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LITTLE ESSAYS OF LOVE AND VIRTUE

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MORE ESSAYS OF
LOVE AND VIRTUE

by
HAVELOCK ELLIS

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PREFACE

IN putting forth a further series of such *Little Essays of Love and Virtue* as I published nine years earlier I must begin with a warning. I do not regard this book of *More Essays* as addressed to the same class of readers as the *Little Essays*. That volume, I stated in the Preface, was specially intended for young people on the threshold of mature life, and I proposed to leave to them the delicate question of its suitability for older people. My feeling about the present volume is the reverse of that. It seems to me that I have been here writing, in the main, less for the young than for those who have passed the stresses of youth and its ardours, and are able to take a wide and serene view of the facts of the present and the limited possibilities of the future. For though in the past the young were too often left in ignorance of the things that belonged to their fate, it is possible that there may be limits to the consciousness it is desirable for us to possess in youth of the processes going on within us and of the direction in which we are moving.

Perhaps it may be asked how it comes about that after writing a book with a primary desire for readers who are young, only a few years later I desire to write for those no longer young. Do I pretend to put myself at the point of view of both? The two viewpoints seem, as we look round us to-day, so different. On the one hand are the young, with their impulse to question, perhaps to shatter, all the things presented to them for reverence, and to set up for worship new images as unlike as possible the idols of their elders. On the other hand, we find the old clinging with tenacity to the new ideals they had set up in youth and vituperating the young for doing precisely what they themselves had once done, denouncing in consequence the irreverence, the disorder, the immodesty, the obscenity, the immorality, of the literature, the art, and the life of the younger generation. "How insolent is youth!" sighed Benjamin Constant more than a century ago; "age seems to it an unpardonable offence." He might have added that we have but to wait a few years to see what had been the youth of to-day finding unpardonable offence in the youth of to-morrow.

It so happens that I do pretend to take the two points of view. I chance to have been much alive in youth, and to retain in consequence a vivid memory of that youth and of

my revolutionary irreverence at the acme of the Victorian period. I even recall how as a boy I once accidentally saw the revered Queen Victoria herself—from a gallery at an International Exhibition which she was visiting unannounced—and (I have heard) told my family afterwards that she was “just like a fat cook.” In my independent irreverence towards the idols of Victorian literature and art, I scarcely deigned to read their poems or look at their pictures, while I eagerly searched for the things that pleased myself, things, some of them, which afterwards also pleased other people, so much so that they have since left me tired. As one grows older, indeed, one may observe with intelligent interest, and if one is sensitive also share, the perpetual slight change which taste is always undergoing, the perpetual slight novelty in which all life, and indeed all art, consists. So it is possible to be young and to be old many times, even in the course of the same life.

That may be how it comes about that I feel with the young, when I find them falling into the same attitude I assumed in youth, and with the same arrogance dismissing the generation which immediately preceded; and I can therefore afford to smile when I find that among the things they so dismiss are many that under different circumstances I had

cherished, and even that I am myself thus dismissed. For it should be among the precious gifts of age that it releases us from the solemnity of youth, and that we learn to hold loosely and lightly and playfully the things that once we persistently clung to; and this not alone because they must soon fall from our hands altogether, but because we have learnt to know them better, and perhaps to realise how much nearer were our loves to our hates, and our hates to our loves, than at the outset we had assumed. That process of age is—as it should be—a movement in the direction of dissolution and death; but meanwhile it is a phase of sweetness and mellowness, the fruit's one moment of ripeness, or of what, more or less foolishly, men call "wisdom."

In thus putting myself alike at the standpoint of youth and of age, I am not, I hope, adopting a literary artifice, but keeping within the sphere of facts. Whether falling in with the rhythm of youth or of age, I would desire still to keep close to the facts of life. In a certain sense, indeed, literature is, as Milton felt it to be, life itself. I would desire to say everything I have to say as well as I can—as precisely and as clearly—but never to pass beyond the orbit of life. Therein all great literature moves. Homer and Virgil and Dante and Shakespeare and Cervantes and Racine

and Goethe are all concerned with life, even though in different senses or on different aspects; and life means for us, at the beginning and at the end, no abstracted formula, no mere "society," but this human organism, with its desires and its satisfactions, its ardours and its weariness, its endless mysteries, its strange possibilities, its curious loveliness, not yet fully explored and known.

"Love" and "Virtue," the lines along which, here and before, I have tried a little to explore and to know, I regard as two main paths along which the human organism seeks to find for itself development and expression. I am not likely, I think, to be accused of meaning by "love" merely a mild euphemism for the physical explosion of sex, or by "virtue" merely the namby-pamby convention of "goodness." If when I speak of "love" I may sometimes seem to recall Freud's *libido* and its sublimations, there is also an echo of the love that Dante celebrated as one with the force that moves the stars; and when I speak of "virtue," it is more often the sort of virtue which Nietzsche proclaimed, free from all "moralic acid," the sort which men sometimes mistake for vice, while they bow down to the hollow image of an outworn virtue, and smugly mistake their own feebleness for "the will of God." It is the old heroic "virtue," firm alike in the

discipline of self-control, and thereby in the strength to control the world, that we need to-day, whatever may have been needed in the days when men gathered together to listen to the Sermon on the Mount and thereupon went forth to slay and steal and lie and make the world a Hell. The love I have in mind is that which secretly inspires a virtue which refuses to yield weakly to the circumstances of a world moulded by the dead heroisms of a past it has outgrown. It comes forward with its own heroisms to guide life into new forms, even if in so doing it must sweep away the old moralities to set up other moralities more in accordance with the increased knowledge of our own days. I belong to a land where all who are truly alive are to-day specially called upon to live daringly, and where virtue, in the antique and genuine sense, as the impulse to demand things that are great and rare, becomes a prime duty. For I am surrounded by traditions that once were living and now are dead, not only in the spiritual world but even in the industrial and commercial world, and yet are clung to with a passionate tenacity which blinds those who hold them to the fate they are bringing down on themselves. I see government entrusted to men of no virtue, by the votes of men and women made of the same stuff, and guided by principles—if they deserve

the name—that may once have been those of sanity but in the light of a later age are imbecility. To-day virtue is an adventure.

I am well aware that in setting forth, here and elsewhere, the claims of Love and Virtue, as I conceive them, it will seem to many that I carry them to the point of extravagance and make demands that are at present impossible. But anyone who realises that in every ancient and firmly established social order the forces of inertia are of immense weight will realise also that we cannot strike too hard or make our demands too large. In such an impermeable world we can only gain much by having asked more. To do so is the only course open to men of reason and moderation who are pioneering the future. This is life. Even if I sometimes dream, I do not dream beyond the circumference of life and the aptitudes of the human organism.

When, indeed, I come to think of it, that may be the reason why my “dreams” are at first regarded as shocking and afterwards as commonplace. They are within the orbit of life, even though they seem to present some new vision of life. My first book, *The New Spirit*, was greeted on publication with howls of execration, as outrageous or perverse or ridiculous. On re-issue, thirty years later, it was, with scarcely a dissenting voice, called

sane and reasonable. When the volume of *Little Essays of Love and Virtue* was published less than ten years ago, one at least of those included had seemed so alarming that the editor who had originally commissioned it could not dare to publish it himself and he found no other editor who would do so. Now I am told that the truth of those *Little Essays* is "obvious." Well! I can only hope that, if not to-day, at all events to-morrow, these new Essays of Love and Virtue will also be found to contain nothing that is not "obvious."

HAVELOCK ELLIS.

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MORE ESSAYS OF LOVE AND VIRTUE

I

THE NEW MOTHER

A FEW years ago it was the fashion to discuss the modern girl and her imperfections. The flapper—as some insisted upon calling her—had, it appeared, many imperfections. The scantiness of her hair and her skirts was more than matched by the scantiness of her morals. We need not deny the reality of many of the imperfections revealed in the course of this discussion. Every generation has its own vices, and many others as well, for every generation includes individuals of opposite temperaments.

That has now probably been realised by most people, and the agitation over the modern girl—who is now indeed no longer “modern”—has died down. It begins to be seen that our views of the present are falsified by our imaginative ideas of the past. In the depth

of our unconscious we ingeniously construct a picture of the past, and then we are horrified, or delighted—according to our individual tastes—by its contrast with the present. In this matter the picture of the past is constructed out of rags and tags of what we call “Victorianism.” There was an amusing satire on this tendency of the human mind in a brilliant Revue not long ago played in London and New York, “This Year of Grace.” Here we were given a glimpse of the Victorian bride and bridegroom of 1890 arriving in all their primness and prudery at seaside lodgings (in, it so chances, the coast resort where I write these lines), and then a glimpse of a similar couple of 1928 in all their easy familiarity. One scarcely needs to be old enough and privileged enough to know how these things happened in 1890 to be able to state with assurance that the real bride of that date was far more like that of 1928 than like her imaginary self. The real differences are in things not essential, in dress and in social conventions.

Those differences, it is true, strike deep. They do not affect the great central situations of life, where the eternal human impulses speak as clearly in one generation as in another. If no woman of the public stage in the nineteenth century, or even in the eighteenth, wrote of her own life so frankly as Isadora Duncan, that

was not because they were less apt to live daringly, or more apt to be hypocritical, but simply because the social conventions were different. Mrs. Inchbald, one of the most interesting Englishwomen of the eighteenth century, wrote frank memoirs, but she was persuaded to destroy them; Byron's were solemnly burnt in manuscript; Trelawney's *Adventures* were at once carefully expurgated by his friend Mrs. Shelley. Always, close at a writer's elbow, was some fierce and potent incarnation of Social Conventions. More than a thousand years ago the poems of Sappho, greatest of women artists and the most poignantly naked, were so rent to pieces by this same fury that only a few fragments have reached us. Even the little conventions regarding what may or may not be done in public are often the expression of profound impulses, and exert a widespread influence which could not be foreseen. That is so, for instance, as regards fashions of dress. The new tendency of feminine dress in our own day seemed at first merely a phase of the see-saw of fashion, as affected by the economies rendered necessary in war-time. But it was found to be influenced by, and in its turn to influence, many elements of our civilised life that are deeper than the changing fashions of the day: sport, hygiene, the immensely

improved health of women, as witnessed by the disappearance of disorders like chlorosis, formerly considered to be inevitably bound up with the feminine sex, a new fellowship of equality with men in work and in play. The new physical aptitudes were found to be associated with new psychic aptitudes. There was a new directness of vision, a new downright-ness of speech, a new spirit of adventure, a resolve to experiment even in fields ostensibly prohibited. These new conventions involved an often open disregard of old conventions. They have proved of far-reaching significance. They do not touch the deep springs of human action which operated in 1890 as they do now. They are scarcely even new in those manifestations which have most exercised the minds of moralists; and "petting," if we could recover the prehistoric evidence, might be traced back to origins in the Garden of Eden. They are none the less far-reaching, and the modern girl of yesterday leads up to the new mother of to-day.

The conventions of the past, however superficial, were, as conventions are apt to be, sometimes rigid and almost unbreakable. That was especially so—as still it is apt to be—when they took the form of sexual taboos. These are far from being distinctive of so-called "Victorianism." They go much further back,

and they exist in countries completely outside Victorian influence, even in France, which is by some ignorantly supposed to be a land free from sexual taboos. I know a French-woman who can still be called young, belonging to a bourgeois family of superior ability. The mother was a typically admirable and devoted housewife. But she never gave her daughter the slightest instruction concerning any natural sex function, and no other sources of knowledge were open. The young girl, being highly intelligent, succeeded in forming for herself some general ideas on the subject, infusing them with a poetic spirit, so that she gave the impression to those around her that she was well informed in these matters, and her mother, realising at last that instruction of this kind is desirable yet still unable to overcome her own inhibitions, asked her daughter to instruct her younger sister. This was done to the apparent satisfaction of the pupil, yet the teacher herself remained so ignorant that when some years later she was about to have a child of her own she believed, even to the very day when the child was born, that birth would take place through the navel. Such ignorance is not uncommon even in France. A woman of such distinguished intellect as Madame Adam believed in girlhood that a kiss on the lips from a man produced a

child, and many French girls, until recently and perhaps to-day, have the same belief, which is also found in the United States. The taboo on sexual speech is ancient and has no national frontiers.

It is because it is ancient, passed on by tradition from generation to generation, that it still subsists to-day, even among parents who regard themselves as emancipated and are fully aware of the duty to train their children in a wholesome knowledge of the vital facts of sex. There is now indeed a widespread conviction among parents who were themselves brought up amid the old conspiracy of silence in the home that this is wrong and that they must inaugurate in their own homes a new and better era of sexual enlightenment. But how are they to do it? And what ought they to tell their children? They do not know. The result is that in a large proportion of cases they do nothing, although still retaining an uneasy conscience; in this indeed unlike their own parents, who had similarly done nothing, but on principle, with the virtuous conviction that they were "preserving the innocence" of their children.

Even if they make the plunge the results may not be satisfactory. I recall an English mother of some years ago—but she was not unlike many more recent mothers—who was

firmly convinced that it was her duty to impart sexual enlightenment to her daughters when they had reached the age of puberty. She was an intellectual woman of advanced ideas for her time, the friend of some of the leaders in women's movements, and fervent in her convictions. But her excursions into the field of sexual enlightenment must be counted a failure. She had never prepared the way for her exposition; she had not acquired the tact, the sympathy, the insight, needed to give, so suddenly, a lesson her daughters were neither expecting nor desiring. They were simply repelled and disgusted; perhaps the impression thus made was never entirely effaced. Quite recently another mother, an American University woman, has recorded her attempts at the sexual enlightenment of her daughter aged five. She had herself been brought up, like many other mothers, in a strict middle-class "Victorian" home, where the word "sex" was unknown, and all her knowledge of it before marriage was acquired from the walls of public-school toilet rooms in New York, and similar tainted sources. She resolved to be "modern and sensible" in the sex education of her own children. She timed the operation at a more reasonably early age than the English mother, but, again, the results were not satisfactory. The child was told an idyllic

tale of the planting of little seeds. There was a barrage of questions: "How?—When?—May I see it done?—Please let me see a baby seed!—Does anyone plant seeds in the kindergarten teacher?" And so on. Moreover the child began to be alarmingly communicative of her new knowledge to friends and visitors. Finally her mother angrily shouted to the child that if she talked any more about the subject she would be whipped. That is one of the possible results of sexual enlightenment. But in both these instances—that of the English mother and that of the American mother—the really significant point to be noted is that from the first the mother was hardly in harmonious rapport with the children on whom she suddenly and injudiciously sprang her "revelations," nor was she adequately prepared for the ways in which the minds of children react to revelations. Such parents are not really to be accounted among the "new mothers." They are the outcome of the old order, according to which all the facts of procreation were outside the openly accepted order of things and never mentioned. Mothers could not cultivate with their children the simple and open footing on which the natural facts come gradually and almost insensibly into sight, without the shock of any morbid or startling novelty.

It has of course to be realised that children may react in various ways that cannot always be foretold, but of necessity they are largely affected by the way in which the "revelation" comes to them. Dr. G. V. Hamilton in his elaborate *Research in Marriage*, among 200 men and women of superior character and ability, found that 37 per cent. of the men and 29 per cent. of the women felt proud and gratified when their curiosity about sex matters was first satisfied; 20 per cent. of the men and 17 per cent. of the women accepted it as a mere matter of fact; there were also as many as 23 per cent. of the men and 31 per cent. of the women who were unnecessarily shocked and repelled by the unfortunate way in which the revelation came.

The subject was investigated also by Dr. Katharine B. Davis among one thousand married women of much above the average in education and of an average age of 38, so that their youth belonged to a period when the new mother had not yet arrived. They were asked to answer the question: Had you been at all adequately prepared by instruction for the sex side of marriage? To this 55.8 per cent. replied that they had. But many of these affirmative answers revealed how inadequate were the notions concerning "adequate preparation." Some thought a knowledge of

contraception all that was needed; others an expectation of pain; a few were quite content with "duty of wife to submit to husband." Most of those who had no "preparation" at all (there were 438 of these) regretted that they went into marriage blindfold and felt that preparation would greatly have helped them in adjusting their lives; as a matter of fact, a much larger proportion of those who considered themselves happy had received instruction than of those who considered themselves unhappy. Some suggestive and significant remarks were, however, made by women who had received information of the usually approved kind and found it inadequate: "Mere knowledge of facts is of very little value"; "I knew nothing about *emotions*"; "Fanciful explanations by means of birds and flowers did not help"; "The factor of passion was left out"; "Books deal with things as they should be, not as they are."¹ These are the opinions of the new mother, but they are based on the bitter experience of an order of things which, we may hope, is now passing away.

