cor. vii., 5). Let the mothers do their duty by their children, and suckle them as they are bound to do, and so they shall not procreate more frequently than is consistent with health. Ameliorate, improve, raise her moral position. Use her as a help-mate worthy of an honourable man, not as a vessel for unbridled lust. Be pure in your conjugal relations. If you do so you will ensure a happy home. It has been shown by Mayer (*Rapports Conjugals*, p. 240) that conception cannot occur after the twelfth day which follows the end of a period, and up to the recurrence of the catamenia, during which connection is likely to lead to impregnation. If it is dangerous from whatever cause for a woman to procreate too frequently, restraint can be so regulated and practised. Conjugal onanism, however, is not only criminal in the man, but it must tend to demoralise women. If you teach them vicious habits, and a way to sin without detection, how can you assure yourself of their fidelity when assailed by a fascinating seducer. Why

may not the unmarried woman taste of forbidden pleasures also, so that your future wife shall have been defiled 'ere you know her ?

Mr. President and Gentlemen, as medical men, we are often the guardians of female virtue. We are admitted into the closest confidence of our patients. We know the secrets of many a household. We are trusted, respected, nay loved, for our considerate kindness to the sorrowful and the sick. Shall we now remain silent when attempts are made to introduce into our happy homes habits of immorality, which are so vile in their character, so dishonourable in their development, so degrading in their practice ! Let us protest as medical men, as moral men, as Christian men, against recommendations, by whomsoever made, so filthy, so base, and so abominable.