The new mother, as I have from time to

¹ Katharine B. Davis, "A Study of the Sex Life of the Normal Married Woman," *Journal of Social Hygiene*, 1922-3; also the same author's *Factors in the Sex Life of Twenty-two Hundred Women*, 1929, p. 67.

time seen her, neither shrinks in alarm from the subject of sex, nor attempts any heroic feat of "sexual enlightenment" with her children. She has no need to. She regards motherhood as a relationship of loving and natural intimacy, and she differs from any ordinary affectionate mother of old mainly through being guided by intelligence, and not by obedience to outworn traditions. She has learnt how to become the friend of her children. The relationship thus becomes more, and not less, simple, for our traditions had introduced an unnatural artificiality with endless complications. It was inevitable that any sudden attempt to be "modern and sensible" in matters of sex within that artificially woven web must often prove disturbing and unsatisfactory. And even if the mother's ideas may claim to be modern all through, if she fails to establish the fundamental basis of friendship with her child she has failed altogether. The new mother is learning to be "modern and sensible," not in sudden spasms, but from the first, in the whole relationship of motherhood.

There is nothing here meant to suggest that motherhood is so alarming and formidable a vocation that a woman should not venture to approach it without much special preparation. Such preparation is certainly desirable. But the new mother is not always, or indeed usually,

the outcome of formal training, or the creature of dogmas, whether her own or of others. That is what is so interesting about her; that is why I have so much faith in her reality. Again and again, I find her in all sorts of places, without any expert preparation for her maternal tasks, often herself springing from an old-fashioned home of unwholesome type. But there seems to be a subtle change in the atmosphere to-day, and as it were instinctively, by natural impulse, the new mother often follows a course which might well have been the outcome of the finest teaching by experience.

The functions of sex are just as natural as the other human functions, the main natural difference being, not that they are more obscene or more sacred, but that they develop at a slower pace. They seem equally natural to the child when they come before him naturally, and it is because they so seldom come before him naturally that his attention is apt to be concentrated on them with a secret and morbid intensity. We can scarcely wonder when we realise that, as Dr. Hamilton has found even among superior persons, only 2 per cent. of the men and the same proportion of the women had received from any source "full and adequate information." There are innumerable children who when they first came in contact with some fact or word of sex have

asked an innocent and perhaps even casual question about it and received an unexpected snub which is not to be forgotten. Never again is any question asked, but beneath the surface the young mind works at unravelling the mystery.

That need not happen. It can scarcely happen when the relationship between mother and child is so simple and natural that the germs of such morbid mysteries find no place to develop in the child's mind. There can be no point at which any mysterious "forbidden" subject is enabled to take shape. The child's natural reactions are naturally met, and when these reactions touch the region of sex and reproduction or of excretion the child is not carefully headed off. That ancient conspiracy between parents, teachers, and social environment to persuade the child that everything to do with sex and with excretion is disgusting, and the simple words describing them so "filthy" that they must be replaced by cumbersome euphemisms, if not abolished, is now at least rendered harmless. The origin of babies thus comes to appear to the child at an early age as simple as the origin of kittens, however more wonderful by being brought home to him as a fact of personal experience. Nor is there room left for those unwholesome curiosities concerning the physical form of the

opposite sex which so often tormented the child of a former age when he approached puberty and grew conscious of sexual differences. The social convention in regard to the body has changed so much during recent years that the path has been rendered easy for the new mother. She puts no barriers in the way of boys and girls seeing each other naked when circumstances render it simple and natural, and her children from early age sometimes see their parents in the bath. Adult nakedness can thus never become that occasion for the shock of fascination or repulsion which it has often been for those children from whom this sight is hidden until they are approaching puberty or later. It is largely an unnatural physical attitude which fosters the "castration complex" of the psycho-analysts, just as it is largely an unnatural emotional attitude which fosters their "mother-fixation"; although it is scarcely possible for either to develop in any intense degree except on a hereditarily neurotic foundation.

I have said that the method of the new mother, as I have seen it in action, is nothing if not simple and natural. But I do not deny that it is often, at the same time, difficult and troublesome. What is simple is not always easy. The mother of old time by whom so many adults of to-day were brought up—and

they will often be prepared to say well brought up—was affectionate but severe. The child's part was to obey and to respect, and it was not encouraged to be intimate, so that it seldom felt any impulse to be intimate, and the mother seemed, on her side, to have found it difficult to be intimate with her children, thus soon becoming as shy with them as they were with her. Dr. Hamilton finds that nearly half of the men and women he has so carefully investigated report that their relations with their parents in early life had been either "undemonstrative" or "very undemonstrative." A system of artificial taboos ruled both parties in the relationship; it was not a simple relationship, but it evaded many difficulties. The child of to-day is less easily moved to obey his parents and still less to treat them with respect. He treats his mother with a familiarity which sometimes seems shocking to those of us whose attitude in childhood was so different, though we realise, as years go on, how much this method achieves that the old method could never attain. The new mother was often herself brought up by the old method, and she suffers sometimes from the freedom she leaves unchecked. But she has realised that it is but a poor preparation for life that lies in a gospel of *Don'ts*. And when that freedom becomes too extravagant she gently explains

that great truth, lying at the foundation of society, which children never understand spontaneously—nor always indeed adults—that, however free we may be, we are not free to do the things which interfere with the equal freedom of other people.

The troubles of the new mother do not end there. She has soon to realise that new mothers are at present a small minority, scattered through the community and unorganised, although there is a remarkable similarity in their methods. They are surrounded by the old mothers bringing up the old sort of children and still feeling that they have on their side the primitive herd-instinct which encourages intolerance of novelty. A new mother had familiarised her little daughter of six with the elementary facts of sex and the origin of babies. But one day the child, having received a different statement from other sources, came questioningly to her mother: "Babies come out of eggs!" Her mother gently explained that there are people who think that children are not old enough to understand the truth about these things and so make up stories to tell them. The little maiden drew herself up and said: "I will never believe anything but what *you* tell me." In such a way a beautiful relation of intimacy and trust is established for the enlightenment and development of the

child, and the tainted influences of the external world are sterilised beforehand.

It should, however, be clear to parents at the outset that they have to reckon with this external world and to guard themselves and their child against it, though this should not be done before an actual clash has occurred, and only then to meet the case in hand. Undue haste in forewarning the child might be as harmful as was the deliberate attempt to thrust upon him sex revelations he had not asked for. It would prematurely destroy the child's spontaneity. The new mother has no wish to protect the child unduly and rob him of initiative. If she holds the child's friendship, she knows no fear and goes joyfully ahead, extending to the external world the same trust as at first does the child, though hers is often based on merely a smiling tolerance. She knows that if any clash occurs between the world and the child, he will come to her and she will then effect the necessary adaptations to the world for the protection of the child. In thus encouraging self-reliance, and not unduly sheltering him beforehand, the new mother finds no great harm resulting from any clash, since she is always the friend to whom the problem is brought for solution, and any germs of secrecy and distrust, such as the child may naturally possess as part of his human

inheritance, she has an opportunity of training in the right direction, tempering them with her own tolerance.

At puberty the new mother will still find further problems to face, not now from without but from within her children. For at puberty the developing impulses from within bring to the boy's or girl's consciousness elements which are strange to itself and seem to demand as their natural right a secrecy which, where the earlier questionings were concerned, was, if it existed, imposed rather than natural. It is no longer easy, it may no longer be natural, for the pubescent boy or girl to confide completely even in the new mother. So that she may sometimes be doubtful at this stage as to what is going on within the rapidly growing organism, and what problems it may be secretly facing. But even here the new mother may contain herself in patience. If she has so far guided her children wisely no great harm is likely to ensue. The developing son or daughter, when secrecy no longer seems important, or when it becomes unendurable, will most naturally turn to its parents if it is assured that their guidance in the past has been sound. And even if they do not, the old guidance will still have left its traces. If the developed child is now training himself, the sound tradition of training he has known will

still remain with him. And if in this evolution a new instinct of reserve appears—as it most probably will appear—in the adolescent mind, the new mother will recognise that that is not really a turning away from herself, but a necessary accident of the development of individuality, and by that recognition she will the more deeply win the love and gratitude, as well as the confidence, of her child. We have always to remember that an education which is not a discipline, and a self-discipline, can scarcely be considered a preparation for life.

The question of discipline, which comes in here, cannot be passed over, for it is the essence of the whole matter. At first sight it might seem that the attitude of the new mother towards her child deprives it of discipline. She allows it the utmost amount of freedom compatible with other claims. She treats it as an equal rather than as an inferior, apparently extending to children the same kind of equality which has only of recent years been accorded to women themselves. When that means indulgence, with an artificial protection against the natural results of indulgence, it may well be unfavourable to any sort of discipline for life. “The Garden of Eden,” it has been said, “is a poor preparation for toiling in the sweat of one’s brow.” But it is necessary to point out that the old system,

now decaying, was in its extreme form still more ill-adapted as a disciplinary preparation for life. A famous author of the nineteenth century, Ruskin, wrote an autobiography, called *Præterita*, which deserves to live when his books on art are forgotten; in this he tells how he was brought up in his very "Victorian" middle-class home by loving parents who shielded him from every harm and allowed him absolutely no freedom of action. Looking back on this training in old age he realised how sadly it unfitted him for the discipline of life and became the direct cause of misfortune when he was cut loose from his mother's apron-strings. If the new mother leaves a large scope for freedom to her child, and encourages him to act for himself instead of acting for him, he may have to suffer for his actions, but he is learning responsibility and is being trained in the home for the discipline of the world.

It is not to be assumed that the mother of old days was entirely wrong and the new mother of to-day is entirely right. The task is difficult for any kind of mother, and the one may fail as well as the other. Motherhood is an art, a rarer art than is commonly supposed, and while every woman has sometimes wanted to be a mother she may well think twice before she decides that she is fitted to become one,

for she may be unfitted spiritually even if she is physically fitted. The old-time mother was capable of producing splendid children; where the material was good her methods were brilliantly successful; but her failures were many, and when the child was of poor material it remained undeveloped or deviated in morbid directions, becoming the victim of "mother-fixation" or the "Œdipus-complex," a suitable patient for the psycho-analysts who flourish on the failures of old-world training.

Whether for good or for evil, however, we cannot carry over the methods of the past into the present. Every age must deal with its own problems in its own way. The new generation demands the new mother. How finely successful she can prove—especially when herself inspired by a happy love-life—some of us are already able to testify.

II

THE RENOVATION OF THE FAMILY

THE decay of the family has long been a favourite theme of social alarmists. Looking back on the conventions which in their own early days were held to be sacred, whether or not they were actually observed, elderly people exclaim on the "bankruptcy" of those marriage conventions to-day and the consequent dissolution of home life.

In a sense they are completely justified. The conventions they were brought up in are really changing; marriage is not the same thing as it was in their early days; the new home is certainly different from the old. It is true. It has, indeed, been more or less true ever since social life began. Yet, under all modifications, there has always been some form of marriage, and the home in some shape has still persisted.

It is, therefore, only the shallow and the ignorant who can mistake the changes that take place in their own little day and environment for the obliteration of great landmarks—

that is when we have put aside those well-meaning people who like to play with the idea of the "bankruptcy of marriage" in order to startle their fellows into a more lively concern with social problems. As a matter of fact, it is necessary to take a wide view of human history, such as may be gained from Westermarck's *History of Human Marriage* or Briffault's *The Mothers*—I purposely choose two works widely opposed in their temper and conclusions—in order to realise that the family and the home, even under the most divergent social conditions that we can well conceive to be possible for Man, have still persisted.

We may go further still. It is not only a truth for the human species that marriage is omnipresent; it is even a general rule among the higher mammals. This is not only so, as far as our imperfect knowledge extends, among the closely related anthropoid apes; it is so among the superior quadrupeds; the elephants lead a conventional life of the type familiar among ourselves, of which, with its related education of the young, adventurous camera-hunters are now revealing the details, while among birds, who are phylogenetically so remote from ourselves, the resemblances are often still closer. It is vain for even the most conservative of human beings to lament the failure of marriage; it is futile for even the most

light-hearted of radicals to hope to get beyond it. The family is at the root of our bisexual constitution.

"The abolition of marriage in the form now practised," wrote Godwin, "will be attended with no evils. It really happens in this, as in other cases, that the positive laws which are made to restrain our vices irritate and multiply them." It is more than a century since those wise words were spoken. But the great pioneer who uttered them exerted no influence on legislation, and their truth has now had time to be illustrated by thousands of prohibition laws against all sorts of real or imaginary vices.

There are at least three tendencies which we may term biological, common to Man and the animals immediately below Man, which constitute for the family foundations we cannot conceive as being overthrown: (1) the impulse of sexual attraction which leads to mating; (2) the tendency to close comradeship, even apart from the sex of the comrade, within the herd or community; ¹ (3) the instinctive impulse of mates to care for their offspring.

¹ Dr. M. A. Bigelow ("Biological Foundations of the Family," *Journal of Social Hygiene*, March, 1930) calls this tendency to pairing of comrades, who may or may not be of the same sex, "comrade-instinct." He remarks:—"I have made some unpublished observations on herds of common domesticated animals in which I have found a surprising number of pairs of comrades associating for

Yet it is true that new social factors, developed during the life-time even of those of us still of middle age, are causing a greater modification in the conventions of marriage and the home than we can easily find traces of in our past history.

The ever-increasing approach to social and industrial equality of the sexes, the steady rise and extension of the divorce movement, the changed conceptions of the morality of sexual relationships, the spread of contraception—all these influences are real, probably permanent, and they have never been found at work before in combination, seldom even separately. Not one of them, however, when examined with care, bears within it any necessary seeds of destruction. On the contrary, they are adapted to purify and fortify, rather than to weaken, the family as we know it, to enable it to work more vigorously and effectively rather than to impair its functions as what has been termed “the unit of civilisation.” It is true that the younger women of to-day are often dissatisfied with marriage, but that attitude is a belated recognition that they are entitled to satisfaction, and we may accept

months and years while they live freely in what appeared to be herds.” Apart from herds, we may frequently observe a close comradeship between two animals often of the same sex and even of different species.

it as wholesome. The greater economic independence of women assists them in the task of sexual selection, and is found to be conducive to marriage, though it is also favourable to divorce when marriage is disrupted.¹

The greater facility of divorce aids the formation of the most satisfactory unions. A greater freedom between the sexes before marriage, even if it has sometimes led to licence, is not only itself beneficial but the proper method of preparing for a more intimate permanent union. And the exercise of contraceptive control is the indispensable method of selecting the best possibilities of offspring and excluding from the world those who ought never to be born. As a matter of fact, marriage, so far from dying out, tends in various countries of the West to increase in frequency. Even the Great War, which was expected to make marriage more difficult for women, had

¹ In Germany, for instance, this is clearly recognised. The way to marriage, it is there said, is usually over an occupation; 80 per cent. of women up to the age of 30 exercise an occupation. While this is the way to marriage, it is also found to be the way to divorce, in the sense that women who possess the ability to earn their own living divorce more easily than those without such ability. This, however, is a definite social advantage; it means that when her domestic happiness is destroyed a woman is not compelled to endure hopelessly a life of wretchedness (Andreas König, *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*, Nov., 1927).

no such effect; thus in England, in 1921, out of every 1000 women over fifteen years of age 520 were married, though ten years earlier (1911) only 506 were married. While as regards the production of children through the agency of the family, the danger that faces Western civilisation to-day is not of a deficient production but of an enormous excess. So that, whatever changes of form it may undergo, we clearly have to reckon with the persistence of the family, whether that is a prospect which causes our hearts to sink or whether it fills us with satisfaction.

We might reach the same conclusion even without any close examination of the sociological data of to-day. It is enough to survey the fundamental biological facts on which all human or other societies must rest, or to glance at the history of marriage and the family from the earliest period at which our knowledge begins.

Not that that may be easy. We find many people doing it, with an air of the greatest self-confidence, and reaching exactly opposite conclusions, or, at all events, conclusions that seem to themselves to be opposite. On the one hand are those who start from promiscuity and regard the clan and the mother (with perhaps her brother thrown in) as the most solid facts of the primitive situation. On the other

hand are those who, in extreme reaction from that view, put the biological fact in the foreground and are inclined to discount any modification of it by cultural influences, so that the human family continues from the point reached by the animal family, in father, mother, and offspring.

To-day it is perhaps possible to see that both these views have elements of truth, but that either of them is wrongly held if it is believed to exclude elements of the opposite view. That is the standpoint which I have myself for many years tried to indicate as probably the most correct, though I could not feel that I had the right to do so emphatically. Now I am more prepared to do so in light of the conclusions which have been reached by one who is perhaps, to-day, second to none as a profound investigator of these problems and an intimate student of the sex life of savages as it at present is carried on. Dr. Malinowski sees the elements of soundness and truth in each of the two hitherto rival doctrines which have flourished side by side during the past century, and, except when they are stated in an extreme form, he denies that they are contradictory. They both present aspects of the big procreative institution of mankind; biological or animal marriage is the core, but it is capable of more or less transformation into culturally social-

ised forms.¹ What mainly concerns us here to observe is that, whatever view of the family we adopt, we are still constrained to admit that, under all changes of form, it has always persisted, so that its existence may even be said to be woven into the texture of the species.

It has too often been forgotten that the family possesses this many-sided flexibility and has in different ages and lands shown endless variations of shape in adjustment to varying social conditions. Those who overlooked this essential fact have frequently cried out in rebellion against the whole conception of the family. Because they themselves chanced to come out of an unhappy family life—though the excellent qualities they have notwithstanding often displayed go far to show that even an unhappy family life may have happy results—they impetuously demand the complete abolition of the family. An anonymous German correspondent, who opposes my acceptance of the family as a suitable home for the young, and refers to the certainly deplorable fact (to be matched also in other countries)

¹ In the important essay here referred to on "Parent-hood the Basis of Social Structure" (published in *The New Generation*, New York and London, 1930) Professor Malinowski sets forth what he describes as "the first full statement of my theory of Kinship, the result of over twenty years' work on a subject to which I have devoted most of my attention."

that in all Germany and Austria during the last sixteen years only four Schools for Mothers have been founded or planned, has lately sent me a long and imposing series of quotations from eminent writers, ancient and modern, denouncing the family. I quote a few at random: "I reject family education altogether; public education is better" (Fichte); "Give me other mothers and I will give you another world" (St. Augustine); "Of ten blows which a child receives nine are from its mother" (T. Hippel); "Maternal love easily becomes pernicious, an animal affection, overlooking, forgiving, and sparing all the child's faults, immensely injuring the child itself, and imparting at the outset the germ of future illusions in life" (Forel); "Many women wish to abolish war; but these very same women, in the sphere of education, cannot give up those methods of force which call out rough passions and unworthy ideas of right, and are the counterpart of war" (Ellen Key); "Babies need better education than the individual mother gives them" (Mrs. Perkins Gilman); "Poor child! Your father is tied to his office, your mother is vexed to-day, to-morrow she has a visitor, the day after, her moods" (Pestalozzi); "The family, the Hell of the child, the home of all social vices!" (Strindberg); "If the punishment of the criminal is justified we

must first ask : How did he become a criminal ? What was his mother like ? " (Brockhaus's *Hours with Bismarck*).

Such outbursts have their significance. They show us that the family, however fundamental, will not fit everyone and that not all are worthy of the privileges it offers. They clearly indicate that those who are not fitted, by nature or by training, for marriage and parenthood, would be well advised to follow some other career. They are a warning that every institution must perpetually grow and change, if it is not to prove pernicious. Above all, they impress on us how deeply founded the family must be, when it can evoke such hearty condemnation, even from the most eminent personages, without in the slightest degree endangering its stability.

There is one important change which must be recognised at the outset. Hitherto the question of the family has been mainly, if not even altogether, the question of marriage. To a large extent it must continue to be so. But it is a distinguishing characteristic of our Western civilisation, in all the countries it has touched, that this is no longer necessarily the case. In the history of mankind in general marriage has meant a family, and when no children appeared the marriage has often been dissolved, sometimes almost automatically.

With us, not only is the absence of children considered no adequate ground for the dissolution of the marriage, but the marriage may at the outset be planned to avoid procreation, whether temporarily or permanently. That is becoming the central characteristic of our marriage system, and it is of immense significance in relation to the family. Not that it can affect the existence of the family, since that rests on a biological foundation which cannot be destroyed. But it furnishes an altogether new control over the forms the family may assume, and it renders the family adjustable, in a way that has never before been possible, to the developing direction of our general social organisation.

This is notably conspicuous in relation to the changing economic position of women. In the phase of civilisation out of which we are growing, a phase which persisted unimpaired until the Industrial Revolution at the end of the eighteenth century, the economic position of woman was as wife and mother at the head of the home. That was no small position to occupy, and it required most diverse gifts, since the home was a centre of industrial activity for a large part of its own needs. But woman to-day occupies a totally different position. She has lost her industrial activities in the home, but has regained them in the

wider world, and added to them the freedom to adopt, if she so chooses, most of the activities formerly reserved to men.¹ At the same time she tends more and more to accept, at all events as an ideal, the principle of complete economic independence, even in the exercise of her functions as wife and mother, since she no longer considers that as wife and mother she becomes the servant of a man and entitled to wages as such, but holds that she is gratifying her own desires. That principle, however, though it may be reasonable, leads to a grave conflict if pushed to its logical extreme in practice. If a woman, when she becomes a wife, is to follow the example of the woman of the old world and spend her time and strength in bearing perhaps a dozen children, of whom not half may survive, she cannot possibly be economically dependent on her

¹ The part played by women in industry is steadily increasing, and the restrictions often imposed for their protection (in my opinion unquestionably beneficial, as may be seen in my book *Man and Woman*) have had no effect in limiting that increase. The English evidence is clear on this point (*Home Office White Paper*, Cmd. 3508, 1930). In textile industries women have always played a large part; it is now about 64 per cent. of the whole; in non-textile industries women's part has risen in recent years from 15 to 27 per cent. There is a tendency for women to be engaged in the more unskilful processes, as they mostly look upon factory work as a temporary career to fill up the interval between school and marriage.

own exertions. She must remain unmarried or renounce her independence in becoming wife and mother. The difficulty is always real, but it has now become, in some measure at all events, adjustable. It has become clear, that is to say, that the number of children and the times when they are to be born may be arranged according to the circumstances in which the two parents are situated, and it is also seen to be reasonable that, since the mother must necessarily devote a larger share of time and care to the child, the father may be called upon to take a larger financial share, without the economic equality of the two parents being thereby injured.

The desirability of controlling the appearance of children in the family brings us to the question of contraception. That is a question around which in the immediate past much controversy raged. It cannot even yet be said that it has ceased to rage. And since in some countries of the West there are still legal disabilities to be remedied in order to bring the law into harmony with custom and opinion, propaganda is artificially stimulated. There is, however, no longer the shadow of doubt that both the principle and the practice of birth control are now firmly established in all civilised lands, and gradually becoming accepted by every class of the community, so that before

long the only matter of dispute will be concerning the best method by which it can be carried out. It is estimated that at the present rate birth control will become practically universal in our civilisation within from twenty-five to fifty years, and it may be that with better conditions of sexual initiation, increased medical study of the difficult problems involved, and the cultivation of self-control, mechanical methods of contraception will become less necessary.¹ There are three main lines along which this development has proceeded. In the first place, there has been the insistence of women that they will no longer be mere breeding machines, destroying alike themselves and their excessive progeny. In the second place, the economic conditions of life for all social classes in the modern world tend to render caution and foresight necessary in family life, and there are now but few parents who can afford to disregard so completely these conditions, and the responsibilities of bringing up children in the world of to-day, as to have an unlimited family. In the third place, scientific demographers and statisticians are now, with ever greater decision, pointing out that

¹ In Russia, where the birth-rate rises and the infantile death-rate is falling, the need of contraception is recognised, but not yet fully established. Abortion is legalised and conducted with due precaution, but on a large scale this is a poor substitute for contraception.

the enormous increase in the earth's population, which up to about a century ago was practically stationary, cannot be much longer continued, since even another century may suffice to reach the limit of possible expansion. Each of these lines of argument is legitimate. When combined, they are of irresistible force.¹

¹ It is sometimes supposed that the Catholic Church is opposed to contraception and that Catholics refuse to practise it. Both these suppositions involve some misapprehension. It is certain that Catholics practise contraception. France, a largely Catholic country, has been the leader in the movement, and in Germany the Catholic birth-rate is falling; in the United States it is found at Mrs. Margaret Sanger's clinic in New York that the proportion of Catholic women who apply for advice is about 32 per cent., that is to say, nearly as large as the proportion of Protestant women, which is 33 per cent. In some countries, it is true, statistics show a higher birth-rate among the Catholics than among the Protestants, but in those countries the Catholics usually belong to a lower and less educated social class which would inevitably show a higher birth-rate whatever religion they professed. Dignitaries of the Catholic Church have sometimes distinguished themselves by denunciation of contraceptive measures. But those of them who have to speak with a sense of responsibility are cautious in their statements. Thus the most conspicuous English ecclesiastic of the Catholic Church, Cardinal Bourne, Archbishop of Westminster, has lately ascribed the condemnation of birth control as "unnatural sin" to "Christian tradition" (*The Times*, Oct. 6, 1930). That view, it may be added, is also accepted by the chief ecclesiastic of the Church of England, Dr. Lang, Archbishop of Canterbury, who regards the opposition to birth control as due to "the

Another modern condition which has an important bearing on the family in our Western civilisation is constituted by the increase of divorce and the ever greater legal facilities for securing it. Speaking generally (there are always exceptions) it may be said that in savage societies, as probably in the primitive world, matings, provided they are formed with members of the group with which mating is permitted, are easily formed and rather easily ended. In more advanced barbarous societies, in which property became a chief factor in society, masculine influence is more predominant than before over feminine influence, the marriage bond grows more rigid and is specially rigid in favour of the husband. In the latest civilised social states, this rigidity is relaxed, divorce becomes easier and more frequent, and the rights of the sexes tend to be equalised. We may see that

influence of a long Church tradition," but Dr. Lang is careful to add that that tradition receives "no clear direction or even guidance" from the New Testament, and that there is no reason to regard birth control as "sinful" (*The Times*, Nov. 14, 1930). No advocate of birth control need complain of this ecclesiastical attitude. And so far as the Catholic Church is concerned, it is hardly possible for a Church which venerates chastity and maintains the celibacy of the clergy to be fundamentally opposed to contraception, since chastity and celibacy are themselves methods of contraception. The only dispute possible is with regard to methods, and that is a comparatively trivial matter. There would appear to be no dogma of the Church incompatible with contraception.

process in classic Rome. Beginning, it may well be, in a social state of more or less matriarchal constitution, when the Roman social order became patriarchal marriage in some of its forms was almost indissoluble, and divorce, so far as it existed, was usually a privilege confined to the husband, except in a "free" marriage, where the wife did not fall under the *manus* of her husband. But in the later developments the privileges of free marriage were extended to *manus* marriages, and Roman law became equally liberal to husbands and wives in the matter of divorce. That represents approximately the stage that we have to-day reached in Western civilisation.

The frequency of divorce has much increased since the Great War, but it was steadily though more slowly increasing long before, though in France the frequency of divorce increased up to 1921 and since then has somewhat decreased. The post-war so-called "epidemic of marriage" was naturally followed by an "epidemic of divorce," which is now subsiding, although we may still expect the rate to rise slowly as the impediments are removed. In Japan, it may be remarked, which comes next to the United States in frequency of divorce, there was no post-war rise. The United States holds the record; in 1923 there were 360 divorces to 100,000 of married population (or

149 to 100,000 of the whole population). And in some States this means one or more divorces to every five marriages, though according to the later (1928) American results of Groves & Ogburn there is one divorce to every seven marriages, actors and musicians constituting the most divorcing professional class. In Europe, Austria and Switzerland stand high, and England (1922) very low with only 6.8 divorces to 100,000 of population. In Russia divorce may be obtained at the wish of either party (and at the wish of both it may be arranged before the Registrar, without recourse to the Courts), yet divorce is far less frequent than in the United States, and the younger generation cultivate the ideals of self-discipline and self-control on which Lenin insisted.¹ Such differences represent differences of social opinion and of religion, as well as discrepant facilities for obtaining divorce. The general advance of divorce corresponds to the normal condition of advanced civilisation and represents a necessary and healthy adjustment to the complex social conditions. Divorce by mutual consent (and even on the demand of either party) is the goal towards which we are

¹ Anne L. Strong, *Marriage and Morals in Soviet Russia*, 1927. The position in Russia is discussed by M. Hindus, *Humanity Uprooted*, a highly instructive study by a Russian familiar with the Western world, and yet critically sympathetic with Soviet life. See also the same author's later book, *Red Bread* (1931).

moving, and it has already been reached in some countries. It is reasonable that a contract formed by mutual consent should be dissolvable by mutual consent, and so far from divorce being destructive to the family, we may agree with Westermarck that it is a necessary means of preserving the dignity of marriage by ending such marriages as have ceased to be worthy of the name.

The tendency to diminish the rigidity of marriage ties is being carried further, it may be added, than an increased legal facility for divorce can carry it. There is undoubtedly a tendency in our Western civilisation to recognise the existence of sexual relationships outside marriage altogether, always provided that such relationships are not for the procreation of children. It may be said that such extra-marital manifestations of the sexual life are no novelty. Prostitution has flourished in secret, and even been defended in public, while what is called "seduction" has everywhere been taking place. But the novelty lies in the fact that both prostitution and seduction are diminishing. Prostitution is becoming less attractive and seduction less possible. The palmy days of prostitution (which seems to have begun as a religious rite) were before syphilis entered civilisation, and its prestige has been gradually falling ever since. Seduction in the legitimate

sense of the word (as " seduced " is often merely the expression used by women of low social class to describe their first act of sexual intercourse) is only possible when the woman is unduly ignorant of the nature of sexual relations, and that state of affairs is coming to an end. But when prostitution and seduction are, so far as may be possible, eliminated, the objections to the formation of sexual relationships—in the absence of higher ethical or religious considerations and provided offspring are not contemplated—largely fall away. There can be no doubt that this new condition is becoming appreciated by the younger generation. Young people of both sexes are now in a position to view a larger proportion of the facts involved than were open to the generations preceding them, and they are acquiring the courage to act in accordance with the facts. That means that many mistakes are being made, for the deepest facts of the sex life can only be learnt by experience, and experience can only come slowly. But it is perhaps better to make the mistakes of facing life than to make the mistakes of running away from life. For those mistakes may enrich and enlighten, while these are apt to prove futile. The paths of the sex life are beset by difficulties; but so is the whole of life. If we are to live in any true sense at all we are compelled to live dangerously.

A large proportion of the men and women of to-day form sexual relationships outside marriage—whether or not they ultimately lead to marriage—which they conceal, or seek to conceal, from the world. This has always been so; ¹ what is new is the attitude taken towards such relationships, leading to the conception of “companionate marriage,” that is, an openly acknowledged and recognisable relationship less binding than ordinary marriage, though liable to become ordinary marriage should children be born. This conception has not been put forward as a method of relaxing morals, but rather of supporting them, since the open recognition of a kind of relationship which already exists secretly on a large scale cannot but be a steady-
ing and ennobling influence.²

The preceding considerations represent conditions which are modifying marriage in our Western civilisation. But they are far from overthrowing marriage or threatening the life of the family. On the contrary, they help to

¹ Sexual intercourse outside marriage, as Malinowski truly remarks, is no “anomaly,” nor does it contravene marriage. In pre-nuptial licence we even have, he adds, “an institutionalised method of arranging marriage by trial and error.”

² M. Knight, “The Companionate and the Family,” *Journal of Social Hygiene*, May, 1924. Judge Ben Lindsey, with his wide experience of social conditions, has vigorously advocated this conception in his *Companionate Marriage*, 1927.

strengthen them. It is the rigid institution that is broken; the institution that cannot change is dying. By its flexibility and its adaptation to changing conditions, the family reveals its stability and its power of growth.

But marriage, it may once more be repeated, rests fundamentally on biological instincts and the facts of constitutional organisation; it is not strictly an institution. The flexibility and the adaptation are limited, and if they sometimes seem extreme that is simply because we happen to be dealing with individual cases of constitutional variation, such as we can statistically estimate. Even in Soviet Russia, where the legal flexibility of sexual unions has been carried to an extent unusual in the European world, the fundamental facts of human nature remain the same, as well as the ordinary human valuations of those facts.

This seems to come out clearly in a recent study of "the psychology of the monandric and the polyandric woman in modern culture," that is to say in Moscow, by Professor Blonsky.¹ He finds that there are two types of women: the monandric woman who is only drawn into serious relationship with one man, and the polyandric woman who tends to form numerous relationships with men, either successively or

¹ Pawel Petrovitch Blonsky, *Zeitschrift für Sexualwissenschaft*, May, 1930.

simultaneously. There is, as we should expect, between these two types an intermediate group. The women in question were teachers, between the ages of 30 and 40, and they were investigated with the help of women, friends or pupils of Blonsky, themselves teachers, who had been intimately acquainted with them for some years. It was found that the monandric women were nearly twice as numerous as the polyandric women, and each type presented characters concerning which the observers (with whom Blonsky also is in complete agreement) concur to a remarkable extent. They all asserted that egoistic individualism was the most prominent characteristic of the polyandric women; they tend to act on their own, making no attempt to win the support of their fellows, with whom they are often in conflict; they have no genuine talent for organisation, but at the same time wish to assert themselves, overestimating their own abilities (which do not carry them beyond the average in their profession, though they may be highly accomplished), and are apt to show morbid susceptibility when they fail to secure recognition. They tend indeed to be restlessly nervous, and frequently pass on this nervousity to their offspring. At the same time they are often attractive, and they pay much attention to their appearance.

The monandric woman shows totally different traits. She is sincere, faithful, not externally formal, but devoted to her professional duties. (And Blonsky remarks incidentally that it is a mistake to suppose that the monandric woman is unfitted for public life, or that for such life the polyandric woman is better suited.) She possesses energetic organising capacity, and is usually able to deal effectively both with her private and her public life, aided in this by the stability and balance of her character. She is guided less by vanity than by honour, and the sense of her own innerworth. Blonsky concludes that the moral characteristics of the monandric woman are mostly positive, while those of the polyandric woman are mostly negative. As we are, he affirms, so we love: our way of love is not a thing in itself, but related in the most intimate manner to the whole of our character.

This analysis is instructive. It is interesting, that is, to find, even under the revolutionised social conditions of Soviet Russia, not only that the woman of what some would consider old-fashioned type is still predominant, but that she is regarded with as much admiration as we might expect to find in a conservative country like France. It would almost seem indeed that the polyandric woman whom, in the opinion of some Western persons, Soviet conditions favour,

is there unduly depreciated.¹ There is really more to be said for her than Blonsky is inclined to admit. That may in part be due to the fact that the investigators were women. Blonsky points out, however, that the depreciation of the polyandric women is shared by men, even the men who form temporary relationships with them, for men are inclined to look on such women as convenient means of satisfying sexual needs, simply as substitutes for prostitution, and feel for them no high regard. That, Blonsky considers, is an influence making for the degradation of polyandric women, whose life-courses are not usually happy. It is unnecessary to add that the monandric woman, who is peculiarly adapted for motherhood and family life, will not easily be deprived of that career.

So we still have, notwithstanding all the modifications that we can regard as within the limits of probability, the family persisting,

¹ It is generally admitted on all sides that the younger generation in Russia, under Soviet conditions, has been passing through a transitional phase in sex matters which has admitted extravagances, even of opposing nature: some enthusiasts, revolting against the easy sex morality of the old Tsarist regime, have sought to subordinate sex and uphold Puritanic ideals; others, regarding the old morality as bourgeois, consider libertinage a duty and question the sound political opinions of girls who resist them. Such extravagances mark every time of transition.

essentially, in its primitive form: father, mother, offspring. The impulses that make these three units a trinity are all primordial: the desire of the parents for each other, the desire of each for the child, and the dependence of the child on its parents, rightly considered, on both its parents, for even where there is no material need of a father there is yet a spiritual need.

It is interesting to observe that this "trinity" is so fundamental in human societies that it is even found in communities of a low degree of culture where ethnographers have independently given it this identical name, finding that by such peoples themselves the family is regarded as strictly a "trinity," even when consisting of more than three persons. Radcliffe Brown, who, following Lyons, sets forth this conception, states that it "is found in a great many primitive societies, probably in all." In some such societies the family does not really exist until the birth of the first child, the relationship between husband and wife not being directly created by marriage but indirectly through the birth of the child. The conception of a trinity is sometimes preserved by regarding the children of a family as multiples of a single personality, and in a polygynous household by regarding the wives as multiples of one personality. Sometimes the family

trinity is solidified by the imposition of a special taboo in which all three members share.¹

It is true that, in the supposed interests of the child, the idea has been put forward (first of all by Plato in the famous fifth book of his *Republic*) that the infant should be removed from its natural parents and placed in the hands of nurses skilfully trained in all the science and art of modern hygiene in general and puericulture in particular. Certainly it is possible to find innumerable parents who are completely and lamentably ignorant of this science and this art. This may be especially so in those lands of Communistic tendency, like Soviet Russia, where the Platonic ideal is most commended. But to be content to leave the mothers in ignorance and to train up in the knowledge of the duties of maternity a body of women who are not intended to be mothers, except for other women's children, seems a perverted attempt to escape the difficulty. It is not calculated to benefit, and still less to render happy, the real mothers, the artificial mothers, or the children. An institution on so unreal a foundation cannot possibly compete with one on a sound biological basis which is just as susceptible to any necessary cultivation and development as the other.

¹ A. Radcliffe Brown, "Father, Mother, and Child," *Man*, Sept., 1926.

As Malinowski well says, "social and cultural influences always endorse and emphasise the original individuality of the biological fact." It is scarcely surprising that we find little indication that this artificial method is likely to be followed on any large scale, if at all. It seems only in place when we are concerned with motherless waifs and strays. The legitimate method of approaching the problem—as is constantly becoming more widely recognised—lies in training the real mothers, and, so far as possible, before they have begun to be mothers. In our world motherhood has ceased to be the inevitable fate of every woman who enters marriage and many who remain outside it. It may be said to have become a vocation. It is true that nearly every woman, at some period in her life, desires to become a mother, and that most men desire to become fathers, sometimes indeed without clearly realising that fatherhood implies motherhood and that it is a vastly more difficult task to be a mother than to be a father. But this is a vocation which not all who feel called to it ought to follow. Only those who are fitted by nature, and also by training, should attempt to follow it. In various countries now, and on an ever-larger scale, efforts are being made to provide this training. The establishment of Schools for Mothers, in some countries facilitated by law, constituted a notable step

along this path.¹ In England "Nursery Schools" for the pre-school child are slowly increasing, and with most of them are formed "Clubs for Mothers" which are readily attended, and furnish advice and instruction to mothers in the care of children. By such measures it is found that the sense of parental responsibility is not diminished but increased.²

So far we have been viewing the family as a domestic fact. As such it is the central core of all human and even animal life. In the most primitive conditions, before any wide social bonds were formed, or any compact community existed, we must postulate the family, for we cannot conceive how any creature with the prolonged helpless infancy of human beings could otherwise survive in this dangerous world. But with the formation of communities, with the multiplication of social ties, the family ceases to be a merely domestic fact, and it is possible, and even probable, that the family became more complex in its relationships even at a fairly early period of human prehistory. It

¹ Dr. Miele of Ghent has sometimes been credited with initiating this step, which, however, naturally grew out of the insistence on puericulture by Budin and Pinard in France. An early pioneer in the establishment of "Schools for Mothers" seems to have been Dr. E. S. Goodhue, of California and Hawaii, who is still active in this field.

² *Annual Report of the Chief Medical Officer of the Board of Education for 1928*, London, 1929.

is certainly complex to-day among those peoples whom we are pleased to regard as "primitive."¹

With the development of civilisation the form assumed by the family becomes again more simple and independent in appearance, but the family remains in an intimate relationship with the community to which it is constantly furnishing new members. Beyond its elementary domestic functions, the family thus necessarily enters into reciprocal functions of responsibility with the community. The community undertakes duties—which may vary to a wide extent—towards the family, and the family, in return, is called upon to contribute, to the best of its abilities, to the community. There are wide variations in the conception of the duties on either side, and this leads to-day to a frequent conflict in opinion and practice. On the one hand, there is the tendency to diminish the duties of the family and of the State towards each other to a minimum; on the other hand, the tendency to increase them to a

¹ See, for instance, the fascinating books, based on intimate knowledge, of Professor Malinowski concerning the social and sexual life of the Trobriand Islanders of New Guinea. See especially his study of "Parenthood the Basis of Social Structure" (*The New Generation*, 1930), in which the two aspects of the human procreative institution, the marriage aspect and the social aspect, are admirably balanced.

maximum. The former tendency may be called Individualism, the latter Socialism. It is common for those who associate themselves with one of these tendencies to sneer at the other or denounce it as dangerous. From the social point of view, however, as is fairly obvious to an impartial observer, both tendencies are necessary. A society without socialist impulses could not cohere; a society without individualist impulses could not survive. But with regard to the limits to be set to each group of impulses opinions are bound to vary. We may believe that with regard to many elementary requirements, of which all have an equal and common need—such as provision of open spaces in cities, a pure water supply, and a sanitary system—the collective activity of the community is rightly invoked; and that in regard to religion, to opinion in general, and to the higher branches of education a large scope must be left to the individual. But there are many spheres in which arguments clash. In this special question of the family, for instance, we may ask, how far children are reared for their parents or for themselves, and how far for the community. And if, as we are bound to hold, children have a value as future members of the community, should the community, in addition to other services, contribute financially to the upbringing of the children?

In this way we have the question of mothers' pensions.

It appears that the idea of " Family Endowment " was first put forward by Thomas Paine, that great fertilising genius whose suggestions on so many subjects, Utopian when he formed them, are now becoming embodied in our Western civilisation; and he was followed by Condorcet, who was also the pioneer in publicly advocating the use of contraceptive measures, for there is no opposition between birth control and family endowment. On the contrary, it may be said that the prevention of unwanted children and the proper care of wanted children (whether or not that should be aided by the State) are closely related measures.

There is still dispute as to whether children should be subsidised by the State, and although the principle is becoming widely transformed into practice, the implications of mothers' pensions (for it is generally held that the payment should go direct to the mother) are not yet always fully understood or realised. In France such assistance is given partially, especially to the families of State employees, in various ways, from anxiety to increase the growth of population on militaristic and other grounds, and with no regard to the quality of the children who may thus be produced; nearly half of the wage-earners in France, it is

said, now benefit in some way or other by these measures. Both in France and Belgium it seems to be found (*The Times*, March 26, 1930) that a system of family allowances slightly increases the number of children and diminishes infantile mortality. In Germany, modifications of the same methods, on a more socialistic basis, have been put into action, but do not seem to flourish. In Russia, which aims at becoming a Paradise for children, mothers receive State aid and special funds. In Australia the problem of family endowment has been approached in a logical and systematic manner, and a Government Commission was set up to investigate its feasibility. Every political party is said to favour it, but the cost of a thorough-going scheme is so vast that no Australian State has yet ventured to set it up, except (1927), on a comprehensive but modest basis, New South Wales. New Zealand had previously adopted the plan on a small scale.

There are, however, many convinced opponents to any scheme of this kind. They hold, on the one hand, that there is not the slightest need to assist maternity since the population is nearly everywhere increasing already at too rapid a rate, and, even if there appeared to be such need, maternity is not a suitable function for State endowment, since it is not essential to a woman's life to become a mother, and there are ample recompenses in maternity itself.

Even among those who are not opposed to a State subsidy there is severe criticism of the motives and methods of the schemes usually adopted or proposed. Nationalistic and militaristic motives are here out of place, nor can they often appeal to the mothers it is proposed to assist. On the other hand, the real interests of the community demand a discriminate selection of population, and for the State to offer to assist the procreation not merely of the highest and best—who scarcely need such assistance—but of the lowest and worst is to stultify itself and to work for its own decadence. A wiser and more reasoned scheme than has yet been devised is needed, if the present tendency to maternal endowment is to prove of substantial benefit to the community.¹

In England, even the Labour Party, notwith-

¹ The cause of Family Endowment is ably and persuasively stated, and the present position of such schemes in various countries set forth in detail, by Miss Eleanor Rathbone in her *Disinherited Family and Ethics and Economics* (1927). She fails to insist adequately on the need of birth control and eugenical safeguards, but argues that to help the mother is to aid "orderly and self-respecting living which is the best cure for indiscriminate and dysgenic breeding." She considers that family aid in France has done nothing to increase the birth-rate, though introduced for that purpose, and points out that grants may be limited to the early children of the family and refused altogether where the heredity is bad. An argument on which she forcibly insists is that equal payment to men and women for equal work is not practicable unless in association with family endowment.

standing its strong Socialist trend, has not tried to carry out, or so much as put on its programme, any system of family allowance, or any alternative system of greatly increased social services. The question has been carefully investigated by a Joint Committee of the Labour Party and the Trades Union Congress, and it was felt that the enormous sums required might have the effect of dislocating the wage-system, and that even the simplest alternative of increasing the cost of social services by the one hundred million pounds that would be required might have an unfavourable reaction on the wage-rates of industry. To the wisest Labour leaders the experiment still seems too hazardous.¹

When the question of mothers' pensions arises, and the function of the community in supplying financial aid towards the production of children, we are faced by a problem which is often ignored when this measure is adopted or advocated. That is the problem of how far the community really needs its production of children to be subsidised, and how far it is desirable to afford that aid without regard to the probable quality of the children produced. The measures adopted or advocated for maintaining or increasing the population of a state have so far been confused, unintelligent, and

¹ *The Times*, March 10, 1930.

even maleficent. The old feverish anxiety to increase the population at all costs has ceased to be reasonable. The growth of the world's population has become during the past century so enormously rapid, being doubled every hundred years, that we are approaching a period when the strongest country will be that which increases most slowly or not at all.¹ Even among the nations concerned in the Great War, Russia, with the largest population and the highest birth-rate, was almost the first to succumb, for the size of a population is not the measure of its strength. The two countries of the Old World which to-day display the greatest anxiety to stimulate their own growth in population, France and Italy, both illustrate the methods which should not be adopted. In France the growth of the population is small

¹ The whole question of the rapid growth of population in modern times and its bearing on the future of the world is discussed in a masterly manner by Professor E. M. East, *Mankind at the Crossroads*, 1924. For a more recent discussion of fundamental population problems from various points of view, by leading scientific authorities of Europe and America, see *Proceedings of the World Population Conference*, 1927, edited by Margaret Sanger. And for a clear and authoritative statement, in a concise form, see Sir George Knibbs, "The Fundamental Elements of the Problems of Population and Migration," *Eugenics Review*, Jan., 1928; he concludes that the great problem before Man now is "how best to control the rate at which he multiplies."

but the country has reaped many benefits from that slow growth, which is not, however, due to a low birth-rate but to a high rate of infantile mortality. Yet the official policy of France is directed much less to the task of better caring for the children born than to the encouragement, by all sorts of small benefits, of still more births, without any regard for the quality of the children thus to be born. In Italy, where the rate of population growth is already high, the energetic encouragement to further increase for which the Fascist Government is responsible—should it ever prove more successful than it has at present—can only lead to internal suffering and discontent or to external trouble, due to difficulties with other countries refusing to accept immigrants and to the resulting temptation to risk war, which from of old has been the method for arresting internal rebellion and reducing superfluous populations. A wiser course is being pursued in the New World. The United States, in view of the growing perfection of technical processes and the increasing tendency to unemployment, realises that the desirable limits of population are being reached, and is slackening its own rate of growth (it once doubled its population in twenty-three years), while excluding all but a small proportion of foreign immigrant peoples, whose rates of increase are usually higher than its own. To

the United States thus belongs the honour of being first, among great nations, to assert, virtually, the international importance of birth control. In Australia, also, though in a less definitely formulated manner, the same attitude prevails, and while internal expansion has not yet reached its limits, although at the present rate of increase it is rapidly drawing near them, the tendency is now towards hostility to immigration.

We thus approach the problem of the desirable size of the family. It is a problem which has only in recent years become practical. In old days children were "given by God," and God who gave them often took them back again with extreme rapidity. The population was practically stationary, and yet families were frequently of enormous size. Many were called into the world but few were chosen to live. In old family records we see two or even three brothers of the same name. "John" was christened and "John" died, so the name was available for a later "John," and, if he too died, for a third. Nowadays the progress of medicine and hygiene has rendered life safer; when a child is born there is a reasonable probability that he will live, and we can afford to be more economical in child production. The old methods, indeed, became impracticable; they produced too large an excess of

population.¹ If we desire to retain that almost stationary population which has, on the whole, been normal for mankind we can no longer effect it by the method of large gross production and small net results.

The optimum number of children in a family has often been exaggerated, especially by those who have not realised how greatly in modern times the conditions of life have changed in the direction of diminishing wastage. Thus Grotjahn in Germany has stated that an average of 3·8 children is required per marriage in order to maintain the population in equilibrium. But this is, as a general rule, certainly too high. In England, it is calculated, an average of about 2·5 children per marriage now amply suffices to do more than maintain a stationary population, by ensuring a considerable increase. The optimum size of the family now therefore oscillates between two and three. To many marriages we find more children, and to many we find fewer or none.

We cannot yet attempt to calculate all the benefits arising to the community from the

¹ The old methods are not extinct. In 1927 Friedjung gave the history of 100 working-class women of Vienna who had borne six or more children, the average being over 10. But only about half the children were alive a few years after birth; one mother lost 16 out of 24 children born alive, and many others more than half.

diminution in the size of the family which has now become possible owing to new hygienic and medical conquests in the economy of life. There is far more in it than the simple ascent to a higher level of well-being inevitably resulting from a diminution of our excessive procreation, our excessive diseases, and our excessive deaths. The family has been called "the unit of civilisation,"¹ but in so far as the family is merely an isolated unit, civilisation still remains primitive. It is by its capacity for interpenetrating contacts with the community that family and community are alike enabled to

¹ In using this old phrase I by no means wish to imply that I unconditionally accept it. There is excellent reason for regarding the family as the *biological* unit, and, as such, essential and permanent. But there is no such good reason for considering the family as the sole *cultural* unit. Civilisation needs more than the family before it can be built up. It is inconceivable without assuming the close interaction of a whole community. Indeed, the family itself as a trinity seems only to become a conscious unit in relation to a realised community. That may be indicated by the word "family" itself, which in Latin, and even in English law and custom, does not refer to the biological trinity. (This is pointed out in a paper by Lord Raglan, *Man*, Jan. 1931.) The "*familia*" was the whole number of slaves belonging to one master, and was therefore a small community. In many languages there is no word for the family as a trinity. The family is clearly the biological unit, but, as such, it may be originally unconscious; it is not strictly an "institution," and we must be cautious in defining its cultural relationship to the systematised clan.

develop a fine civilisation. It is largely because the family has been so much a self-centred unit, absorbed in the constant stress and strain of self-reproduction, that our civilisation is still, on the whole, so crude. An important factor in this development is the liberation of women who are mothers from an undue absorption in maternal functions. It is estimated that a healthy woman in a healthy environment, when left to nature, produces on an average fifteen children. Apart from the fact that the world nowadays has no use for such women, it is obvious that a woman whose life was thus occupied had little time or strength left over for the wider functions of social life. She could not exercise a profession and she could not bring her knowledge and experience to bear on the life of the world outside her own home. Moreover her knowledge and experience were so limited from lack of contact with that larger world that, unless rarely gifted, she was not fitted even to conduct her small domestic life wisely. The affairs of the world, so far as women are concerned, were left to the unmarried, often, by the limitation on another side of their experience, narrow and prejudiced, and to a few fine exceptional women who, when the period of sexual activity was over, still had the strength and ability for wider activities. These conditions are responsible for the severe

criticisms (some I have already quoted) mistakenly directed against the activities of women in the family life of the community, mistakenly because it is not women, but a special and untypical class of women, whose activities arouse this criticism.

The proper fulfilment of all that maternity means involves, even for the average 2·5 children, the devotion of a large slice of a woman's life. But it is very far from demanding the whole of it, and by a due apportionment of her time and energy between her family and the world a woman may enrich both to an extent in previous times impossible. In Russia, where the social equality of women is established in accordance with the original intention of Lenin, who declared that "every kitchen maid must learn to rule the State,"¹ it is found practicable for women to work and even to occupy high posts without prohibiting maternity, the woman being released from work and provided for by the State for two months before and two months after her confinement, assisted in her maternal duties by communal nurseries

¹ This was not an empty boast, surprising as it may seem to those who only knew Russia in the days of Tsardom. To-day women in Russia form a larger proportion of the ruling class than in any other country of Western civilisation, and are proving worthy of their opportunities. See, for instance, Dr. Helene Stöcker, "Zum Vierten Male in Russland," *Neue Generation*, March 1928.

and kindergartens, and not mulcted in salary for the time spent in suckling her infant. That is a step, however inadequate, in the right direction. The obstacles that in many countries are only slowly being overcome are due less to any inherent difficulty in combining work and motherhood than to effete traditions and blind prejudices.

This is well illustrated in the special and important case of teachers. A large proportion of teachers are to-day women, often not only for children of their own sex but for boys. There cannot be the smallest doubt that women who have had sex experience of their own and children of their own are incomparably better fitted to deal with the special difficulties of children than those who have not. A few gifted women may be found who can make up for personal inexperience by insight and artificially acquired knowledge, but they are rare exceptions. This is a fact that should be fairly obvious even to one who knew nothing about schools and education. But it becomes conspicuous when we observe the actual conditions that prevail. The teacher who has had children of her own is seen to possess an almost instinctive comprehension of children which is seldom present in her unmarried colleagues. Their scholastic attainments may be of the highest, and yet they may be unable to meet

even the simplest emergencies of child life, themselves little more than children, and sometimes—indeed often—more ignorant of the facts of human life, and more afraid of them, than are their pupils, whom they are supposed to be competent to “educate.” Children to-day are apt to be acute critics of the abilities of their teachers, and if children had a voice in the selection of teachers the level of education would certainly soon be raised. At present a large majority of elementary teachers (in England nearly 80 per cent.), and a considerable proportion in secondary schools, are women. Yet how many of them are encouraged by the official authorities, or even allowed, to acquire, in or out of marriage, the essential experiences of sexual pleasure and motherhood? In spite of the recent progress of science, the depths of human imbecility have not yet been plumbed.

But the family is not only a domestic question, not only a social question, as the almost tragic failure to recognise it in the great function of education brings home to us. It is, finally, a racial question. The well-being of the individual in the home, his due equipment in the community, and, ultimately, his fate in the species, must rest on the sound organisation of the family. The increasing recognition of this fact on a scientific foundation is one of the most notable features of our Western civilisation.

In an almost instinctive and unconscious manner it has been recognised and acted on ever since human society became organised. Equally among savages and among the founders of the classic cultures of Greece and Rome, from whom we inherit so much, it was recognised, without question and without discussion, that the population must sometimes be restricted and that only the best children should be allowed to live. The method of infanticide has everywhere been the most usual method of attaining this end.¹ Then a new ideal, supported by Christianity and emphasising the value of every human being as a soul, began to be developed, and finally to be carried out in an extreme form, owing to the modern advances in medicine and hygiene. That movement has meant much for the growth of human sympathy and solidarity. But it was unbalanced, for it failed to perceive the precious elements that had been lost in the decay of the earlier ideal. Our civilisation to-day is marked by an increased perception of both the fundamental conditions of racial well-being. We have gained the ability and the will to cherish every human

¹ The various methods which Man throughout his history has practised in order to reach the ends now possible through birth control and eugenics, are fully set forth by Prof. Carr-Saunders in his elaborate work, *The Population Problem*.

creature, however feeble, that is brought into the world. But we also see the cruelty of bringing into the world human creatures that are maimed, physically or spiritually, merely that we may prolong or alleviate their sufferings. And we realise how heavy is the burden that we thus place on the race, not only of to-day but of to-morrow, by cherishing the feeblest specimens of humanity and enabling them to increase and multiply. We further realise—and that is our main discovery—that it is unnecessary. The advance in medicine and hygiene which enables us to preserve the defective members of our kind also enables us to prevent, in large measure, their production, by methods which, unlike those practised in the early world, are humane.¹

There are two lines along which these measures for the eugenic good of the race are being embodied in our general life: by legislation and by education. The first has often been resorted to, because for the ordinary mind it is the easiest. But it is futile without the second. Many eugenical laws have been passed,

¹ For the history of contraception, see M. C. Stopes, *Contraception: its Theory and Practice*, 2nd ed., London, 1928, and for discussion of all its aspects—medical, eugenic, religious, moral, and international—see *Proceedings of The Sixth International Neo-Malthusian and Birth Control Conference*, edited by Margaret Sanger, New York, 1926.

especially in the United States, merely to be evaded or become a dead letter because they are not in accordance with the general sentiment of the community. On the other hand, when a line of action is spontaneously carried out by the community without penal sanction, legislation becomes unnecessary, save ultimately in order to whip into line a small recalcitrant minority. It is by the growth of scientific knowledge, by the spread of education, and by an increased sense of personal responsibility—all now slowly permeating civilised communities—that alone we can expect any sound advance in the eugenic field. By a reasonable regard for the probabilities of heredity, and a well-directed attention to personal fitness or unfitness for paternity or maternity, we are moving, even though at present slowly, in the right direction. Certificates of fitness for marriage—more accurately for fatherhood and motherhood—are now actively advocated or projected in various countries.¹ But they

¹ See, for instance, the *World's Health*, in which the question of pre-nuptial medical examinations has frequently been discussed, as in a paper by Prof. J. A. Lopez del Valle, Sept. 1927. Mrs. Sidonie Gruenberg stated in 1930 that there are in the United States alone now sixty-one national, State, and private educational organisations concerned with parental education (*Journal of Social Hygiene*, March 1930). The Churches are also giving attention to the matter, and at a Conference of the Ministers' Associa-

cannot be effectively introduced by legislation ; they must first become the imperative demand of each individual for himself and herself, and his or her partner. When they become that, all is effected that we need trouble about, and legislation becomes a matter of comparative indifference, except to set the seal on a social custom of the first importance for the purification of the race.

It used sometimes to be asked : What has posterity done for me that I should do anything for posterity ? The question was wrongly put. " Posterity " is only another name for Mankind, and when we pose the question rightly there can be no dispute about the answer. If we put aside the part that belongs to Nature or to God, we owe everything to Mankind. All that we are, and all that we possess in civilisation, we owe to the everlasting aspiration and struggle of Mankind before us, and to the slow accumulation of knowledge and art on the topmost level of which we now stand. Our immense debt to Mankind in the past can only be repaid to Mankind in the future. It is our

tion on Marriage and the Home, held in Buffalo in 1930, it was resolved to urge on theological seminaries a thorough training of divinity students in mental hygiene, family case work, and sex instruction. The general establishment on a combined medical and religious basis of Marriage and Home clinics was also advocated.

privilege, if we do not regard it as our duty, to pass on, in ever finer shapes, the great traditions which have been handed to us.

These traditions in the matter of the procreation of the race—we may repeat at the end what I said at the beginning—take the form generally termed *marriage*. It is a form which from the first has been constantly varying its shape, but its most frequent shape has throughout been that of father, mother, and child, all three which units, as well as the community to which they belong, have generally found it suits them well to continue through the early life of the child, while even when the offspring is able to take care of itself the two parents have frequently found it to be to their own comfort and joy to continue living together. Here we have, in a fairly permanent form, marriage, even if by no means necessarily indissoluble, the family, and the home, even if by no means hermetically closed.

All these related phenomena—marriage, the family, the home—have been in recent years, as we know, the subject of fierce and brilliant attack. As I write, there comes into my hand a little book by Dr. Eden Paul (containing much with which all may heartily agree) where I find it stated that “it is almost a commonplace to say that such an institution as the family is not necessarily a permanent part of human social

life," and that soon "marriage in the present meaning of the word as the foundation of family life will have ceased to exist."¹

I will not again repeat that the variations, ancient or modern, in marriage, the family, or the home do not in the slightest degree indicate any destruction of any of them; that the very conditions which Dr. Eden Paul and others regard as disrupting and undermining marriage and the family are really calculated to support and stabilise both; and that, as a matter of fact, so far from any decay of marriage being visible, all precise and reliable evidence points in the opposite direction.

It is enough to refer to so great an authority as Professor Malinowski, who in the already quoted study of "Parenthood the Basis of Social Structure" has so luminously shown that the procreative institution of mankind is many-sided and welds all the facts of sexuality, marriage, family, and clanship into "one integral institution," without abolishing any, however great the scope left for flexibility. From a very different point of departure Keyserling comes to a similar conclusion. When writing from Japan in his *Travel Diary of a Philosopher*, and referring with approval to the growing sexual freedom of our West,

¹ Eden Paul, *Chronos or the Future of the Family*, 1930, pp. 5, 44.

and the increasing ability of women to follow their own personal laws, he adds : " The old forms of social life will not on this account become extinct but will continue to exist as before ; they will in fact hardly suffer even quantitatively." And writing in a more popular style, Professor Sapir of Chicago, while quite willing to sweep away the family in its old form, says that when we have recovered from our dizziness at its apparent disappearance and our gasps of horror have subsided, and we open our eyes again, " the family will be seen to be still there, a little cleaner, a little more truthful, a little happier." ¹

We may observe the progress now being made in the renovation of marriage and the family if we note what is taking place in Soviet Russia, where we find an immense social laboratory highly instructive for our civilisation to-day. No doubt there are political and economic matters for which most people of the West would regard Russia as the last place to seek inspiration. But that aversion cannot be brought into action where social matters are concerned. Here, in the opinion of the most competent judges from other lands—those whose knowledge of the language and familiarity with the corresponding institutions of other

¹ E. Sapir, " What is the Family Still Good For ? " *Journal of Social Hygiene*, Dec. 1930.

countries best entitle them to speak—much has been attained that the rest of the world is still only striving to attain. The progress reached is along our lines but it has gone ahead of us.¹ There has been an erroneous idea abroad in the world that the Bolsheviki believe in sexual intemperance and promiscuity in sex relations, an idea no doubt based on the chaos which inevitably resulted at first when the new regime was so suddenly inaugurated. That disorder much distressed Lenin himself, who was entirely opposed to promiscuity and all merely physical indulgence, and held that the highest human elements entered the love-relationship. It is Lenin's doctrine which now permeates Soviet society. This doctrine, maintained by the young men and women of Russia to-day, Dr. Yarros describes as "sincerely idealistic." Indeed, one might add that, so far from there being, as some people imagine, too little idealism in Russia to-day, there is probably too much, and of too fanatical a sort, more, for instance, than is now frequently manifested,

¹ See a notable paper by Rachelle S. Yarros, M.D., of Chicago, on "Social Hygiene Observations in Soviet Russia," published in the *Journal of Social Hygiene*, Nov. 1930; also an article in the same number by Ralph A. Reynolds, M.D., on "Social Hygiene in Soviet Russia," and an interesting sketch of personal impressions by Scott Nearing, "The Child in Soviet Russia," *The New Generation*, p. 232.

as regards sex relationships, in America. The Bolsheviks, as "social idealists," tend to minimise sex, as an important part of life indeed, but still only a part. There is complete facility of divorce, but, as in the countries of the West where divorce most tends to prevail, that is a purifying rather than a corrupting influence on marriage, and in Russia the majority of people still prefer the formal civil union to the freer relationships which also are recognised, nor is any effort made to separate children from their parents. It is felt that in the past the family has been too much an enclosed unit, but that is what so many of us are feeling also in the West. Dr. Reynolds similarly could see no evidence of any break-up of the family as a permanent institution in Russia, though, on account of the housing difficulty, a certain amount of communal family life exists, while there is immense development of the hygienic, educational, and recreational elements. Among the peasantry the new laws have had little effect at all on the stability of marriage. Scott Nearing similarly writes, after a visit, that "the family in the Soviet Union impresses the visitor as being very much like the family anywhere else in Central or Western Europe." Thus on the most advanced practical side the marriage situation to-day presents an aspect harmonious with that which it has long presented in the West on its more theoretical aspect.

Among the writers of to-day who have most broadly and most judiciously approached these questions it is easy to find a recognition of that aspect.¹ Thus Walter Lippmann, while considering that the difficulty of a successful marriage in the modern world has been doubled, and that in the future there will be no compulsion on sexual unions except the inner compulsion to find a true adjustment, still holds that "the convention of marriage, when it is clarified by insight into reality, is likely to be the hypothesis upon which men and women will ordinarily proceed."² From a very different standpoint, that of a Freudian psycho-analyst of the more cautious and balanced sort, Flügel, in a thoughtful psychological study of the family, concludes that not only are marriage institutions so deeply rooted in Man's nature as to be essential, but that, in spite of their rather archaic character, "it is almost certain that they still perform a necessary and beneficial part in the process of psychical development—a part for which no adequate substitute could easily be found."³

¹ For a full statement of this position, as it appears to me, I may refer to "The History of Marriage" in Vol. VII. of my *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*, pp. 508–532, 1929.

² W. Lippmann, *A Preface to Morals*, 1929, p. 312. It is also the conclusion of Mary Messer in her historic sketch, *The Family in the Making*.

³ J. C. Flügel, *The Psycho-Analytic Study of the Family*, 1921, p. 220.

Flügel, it may be seen, would agree with those students of early institutions who regard marriage, whatever its various forms, as "archaic." The investigators who maintain the view that marriage is somehow less primitive in origin, are even more convinced of its immense present and future importance. Thus F. Müller-Lyer, who held that the clan so dominated primitive man that the family, though existent, was unimportant, and sexual relationships polygamous, yet proclaimed (in his *Phasen der Liebe*, translated under the title of *The Evolution of Modern Marriage*) a great future for sexual unions when men and women can face each other in equal economic independence and all motives for marriage have fallen into the background, with the exception of love, which "will be more and more the only determining motive that can induce a man and woman to deny their freedom and bind themselves permanently to one another." We may not regard love as the self-sufficient motive for marriage in so far as marriage involves procreation. Yet if the foundation of marriage seems so solid, even to one who regards it as a denial of freedom and a bondage, how much more for those who find in it no such denial and no such bondage !

III

THE FUNCTION OF TABOOS

WHEN people talk nowadays of the social aspects of modern life, and especially of its sexual aspects, they are sure to refer to what they call the disappearance of taboos. They proceed to enumerate a number of things which in our society were formerly forbidden (and presumably not done) and now are not forbidden, together with a corresponding list of things which were formerly prescribed (and presumably carried out) but now are regarded as unnecessary, indifferent, or even undesirable, to use no stronger term.

It seems possible to anyone whose memory goes back for half a century that these people may be justified in their statements, and as one who has sometimes been execrated or eulogised for playing a part in the change I have no wish to deny its existence. It even seems to me that the time has come for taking a broad view of this change. I think I am competent to take that view, for my attitude is really impartial, since if, on the one hand, I have done my best

to destroy some taboos, on the other, I not only have a firm faith in taboos but I regard them as absolutely an indestructible element of social life, and not of human life alone.

A taboo, speaking roughly, simply indicates something that is "not done."¹ The reason why it is not done may be, and often is, unknown to those who observe the taboo. So that all sorts of reasons—often very unreasonable reasons—are invented to explain the taboo. But below the surface there always are reasons for taboos. Among wild birds in a special phase of bird-existence it is taboo to remain close to human beings. That taboo is strictly analogous to human taboos; it is an adopted custom. It is not found everywhere among birds. When men first visit virgin islands of the southern seas there are birds who do not regard human beings as taboo. The taboo is introduced later when human beings have become destructive to the bird society. It is of course completely unnecessary to be aware of the reason for the taboo, and if birds ever acquired speculative minds they would invent

¹ See article "Tabu" by R. R. Marett in Hastings' *Encyclopedia of Religion and Ethics*. "Taboo" was a word first met with by Captain Cook at the island of Tonga in 1777, as meaning "things not to be touched," though Cook clearly understood and expressed the more comprehensive meanings of the term, and that it was both spiritual and temporal in its nature and effects.

reasons. That is, as we know, exactly what human societies do. The distinction of human taboos lies largely in their high imaginativeness, alike as regards their nature and the supposed reasons assigned for them, and in the comparative swiftness with which they may change.

Yet taboos remain as essential in human life as in life generally. They are a part of tradition, and it is difficult to say that tradition, though always growing and changing, is anywhere non-existent or that life would be possible without it. Among lower forms of life we commonly talk of an adaptation to the environment. The adoption of a taboo, whether or not by modifying it, is exactly such an adaptation to the environment, in accordance with tradition.¹ In the British Isles it is usually taboo

¹ Taboos, as thus understood, correspond to what Walter Lippmann in his remarkable and in many ways admirable *Preface to Morals* (1929) less happily terms "convention":—"Although it may be," he states (p. 300), "that no convention is any longer coercive, conventions remain, are adapted, revised, and debated. They embody the considered results of experience: perhaps the experience of a lonely pioneer or perhaps the collective experience of the dominant members of a community. In any event they are as necessary to a society which recognises no authority as to one which does. In the modern world the function of conventions is to declare the meaning of experience. Just because the rule of sexual conduct by authority is dissolving, the need of conventions which will guide conduct is increasing." While the term "convention" brings out some aspects

for men and women to go about naked. But it is not invariably so. In the seventeenth century, as Fynes Moryson testifies, high-born ladies could go about naked in some districts of Ireland, and, as Pepys testifies, occasional eccentric individuals could do so even in the streets of London. It is quite likely that this taboo will shift again—it is indeed already beginning to do so—and become less stringent. Taboos are constantly liable to shift backwards and forwards over the threshold between prohibition and permission. We witness similar shifting taboos in Nature, and it might not be too fanciful to trace them even in the plant world. We are often so obsessed by our own modes of activity that we fail to realise that we are, after all, a part of Nature and that the same movements which occur in us also occur, however widely different the forms, in other vital phenomena.

Unthinking people sometimes talk as though taboos were effete relics of the past which it is in our power to cast away altogether. A little reflection might serve to show not only that they are far too numerous and too deeply

of taboo, it fails to indicate the quasi-religious element which gives might to a taboo (which cannot be violated so easily and cheerfully as a convention), and it conceals the fact that new taboos, while more in accordance with new social conditions, are not different in nature and quality from the outworn taboos made authoritative by tradition.

rooted to be torn up at will but that we should be in a sad case without them, indeed that human society could not survive their loss. It is certain that property—which from Neolithic times and no doubt earlier has been an important element of human society—could not exist without the taboo against stealing. Law and the police struggle against the violations of that taboo; but they do so very ineffectually; they could not do it at all in the absence of the taboo, for we all of us every day possess the opportunity to steal. Among savages nearly everywhere it is taboo which binds the members of the clan together and ensures that they shall behave one to another in a decently social manner.¹ We have lost the word but we have the bond under other names. To-day, a distinguished English lawyer, Lord Buckmaster, calls it “social opinion.”

¹ The word “savagery,” now that we know more about savages, is losing its old meaning. For the most part, as Dr. Haddon, who has known them well remarks, “savages are gentlemen.” Among the Papuans, K. E. Williams, who has specially studied their moral code (*Orokaiva Society*, Ch. XVIII, 1930), finds no supernatural sanction of morality; the fear of hurting the feelings of one's fellow men is the real “moral sanction,” though it is associated with, as minor motives, the fear of retaliation and, still more, the fear of public reprobation. Williams terms it “the sympathetic sanction,” as it involves a constant consideration for all the members of one's “sympathy-group.”

He is strongly opposed to capital punishment and to any form of vengeance wreaked on the criminal. "It is my belief," he said, giving evidence before a Select Committee of the House of Commons (March 26, 1930), "that the real deterrent against crime is social opinion. It is not the police nor the laws. It is the healthy public opinion which affects and surrounds a man from his youth." In other words, it is the existence of taboos.

It is indeed only the existence of such taboos which enables us to possess any sacredness of personality at all. It is taboos that preserve our more refined sensibilities from the people who wipe their mouths with the table-cloth and blow their noses on the serviette, and it is taboos that preserve us from being murdered outright. If we were objects of complete indifference to our fellows, or of no more concern than stones or trees, we should soon be driven up to or over the verge of suicide. Life is livable because we know that wherever we go most of the people we meet will be restrained in their actions towards us by an almost instinctive network of taboos. We know that they will allow us the same or nearly the same degree of freedom and privilege that they claim for themselves: if we take our place in a *queue* at a railway station or a theatre they will not thrust themselves in front of us; if we claim a

seat by placing our suitcase on it they will not fling the article aside and place themselves there; if they desire to perform any of the intimate natural excretory functions which are commonly regarded as disgusting they will not spontaneously do it before our faces; if—to come to the sphere with which taboos are to-day for most persons specially associated—they chance to experience an impulse of sexual attraction they will not lay lustful hands on us but either conceal their feeling or strive to find delicate methods of expressing it. No published laws and regulations—even when such exist—are needed to restrain them. They are held back by almost instinctive taboos.¹

The pronounced growth of a new taboo in a whole nation is seen in the change of attitude towards drunkenness which has taken place in England during the life-time of those past

¹ I would endorse the observations recently made in a leading article by the *London Times*: "Manners, especially among the young, did indeed incline to be rough and ready as the too much and the too little discipline of the War time took to shaking down together; but the patient and self-effacing elder seems now to be reaping his reward in the new gentleness, new consideration, new attention to social forms and refinements of behaviour which he cannot help observing among his young acquaintance. As for their morals, it is certain that any man who was even suspected of committing the offences of which the Restoration gallants and the Regency bucks made a boast would be cut by every one."

middle age, and is clearly demonstrated alike by the statistics of the consumption of alcohol and police-court convictions for drunkenness. Among the upper classes drunkenness had disappeared as a prominent social phenomenon at the beginning of the nineteenth century. It was in the previous century that a great statesman like Pitt could openly relieve himself of the results of excessive drink by going behind the Speaker's chair in Parliament to vomit, and that men of good society after dinner, when the ladies had retired, could drink port till they fell beneath the table. But such scenes among the populace in the streets of that century, as depicted by Hogarth, were much slower to pass away. Within living memory, however, there has been a great change in this respect among the lower social classes, and those of us who knew London fifty years ago can bear witness to the frequency of the signs of drunkenness then compared with their rarity now. The change is reflected in police-court convictions for drunkenness; comparing even so recent a year as 1905 with 1928, there was a drop of 73 per cent. in the convictions during those twenty-three years. To some extent the change is due to diminished facilities for obtaining drink and its higher price. But the young man of to-day has a new social ideal; he does not want to spend his evenings in a public-house, like

the men of an elder generation now dying out ; " he puts on a nice suit of clothes," as an ex-Chief Constable of Police remarks, " and nicely cleaned boots, with the other accessories of a tidy turn-out, and takes his young lady to cinema, dance, or wherever fancy may lead them ; she is smartly dressed, and he has to live up to her standard. The shillings that used to go in drink are saved up for clothes and to spend on amusements ; and the young man is so far different from his predecessor of another generation that he has acquired the necessary amount of self-respect to feel it a disgrace to be seen drunk." In other words, a new taboo has come into existence.

Such taboos are typical in our own society, and are cherished even by the person who professes the strongest contempt for taboos, if he is a fairly normal member of our society. We may even say that he is—whether or not he knows it—actually engaged in increasing and strengthening them. The whole tendency of our society to-day is to increase and strengthen the taboos which preserve the freedom and enlarge the activities of the individual in moving about in a civilised environment. Several even of those taboos which I have just mentioned as to-day " almost instinctive " had little or no force half a century ago ; I myself can recall the time when some of them had not come into

being, or were not commonly recognised, and I can therefore realise the benefits they confer. There is no doubt that the growth of urban life and the associated collectivistic activities which are for the benefit of all, but belong to no individual, demand for their full enjoyment a system of taboos, either automatic or self-imposed by an effort of discipline. It is only so that the municipal organisation of books and pictures and music and gardens and fountains becomes possible with all the privileges and the conveniences of urban life. The individual in whom the taboos necessary for such organisation are not either automatic or self-imposed is an anti-social individual, and his elimination would be for our benefit. For while some of the taboos in question are objectified in rules and regulations with penalties for their violation, many could not be carried out by force, even with an army of officials, unless supported by the general taboo-observance of the community.

The recognition of the permanence of the taboo-observing impulse, and the constant tendency to develop new taboos, may enable us to face with calmness the counterbalancing fact of the falling away of taboos which have served their purpose and are no longer needed under changed social conditions. That is a process always going on, and in some spheres it

has during recent years moved with unusual rapidity. The reality of the changes that have thus taken place, whether they are to be approved or condemned, we may thus all accept. As often happens, it is small things—small yet significant—which enable us to grasp the reality of change. When we read Pepys's *Diary* it is the minute points which fascinate us, for they enable us to realise profound differences in the attitude of seventeenth-century people compared with our own; as when Pepys found lice in a strange bed he slept in, "which made us merry." I always recall as significant (so that I noted it in my *Impressions and Comments* for June 15, 1918) the first occasion on which I observed a young woman in a London street pausing a moment to adjust her stocking without embarrassment and without going a step out of her way. I had been brought up in the Victorian period when if a woman even of the poorest class (though, for the matter of that, it is women of low social class who are most prudish) wished to pull up her stocking she retired into the darkest alley she could find with her face to the wall. The difference is typical of a revolutionary change in the whole attitude of women.

That was war-time, and the Great War undoubtedly had its influence in the movement

we are here considering, not indeed by generating but by accelerating it. All the social changes which were witnessed during the war in the belligerent countries would have taken place without it. But they would have taken place more gradually and unevenly, not in so dramatic and spectacular a shape.

The whole series of changes so far as women have been concerned—and it is in connection with women that the violated taboos have caused most uproar—were the outcome of a single movement: the movement for making women the companions of men. They were not that in mediæval theory; woman for that theory was either above man or below him; as Miss Eileen Power remarks, she was Janus-faced: in one of her aspects she was Mary, the mother of God and the saviour of men, in the other Eve, the seducer of man and the cause of all his woe. By the nineteenth century this theory had become reduced to an empty shell of convention, but it still retained influence even though within the shell new conceptions were germinating and causing it to crack.

The woman moulded according to these new conceptions is no longer the angel-devil which her predecessor seemed to imaginative eyes, but obviously made to be—as witnessed even by her hair and her skirts and the simple fashion of her garments—the social equal and

companion of man, whether in work or play, even perhaps the play of sex.

That has meant the falling away not only of deliberately broken taboos but also of a greater number that have disappeared almost unconsciously and automatically. The girl who without thought stopped in the middle of the pavement to adjust her stocking was the typical pioneering figure. She was introducing a new kind of simple directness into life, a new sort of modesty, a new courage. Naturally it is in the sphere of sexual emotions and habits that these attributes become most conspicuous, for men and even more for women, whose sphere is by constitution so largely that of sex, whether for good or evil. The new freedom and directness are obviously shown in public speech and the world of journalism. In private speech, of course, things have always been spoken of—often ignorantly and unwholesomely and seldom between people of opposite sex even when married to each other—which were regarded as indecorous to speak of in public, even when they were of most vital concern to society. Venereal disease is such a subject. It concerns everyone, because, however austere the individual may live, he or she is always liable to come into contact with a venereally affected person or even to enter into a life-long relationship with such a person, and so to risk the

prospects of health and happiness. Yet all of us who are past youth once lived in a time when the taboo on discussion was so strict that only in professional or highly specialised quarters was it possible to discuss frankly the issues of venereal disease, and such a word as "syphilis"—which is merely the simple and correct name for the most potently dangerous venereal disease—was for public purposes prohibited. Even to-day, so strong has been the hold of the old taboo, we find a tendency to disguise these subjects under the vague and fumbling name of "Social hygiene," although that term, so far as it has any meaning at all, has no special connection with the subject in question.

The necessity for plain speaking about venereal disease, now universally admitted, was first felt as a gradual extension of that great organised movement for "Public Health" which we owe to the enthusiasm for materialistic progress of the so-called "Victorian" epoch. It was inevitable that an important aspect of public health should soon be felt to lie in the spread of information to young people concerning the exact nature of the danger of venereal diseases. Thus was reached the idea of a sort of "sexual education." But it was obvious that an education in sex which merely meant the imparting of information necessary as a warning against disease was absurdly

inadequate and might even sometimes prove mischievous. There thus came into view, not indeed for the first time, but in a more urgent and generally acceptable fashion, the whole question of education in matters of sex. This is now being more or less systematically carried out in all countries. In Russia it may be found here and there developed with relentless thoroughness and with the aid of the cinema to illustrate the various actual phases of the sex life. In Germany also, which has long been a centre of sexological science, the cinema is largely employed. But even in the most conservative and the most puritanic countries (though conservative and puritanic are by no means necessarily identical) the need of education in matters of sex is generally accepted, and, here and there, more or less cautiously carried out, though all its implications are yet far from being generally accepted.

Yet this innovation alone represents an enormous change in the incidence of taboos. Of all the taboos in civilisation up to recent years none has been stronger than that against speech on matters of sex. It is all the more powerful because it is one of the taboos which have been inherited by civilisation from savagery, and in the transfer has grown even stronger. Even in the early books of the Bible when we read of "feet" they are not always

the part of the body which we usually thereby understand, and thousands of years later, when I was a child in London, I was told that America is the land where it is indelicate to speak of "legs," the word "limbs" being used instead. There is no doubt about the progress made during the present century. But we must not be surprised that even those who no longer believe in the taboo often still observe it in practice. The taboo had always involved private revolts, with outbursts of what even those who thus revolted felt to be filthy and disgusting language, so that they were all the more anxious to keep them secret from the young. It was the most difficult thing in the world to speak to children, their own children, of what they themselves still instinctively felt to be filthy and disgusting. It could only be done rightly and naturally when the parents had undergone more than mere intellectual conviction, something which religious people used to call "a change of heart," and that change itself, to be really operative, should take place early in life. So that still to-day the child is too easily allowed to follow the old paths, and a vicious circle remains established.

Undoubtedly a change is slowly taking place. The new mother is gradually being moulded to match the new child. We are less and less called upon to witness the amusing yet rather

pathetic spectacle of the well-informed child carefully tempering his or more often her enlightenment to the virginal sensitiveness of a "Victorian" parent. The literature of recent times is alone enough to create a new atmosphere in this matter, since the taboos that are falling off life are at the same time falling off the literature of life. A double stream is indeed here at work, the stream of science and the stream of art: on the one hand a flood of scientific and pseudo-scientific books aiming at the enlightenment of the public in matters of sex, and from the other side a flood of novels in which sexual situations are set forth with a freedom, or a nonchalance, unknown, at all events in English literature, since the robustious mediæval romanticism of Scott and the elegant drawing-room manners of Jane Austen put the eighteenth century to shame, Victor Hugo with his fellows and followers performing the same purgation in French literature. No doubt the supporters of the old traditional taboos revolt at moments, and spasmodic attempts at suppression occur from time to time, but they are not only ineffectual, but capricious, for what offends tradition in one country passes without protest in another.

We are not here, however, concerned with protests or with the censorship. They represent the last convulsive movements of a genera-

tion which still possesses a measure of official power but is rapidly dying. Disregarding them altogether, we easily distinguish a modern stream in imaginative literature which arose about the middle of the last century and gradually gained full strength and influence towards the beginning of the present century, while at the same time as that stream arose an older stream was failing. Victor Hugo, already mentioned, was the supreme European representative of the earlier stream, Ibsen may be said to represent the later stream. Zola stands as the world-famous representative of the transition between the two, springing out of the romantic movement and unconsciously retaining much of its spirit, while at the same time he consciously—however mistakenly—aimed at scientific veracity, and vigorously displayed a grasp of real things which disdained any charge of crudity.

Even within the nineteenth century we may see the whole process in the English novel. Dickens belongs to the early stream and Hardy to the later stream, while Meredith, starting from romanticism and reaching towards the modern spirit, represents the transition. In America the two movements are just as distinct. No one doubts to which stream belong Hawthorne and James, and to which Dreiser and Sherwood Anderson. Whatever their com-

parative rank as artists, these two groups, in both countries, show a different social outlook, different conventions and ideals, different taboos, different values of life. The earlier writers, if springing from the higher social environment, observe ostentatiously a great number of traditional decorums, and if from a lower, they are gushing over with a respectable sentimentality which brought tears to the faces of their contemporaries and smiles or yawns to ours. The decorums of the first group have disappeared from the later group, and their taboos may be said to be almost reversed. Henry de Montherlant, one of the younger poets and novelists of France, finds it natural to begin a book (*La Petite Infante de Castille*) with the simple and homely (but incorrect) statement that there is only one public urinal in Barcelona. Imagine Henry James, or, for the matter of nationality, Victor Hugo, thus preluding a book! In the opening chapter of *All Quiet on the Western Front*, the *Iliad*, maybe, of our latest European war, Remarque discusses latrines as clearly a subject of the first importance; yet it does not seem to have been thought so when the Homeric account of the first great European war was written, nor (except in Ireland in relation to Queen Medbh) was it a recognised aspect of great warlike exploits. It may seem a small matter, but it is

probably significant of a different attitude towards life. The classical tradition, as well as the Christian, is here reversed, and the old champions of Greek literature (like Mr. Gilbert Murray) are even more shocked than the archbishops. This new attitude involves not a single point only, but at all points a closer grasp of real facts, with a more negligent, or a more playful, attitude towards pretensions. It means, very significantly, a greater disregard for the prettinesses of life and a greater regard for its austerities. What is called "vice" is no longer made charming and what is called "virtue" no longer easy and comfortable. To the people of the nineteenth century it was shocking to make vice anything but prettily elegant and virtue anything but comfortably happy. They considered it immoral, even punishable. Our view to-day is more nearly the opposite of that, the taboos are not so much abolished as inverted. And there can be little doubt that, being nearer to the facts, the new attitude is in reality the more moral attitude.

Life, as we live it to-day, is more highly socialised, more urbanised, more—so far as external relationships are concerned—"standardised," than it used to be. The world has become uncomfortably small; we have not yet gained a complete control of our excessive procreational activity; so that there are far

too many of us, and, being so closely crowded together, we have to adopt all sorts of new precautions to avoid friction and permit of the greatest amount of mutual freedom available within our unduly narrow frontiers. So many of the old traditional social taboos having become antiquated or no longer adequate, there has been a furious activity in making new laws and regulations, without a due recognition of the fact that old taboos can only be replaced by new taboos, and that mere legal enactments, enforced, or left unenforced, by paid officials or the police, to be effective must themselves become taboos, printed on the fleshy tablets of the individual citizen's heart. If they are thus to become of the nature of taboos they must be few in number, indisputable in value, and so urgent that they are felt to be on the way to become instinctive. No society can live wholesomely by any other sort of regulation, and State legislatures stultify themselves when they fail to realise that their part is merely to formulate, and record, and support the growth and the decay of taboos.¹

Sex taboos are at the centre of this process, not only because it so happens that sex is a

¹ The tendency to make laws and disregard them is specially marked in the United States, and President Hoover has said the "respect for law as law was fading from the sensibilities of the people."

sphere in which change has of late taken place with unusual rapidity, but because sex is at once an extremely important region—so that it becomes a training ground for the social activities generally—and yet a region in which most of the essentials do not lend themselves to direct external control, and so its taboos must be both made and maintained, at all events in the first place, privately.

During recent years, a half of this truth, the more destructive half, has become widely realised. It is realised, that is to say, that many of the family and other social restrictions which were once inculcated on youth are outworn and no longer correspond to the facts of the modern situation. The discovery was made with enthusiasm by many who jumped to the conclusion that a go-as-you-please policy—a naïve obedience to the crude and uninformed impulse of the moment—was henceforth right and justifiable. As Mr. Aldous Huxley, who has interspersed his delineation of some aspects of contemporary life with a wise criticism, well remarks in a thoughtful essay, the modern reaction against “Victorian” respectability, by taking the cheap form of promiscuity, has too often “exchanged the bad features of the nineteenth for the bad features of the eighteenth century”; it has bartered, he acutely points out, the Puritanical repression of sex for

another form of repression, just as full of hatred and contempt as the Puritanic, but effected by the "deadening influence of promiscuous indulgences."

It seldom takes long, however, for those who follow this line of conduct to find where it inevitably leads. They have failed to see that in throwing away the old worn-out taboos they had still retained the licence that those taboos assumed. The taboos, having largely become merely external restraints, had the function of keeping within bounds an impulsive licence which was always tending to break those bounds and demanded, perhaps rightly, an occasional orgy. The two, on the whole, balanced each other, and were necessary to each other; the external taboo was functionless without the licence, and the licence was mischievous without the taboo. To cast aside the one without casting aside the other merely produces confusion.

The old licences are just as much out of place under present conditions as the old taboos. Life under the former conditions was certainly a discipline, but a discipline mainly imposed from without, whence the rebellion against it as soon as its prohibitions were found to be dead. Life, however, is always a discipline, even for the lower animals as well as for men; it is so dangerous that only by submitting to

some sort of discipline can we become equipped to live in any true sense at all. The disappearance of the discipline of the old external taboos thus imposes upon us, inescapably, the creation of a new self-discipline of internal and personal taboos. If we are not responsible to an outside order which we no longer regard as valid, then we are responsible before the inner tribunal of the self which cannot but be valid for us so long as we are alive.¹

¹ When the above was written I had not in mind the writings of Dr. Marett. But it is a satisfaction to me to record that my conception of "taboo" is in essential respects the same as that maintained by so distinguished a student of this group of psychological phenomena. See, for instance, Ch. III. of his *Threshold of Religion*, where he shows how taboo is a breach of customary rule, "with a sanction in the shape of some suggestion of mystic punishment," which yet is never a measurable quantity. There are, he repeats, "always penalties of a distinctively social kind to be feared by the taboo-breaker," in extreme cases death and always more or less what the Australian natives call "growling." All social disapproval borrows the tone of religious aversion, but the sanctioning power remains social in the sense that society takes forcible means to remove the curse from its midst. More recently, in the article "Taboo" already mentioned, Marett writes still more clearly: "The primitive institution of taboo will be found to embody elemental principles of order that are to-day as active as ever beneath the surface of a changed custom." Similarly Professor Radcliffe Brown declares (*Man*, Sept. 1926) that the same general principle underlies taboos in all parts of the world; "however such customs may vary in detail in different cultures, the same fundamental sociological laws underlie them all."

That really is the task for all who are young to-day. And so far from it being an easy and pleasant task, as some may at first have thought when they saw the old taboos melting away, it involves difficulties which their grandparents never knew. If it means the making of new and personal taboos, it involves a slow self-development and self-responsibility, which is not only in itself a continual discipline, but runs the risk of conflict with others engaged in the same task and with the same sincerity. For what we may still term morals, since it has now become an individual outcome, will not be entirely the same for all individuals. All our moralities, indeed, cannot fail to be modifications of a common pattern because we all belong to the same community; but the differences involve a greater degree of mutual understanding and forbearance than when uniform taboos were imposed from outside.

We come here on a conflict such as lies at the foundation of all life. On the one hand we have the disappearance of the old traditional taboos, based on external authority, with the demand that we should create a new discipline from within; on the other hand we have the insistence, which some of the most representative minds of to-day emphasise, on "the new conformity which a new social solidarity is making." How to harmonise those opposing

demands? But it is in harmonising them that all life consists. In words which were meant to apply to creative art and thought, but really apply equally well to the practical art of living, an anonymous English writer has lately well said: "It would seem that for many years there can be no common emotional or intellectual background which may be taken for granted; and if in the result not a little of a man's power must be spent in creating his own scheme of values, still there is no immediate remedy, for it is in the nature of contemporary thinking that it demands an effort as individual as it must be unsparingly honest if it is to have any meaning for our generation."

So if the people of the old generation now leaving the world are often shocked to see swept away the old rigid taboos they were brought up in, they may leave it in peace. Life, after all, may not have been so hard for them, not so hard perhaps as for the younger generation. None the less that younger generation, also, may continue to carry lightly its burden, on youthful shoulders, joyfully creating a new world.

IV

THE REVALUATION OF OBSCENITY

OBSCENITY is a permanent element of human social life and corresponds to a deep need of the human mind, or, for all we know to the contrary, of mind generally. It is not confined to any nation or any stage of culture, low or high, savage or civilised. It definitely exists and is recognised among the peoples we often call "primitive," and it is joyfully manifested by the greatest men of genius among the higher races.¹ If we realise this fundamental permanence of obscenity we are relieved not merely from an ambiguous intellectual problem, but from a troublesome moral task, all the more annoying since, as experience has shown, it is labour in vain. Intellectual discrimination and moral tact remain necessary, but our efforts are no longer bound to be futile when we under-

¹ The problems connected with the origin and meaning of obscenity were touched on by A. E. Crawley many years ago in "A Note on Obscenity," *Studies of Savages and Sex*, p. 101. He inclined to think that the root of the word "obscene" is the same as that of "obscure."

stand that it is our primary task to revalue obscenity.

Such a task has ceased to be meaningless when we remember that we have already gone far in a corresponding task: the revaluation of sex with which obscenity has so largely been associated or confused. By the "obscene" we may properly mean what is "off the scene," and not openly shown on the stage of life. That does not mean, it must be added, on the stage of the theatre, for the theatre has often shown what may not be so openly shown in life—art supplementing life—and alike in the greater dramatists and the lesser dramatists there has often been an element of what is correctly regarded as obscenity. When, indeed, we consider the recognised part which it has played on the most admired stages of the world it is astonishing that it should still be necessary to justify obscenity.

Certainly, as I have indicated, it is our new estimation of sex which necessarily involves a revaluation of obscenity. There are, it is true, two kinds of obscenity: there is the naturalistic aspect of sexual processes, and there is the naturalistic aspect of excremental processes. Both are, from our normally conventional standpoint, obscene. But they are completely distinct, in spite of, from some points of view, their intimate association. This may be observed in literature where it touches on

obscenity. The excrementally obscene writer is by no means necessarily the sexually obscene writer. This is notably exemplified by Swift, who delights in the excremental obscene and often goes out of his way to introduce it, but always austere-ly rejects even the faintest recognition of the sexually obscene. In this matter Swift represents a common tendency among the writers who are men of the Church. When they are obscene they are rarely sexual, the reason being that the taboo on the excremental obscene is only conventional and social, while that on the sexual obscene is regarded as also moral and religious. The moral and religious prohibition cannot be invoked against the excremental obscene, for we are here only concerned with custom and taste in a matter in which custom differs from age to age and taste from individual to individual.

We must not underrate the gravity of the moral and religious factors in the taboo on sexual obscenity. It is true that the moral factor, at all events, is of comparatively recent development. In old days we do not find that obsession with "immorality" with which we are ourselves so familiar. The word "immoral," said Restif de la Bretonne, writing near the end of the eighteenth century, "is a new word; but already," he added, "we hear it re-echoing on every side."¹ The nineteenth century,

¹ *Monsieur Nicolas*, ed. Liseux, Vol. 11, p. 102. But it

indeed, fell in love with the word. Was there anything to which it was not sometimes applied during that century? Previously, sexual obscenity seems to have had little relationship either to the name or the fact of immorality, and in classic antiquity—although the obscene was often regarded as a sign of ill-omen, if not a cause for disgust—it would have been absurd to suggest such a connection. That is why a sixteenth-century Churchman, like Rabelais, could be sexually obscene, but an eighteenth-century Churchman must either, like Swift, confine himself to the excrementally obscene, or, like Sterne, be content with the prurient approach to the sexual obscene.

The religious factor in the sexual obscene is, indeed, more ancient, and we may even call it primitive. But this factor is ambiguous, and, in fact ambivalent, working both ways, so that obscenity is on certain occasions permitted and even prescribed by society. Here, perhaps, we draw near to the earliest social function of obscenity.

What may be regarded as a fairly typical

was not a new word in England, where it was already used in an abusive sense as early as 1660, probably as an invention of the Puritans. Before the middle of the nineteenth century it was admitted into English legal phraseology, and it became possible to assert that "immoral contracts are void," thereby opening the way to endless discussion, since morality is in perpetual flux.

state of things as regards this blended prohibition and injunction, under certain circumstances, of obscenity may be found in Africa, where it has been studied by Evans-Pritchard. Obscenity is here associated with ceremonial activities. Some kinds of collective obscene behaviour, in ordinary life usually taboo, are permitted or enjoined on certain occasions, all of social importance, either religious ceremonies or joint economic undertakings. The main objects, in Evans-Pritchard's opinion, are three: (1) by withdrawing a normal prohibition to emphasise the social importance of the activity in question; (2) to assist in canalising emotion into a prescribed channel at a period of human crisis; and (3) to furnish a stimulus and a reward at a time of combined and difficult labour.¹

These uses of obscenity in comparatively primitive stages of culture furnish valuable clues to its functions generally, and may enable us to see how much we lose in civilisation by foolish and futile attempts to abolish the public expression of obscenity altogether. On the one hand, in so far as we are successful, we lose its canalising, stimulating, and relieving virtues; on the other hand we magnify and exacerbate

¹ E. Evans-Pritchard, "Some Collective Expressions of Obscenity in Africa," *Jour. Anthropological Institute*, July-Dec., 1929.

all its vices. We forget that we are dealing with a fundamental and inevitable human impulse, and that it is our business to preserve those aspects of it which are good and to minimise those which are evil.

As already remarked, we are, however, to-day approaching a revaluation of obscenity along the only path by which it can reasonably be reached—our new attitude towards sex. As we look on the phase from which we are emerging it would almost seem as though the whole field of sex, to its full extent, and in all its ramifications, even those of a scientifically technical character, had been regarded as obscene, and of an obscenity, unlike that found among savages, which was never socially enjoined or permitted. The subject of sex could only be approached when it was deprived of all naturalistic character by being sentimentalised, that is to say, bathed in a vague and frequently quite impenetrable mist.

Under such circumstances it was impossible to approach the question of obscenity in a rational spirit. When everything is obscene it becomes impossible to say what obscenity is. The endless definitions of obscenity, and their absurdity, alike become intelligible.

The absurdity was, indeed, so obvious that the official mind came to the conclusion that it was safest to punish the "indictable misdemean-

our," as it is legally termed, of "obscenity" while carefully refusing to explain wherein the offence lay. This was the attitude of Sir Archibald Bodkin, for many years the English Director of Public Prosecutions and most zealous in pursuing "obscenity." An International Conference was called together at Geneva, on "the suppression of the Circulation and Traffic in Obscene Publications." Sir Archibald of course appeared as the representative of Great Britain. When the delegates of the various countries concerned had all assembled the Greek delegate tentatively suggested that it might be desirable, in order that the Conference should know what it was talking about, first to define the meaning of the word "obscene." But Bodkin rose and objected. He pointed out that there is no definition of "indecent" or "obscene" in English Statute Law. His objection strongly appealed to the officials present, and they unanimously resolved, before proceeding further, that "no definition was possible" of the matter which the Conference was called together to discuss.¹

Nothing more clearly shows—it may be

¹ B. Causton and G. Young, *Keeping it Dark*, p. 55. But the test accepted in English Courts is that formulated by Chief Justice Cockburn in 1868, a tendency to "deprave and corrupt those whose minds are open to such immoral influences." The test is obviously unworkable.

remarked in passing—the illegitimate nature of the attempt to suppress obscenity by law than the obscurantism of the legal officials who undertake it. They love darkness, and we know of whom that was first said. That love of darkness, is shrewd. For, if we think of it, any attempt whatever to define “obscenity”—once we have put aside the vague emotional terms of abuse, “foul,” “filthy,” “lewd,” “disgusting,” etc.—in cool and precise terms cannot bring us to any crime against society.¹ Taken in the wide sense, we may define it as that which arouses sexual love and desire. But that is what anything in Nature may do for some persons at some time, and that it should do so is in accordance with the whole order established by Nature, or, if we will, God. So it has been usual to define the

¹ The sagacious refusal of the lawyers to define the term “obscenity” really involves the admission that it is not properly a legal term at all. Lord Hewart, the Lord Chief Justice, lecturing in London (March 24, 1930) on the distinction between the fields of morality and of law, well brought this out: “The moralist may say ‘Blessed are the pure in heart,’ but it is inconceivable that a Statute should provide that ‘After the passing of this Act any person who is not pure in heart shall be guilty of misdemeanour.’ Nor would the matter be made any easier if the statute went on to provide that lack of purity of heart and its symptoms should be defined by a Government Department in rules and orders having the same effect as if they were contained in the Act.”

“ obscene ” more narrowly as lying in a particular mode of expression, at variance with that usually employed by a particular social class at a particular period of history. But then obscenity becomes merely a defect of pedantry, or, at the most, a failure in good taste, which can never be a crime. It was in this sense that D. H. Lawrence’s novel, *Lady Chatterley’s Lover*, was banned as “ obscene ”; it was recognisably a fine and admirably written work of art, but the author had, on two or three pages, deliberately chosen to use sound old English words in place of the euphemisms commonly preferred in the “ good society ” of his age. For even the most estimable clergyman may safely refer to the action by which we are brought into the world by a word of Latin source in eight or more letters without risking his chances of a *congé d’élire*. But if in the course of a sermon he inadvertently referred to the same act by a good old English word of four letters—such as a child may chalk on the pavement without endangering the structure of society—he is less likely to find himself on the episcopal throne than in prison, unless by the strenuous exertions of his friends he is sent to a lunatic asylum.¹

¹ Even a bishop may have to protect himself against a word. I remember being amused as a schoolboy by an incident that happened to the then Bishop of Winchester (Samuel Wilberforce, nicknamed on account of his extreme

So great for the official mind in this matter are the advantages of darkness ! We still live in a society which meekly permits a man to be fined or even sent to prison for the unfashionable use of perfectly correct synonyms.

This whole question has been made clearer by various investigators since a new vision of the place of sex in life has begun to prevail. Theodore Schroeder, a New York lawyer, was a pioneer with his powerful and substantial work on "*Obscene Literature and Constitutional Law*", privately printed for forensic use in New York in 1911. He here dealt radically with the whole subject in its historical, legal, and social aspects, and his work is still valuable. Familiar alike with the sexological, the forensic, and the ethnographic experiences and researches of recent times, he was able to speak with confidence and authority. He makes abundantly clear that it is an error to claim, as is often done, that "obscenity" in our modern sense has ever been an offence at common law in England or the United States. In the Golden Age of English history, the age of

urbanity, "Soapy Sam"). He had preached a sermon in a country church on behalf of the restoration fund, and the local paper reported that he declared the church to be "nothing but a damned barn." Fortunately his secretary was able to write to the editor that the word actually used by his lordship was "damp."

Elizabeth and of Shakespeare, when the English genius reached its highest point in life and in poetry, as during the Victorian period in science and social reform, there needs must have been, as always in the pre-modern world, sporadic manifestations in various shapes of what we should call obscenity. But it was free and open and wholesome. There was no law against obscenity and therefore there was no inducement to anyone to flaunt his obscenity before the world, and no encouragement to establish a pornographic press to flood the underworld of literature with its products, silly and dirty, but surrounded by the halo of the forbidden.

It was in the following century, by a side wind, that the modern conception began subtly to float into law. Before then, though it took no note of obscenity, it was the business of the law to protect the political order, and the business of the spiritual courts (a business later more or less transferred to the secular courts) to protect religion, and it must be remembered that at that time it was held, even by lawyers, that "morality is the fundamental part of religion." "Obscenity" slipped into it only in combination with charges of political disorder or of impiety. An "obscene libel"—the legal term still used—could not be brought in, as it can now, as a charge against an act or a writing that is "indecent" and no more. The

"obscenity" must be associated either with violence or with impiety.

I have protested against the common accusation that it is Puritanism which was responsible for the introduction of the movement to suppress obscenity. Puritanism was a liberating force, a force on the side of freedom. We cannot too often recall that the *Areopagitica*, the most eloquent denunciation of censorship ever put forth, was the work of the greatest of English Puritans in the world of letters. Puritanism was not responsible for any enactments against obscenity, and the Puritans were themselves prepared to be what we should call "obscene," both in word and in act.

Yet at the same time it seems possible that, if not directly, Puritanism may indirectly have been partly responsible for the legal movement against obscenity. The Puritans may have made no laws against obscenity, and may even have been tolerant of it, but when they were predominant during the English Commonwealth they brought into fashion pruderies of action and of speech which, when the Commonwealth had passed, continued to ferment in social life and to grow rather than to diminish in influence. Prudery was not Puritanism, but it may be regarded as, in part, an offshoot of Puritanism, which flourished vigorously after the vital spirit of Puritanism was itself dead or decaying,

and grew able to mould social customs and sentiments altogether apart from religion. Thus it was only two years after the Commonwealth was suppressed, and when Charles II, the incarnation of the anti-puritanic spirit, had been placed on the throne amid what appeared to be general enthusiasm, that Sir Charles Sedley (with two other aristocratic young friends who afterwards also became distinguished), in a drunken freak, stripped himself naked on the balcony of the Cock Tavern in Bow Street, Covent Garden. A freak of this kind was really not so very uncommon, and usually attracted little attention. But on this occasion it led to a public disturbance. Sedley addressed the crown with a mock sermon, vaguely said to contain "blasphemy," in imitation of an itinerant quack, a favourite theme for Restoration jokes; this seems to have led to the throwing of bottles containing urine on to the crowd below, and they retorted by throwing stones. As "blasphemy" and violence entered here, it seems evident that the "obscenity" alone would have been overlooked. But even on this occasion Puritanism was not mainly responsible. Sedley was tried before Lord Chief Justice Foster, an old-fashioned and high-minded cavalier of the school of Clarendon, and it has been surmised that he was moved by anxiety for the good repute of young

Cavaliers when he inflicted on Sedley the heavy fine of 2000 marks with seven days imprisonment.¹ That it was violence and blasphemy which the law sought to control—not nakedness either in life or in literature—is shown by the fact that we hear of no more charges of “obscenity” till nearly half a century later. In 1708 Lord Holt rendered a decision concerning an indictment for writing an obscene book entitled “The Fifteen Plagues of a Maidenhead.” He dismissed the charge on the ground that, while profanity is indictable, “obscenity” is only punishable in the spiritual courts.

But at this time, it seems clear, the leaven of transformed and degraded Puritanism was working in the general population. The reign of the middle class, putting upper class and lower class alike into the background, and proclaiming a Nonconformist conscience which arrogated the functions of the ancient spiritual courts, was beginning. It soon intruded into the temporal courts, and so led towards that legal enforcement of what was vaguely termed

¹ V. de Sola Pinto deals fully with the case in his life of *Sir Charles Sedley*, 1927, pp. 61–66. Pepys gave an account of it at the time in his *Diary*, 1 July, 1663. The old Chief Justice died three months afterwards. His action in this case had been courageous, as the accused were friends and associates of the King, who might even (someone has suggested) have been of the party.

“morality” which later became a mischievous source of trouble.

I should like to add, however, with regard to the change of feeling in progress during the eighteenth century in England, that I do not consider it mainly, or even chiefly, a by-product of Puritanism becoming ingrained in the lower middle class. To some extent, no doubt, it was that, but it was even more a result of developing social culture, a form of snobbery, the aping of a delicacy and refinement which was regarded as marking a higher class in life, and therefore a thing to be struggled for, although in reality it is not felt by those whom their inferiors believe that they are imitating. We see exactly the same process taking place in France in the seventeenth century (commonly associated with the Hôtel de Rambouillet and the “*précieuses*”), and proving equally triumphant. Early in the nineteenth century the aged Northcote told Hazlitt (as he records in his *Conversations*) that he remembered that when Goldsmith’s comedy first came on the stage there was a great uproar among the populace in the gallery at some coarse expression which subsequently had to be suppressed. Northcote added the significant remark: “The common people sought for refinement as a *treat*; people in high life were fond of grossness and ribaldry as a relief to their overstrained affectation of

gentility." Goldsmith, nevertheless, was a man of incomparably more delicacy and sensitiveness than the rude and vulgar mob that howled at him. I may add, of an equally distinguished contemporary of Northcote's, Sir Walter Scott, who carried prudery and sentiment to an extreme in his novels, that (as I was informed in youth by a friend with Scottish literary associations) Scott would tell coarse stories in private. For it is the populace that tend to enforce the tone in these matters and even to mould law.

We begin to see the encroachment of law in this field in a case that occurred in 1727. It seems the earliest recorded case in which a book was charged with being an "obscene libel" and condemned on that account, simply on grounds of "morality." The book was called *Venus in the Cloister*. The defendant was found guilty. His counsel made a motion for arrest of judgment, arguing that there had never been any such prosecution before in the temporal courts, that a book of this kind could not constitute a "libel," and that morals could only be censured in the spiritual courts. The Attorney-General admitted there was no precedent, but argued that peace may be broken without actual force, and that to destroy morality is to destroy public order, which is the peace of government. This specious pleading was accepted by the

court on the ground that religion is part of the common law, and that "morality is the fundamental part of religion," so that an offence against morality is an offence against the common law. As Schroeder points out, this decision clearly shows that obscenity, *as obscenity*, was not regarded as punishable. It was punished only in so far as it was regarded as a form of impiety. This appears in the next case (1733) when a woman was charged with running nearly naked along the highway. There was no punishment; the action was not "unlawful."¹ All through the eighteenth

¹ I do not know to whom must be credited the dubious honour of making nakedness unlawful. But this unlawfulness was completely accepted in the Victorian period, and remains an accepted convention even to-day, although it is falling into flagrant opposition with the ideals now becoming current among educated people. I read in the *London Times* of to-day (Oct. 7, 1930) that a young man at a sun-bathing camp is brought to the Police Court and fined £10 for having in the course of a discussion with two young ladies in a neighbouring non-sun-bathing camp, who considered the practice was "not decent," let fall the towel around his waist and declared: "If I am not decent I will be indecent." One might have thought that this act of bad taste would be amply punished by a glance of contempt, and that a young woman of to-day would possess sufficient anatomical knowledge not to be shocked by the sight of an unclothed fellow-creature of her own species. But the magistrate (a Mr. Robinson) was very solemn. "Take this as a warning," said Mr. Robinson to the young man; "otherwise you will soon find yourself in prison, the proper place for people holding such views as

century, indeed, charges of "obscenity" were only successful when combined with some other offence, usually "impiety." Schroeder remarks that, as the separation of the American colonies occurred before the end of the century, it cannot be claimed that the United States inherited from England any common law against obscenity.

During the nineteenth century, as we know, the charge of "obscenity," stripped of any pretence that it made either for violence or for irreligion, boldly entered the law courts and was accepted. It stalked unchallenged—save by a few ineffective protesters—through Victorian literature and Victorian life. Many false and foolish accusations may have been made

you do. I sincerely hope you will get rid of these extraordinary views as soon as you can. You will not be allowed to continue to practise these views unless you want to be in the clutches of the Law." These "extraordinary views," as Mr. Robinson considered them, are those beginning to be held by intelligent people everywhere. But, only two days before this magisterial pronouncement, an article on "Justices' Justice" appeared in the *Week-end Review*, written by a well-informed lawyer, in which the incompetence and senility of English magistrates (notable exceptions being admitted) are faithfully denounced, and there is no need to say more, since in that same number of the *Review*, though in another connection, I read that "the record of the Robinsons is pitiful to contemplate." That no doubt is too extreme; nor must we forget the venerated figure of Robinson Crusoe, who has been described as the typical Englishman.

against Victorianism, but there can certainly be no doubt that it was bewitched by the fear of obscenity. Sordidness there might often be, conspicuously displayed on the surface of life, but obscenity was completely banished from that surface. Its humorists themselves, rather a feeble folk indeed, were prudish. Even its cartoonists (Rowlandson, who had more genius than any of them, had died in 1827) were tamely conventional, when they were not vulgar, but never obscene. The fear of obscenity became, indeed, a haunting obsession. And really, when you came to think of it, there was nothing that might not be obscene. As the century grew older that became increasingly clear. For obscenity, however it might be defined—and there was never any agreement as to how it should be defined—usually meant at least two things. On the one side it certainly meant nakedness; whether verbal nakedness or physical nakedness, it was the unclothing of some thing that in public is habitually clothed. There could not be any doubt about that. But it also meant something sexually provocative. That was evidently essential. For unless this unclothing induced sexual activity how could it be “immoral”; why should it be prohibited?

We all know what happened under these conditions. Not only were many scientific books inevitably “obscene”—because science

necessarily speaks without disguise—and therefore suppressed; but in the sphere of literature and art there was evidently a boundless field for the exercise of the anti-obscene impulse. “Four-fifths of the greatest novelists,” a sound critic has said, “have written books which our magistrates’ interpretation of the Cockburn judgment would necessarily condemn.” From Rabelais to Joyce a large number of the masterpieces of literature were haled into court and condemned. Shakespeare was obscene. Even the Bible—which a few centuries earlier had been regarded throughout Christendom as a sacred book—was declared by the legal officials of the nineteenth century obscene, especially in American courts, and punishment was meted out to those who published some selections from it. The naked body was also declared obscene, not only in real life (so that there was endless debate as to how many inches might safely be exposed) but also in pictures, though here, I understand, a distinction was often made, and while a back-view was permissible, a front view was declared obscene; it was the obverse of the human medal that was obscene, the reverse was indifferent.

While the origin and legal developments of the conception of “obscenity” have been well traced by Schroeder, the two authors of a later book, *To the Pure . . .*, have adequately dealt

with its subsequent growth and present position in England and the United States. These writers, Morris Ernst and William Seagle, in fortunate collaboration, represent an active interest in both law and literature, and their book, at once serious and vivacious, is perhaps the most competent and attractive popular presentation of the question we at present possess. The title, it is true, however convenient as a label, may contain implications we do not all accept, for when St. Paul uttered the famous dictum: "To the pure all things are pure," he was not discussing literature or pictures or the cinema, but a matter to which they are hardly analogous. There are many things in books and so-called art generally which the pure may be justified in not feeling to be pure, although there can never be any agreement as to which things these are. That indeed is one of the solid and permanent arguments against a censorship of "obscenity."

Fortunately it is only as a label that the authors have chosen their title for a book which is at once a competent history of the Anglo-Saxon censorship from the Victorian period until to-day, and at the same time a cogent and yet singularly temperate argument for freedom from censorship. We have too often seen the slapdash hand exercising itself in this field. The foolish and extravagant rhetoric of those who fulminate against "obscenity" has been matched

by the random and reckless smartness, sometimes scarcely less foolish, of those who took the other side. It was fully time to approach the question in a sane and serious spirit, which is not less so for allowing the play of wit and humour.

A yet more recent book—this time of English origin—is *Keeping it Dark or the Censor's Handbook* by Bernard Causton and G. Gordon Young (1930). Here also the approach is sane and serious, while the whole subject is comprehensively though concisely considered. The authors advocate the complete abolition of obscenity laws as involving fewer dangers, and less harm, than are entailed by the present dark and subjective methods of procedure.

That, probably, is the view now tending to prevail, though we cannot say that it yet prevails. "I am firmly persuaded," says Bertrand Russell, "that there ought to be no law whatsoever on the subject of obscene publications." Every such law, he remarks, has undesirable consequences; it cannot forbid the bad without also forbidding the good, and the bad works little harm in the presence of rational sex education.¹ Still more significant is the opinion of those who have taken an active interest in the suppression of obscenity. "Many

¹ Bertrand Russell, *Marriage and Morals*, 1929, pp. 91, 94.

legislative acts and regulations have been passed involving prohibitions and varying degrees of censorship," it is said in an editorial note of the *New York Journal of Social Hygiene*. "All have failed to accomplish their full purpose."¹

The test of "obscenity" can, obviously, only be subjective. Nothing is in itself obscene apart from the human observer. This is clearly indicated by the definition of obscenity most often brought forward—if any is brought—in law-courts: "which excites or promotes sexual desires."

Such a definition reveals an unsuspected simplicity or ignorance on the part of the lawyers who formulated or accepted it. In doing so they delivered themselves unaware into their enemies' hands. There may indeed have been a time—though it must have been very remote—when the recognised stimulants of sexual desire were so crude and obvious that there could be no doubt about them. But such a time has certainly long passed away; it had passed long before the psycho-analysts arose to show, rightly or wrongly, that we live in a pan-sexual world.

The fact is that there are now few things in life or in art which may not be "lewd," "dis-

¹ *Journal of Social Hygiene*, Dec. 1930; and in a previous editorial (June, 1929): "'Obscenity' law is more apt to be a boomerang than a sword of justice."

gusting," and "lascivious" (accepted synonyms for the legal "obscene") to the feelings of some people and to the minds of others. This has long been known to those who saw and realised the facts. It is extremely common in susceptible subjects, men or women, for ordinary natural sights and incidents of constant occurrence to arouse sexual feeling ("lewd," "disgusting" and "lascivious," if you find them so). In persons sensitive to erotic fetichism, as many if not most people are in some degree, all sorts of objects, even of the least obviously sexual character, may become thus stimulating. In recent years, moreover, the psycho-analysts, by including the exploration of the unconscious strata of the mind, find reason to believe that sexual associations may be endless. If we are to abolish the possibly "obscene" we must efface the whole world.

Much the same must of course be said of literature and art. There is no end to the list of famous books which obscenity-hunters banned or sought to ban. Some of the most famous books of the nineteenth century, now treated with reverence, were on publication prosecuted, and often successfully. There appears to be no definition of obscenity which will not condemn the Bible. Moreover, on the practical side, it is known that the young find their chief source of information concerning sex—birth, masturba-

tion, birth control, rape, and perversions—from the Bible. This was, for instance, shown not long ago in a careful inquiry by a distinguished authority in social hygiene, Dr. Katharine Davis, among over a thousand unmarried women, all college graduates. The same women were also asked what they found most “sexually stimulating” (in the police courts it would be phrased “lewd, filthy, and disgusting”). The largest number replied: “Man.” The problem thus becomes of tragic consequence, for we see that if “obscenity” is to be suppressed it can only be done by the extinction of one-half of the human race. And as men, if asked the same question, would in an equal majority undoubtedly answer: “Woman”—why, there goes the other half. The censors of “obscenity” are too solemn to realise that they are perpetrating a joke, and too unintelligent to know that the joke has serious, even tragic, aspects.

It is impossible to estimate the social damage which has been done by the outworn taboos of obscenity. It is these taboos which have delayed until to-day the effort to combat venereal diseases and the discussion of the population question. The names of the evils were too “obscene” to mention and therefore the evils themselves were allowed to flourish unchecked, or else left to specialists and officials to discuss in technical terms. In another field

the difficult problems raised by psycho-analysis have been dragged from the sphere of science where they belonged, to be perverted and distorted by the fascination or the repulsion of the taboo against obscenity. Even in the sphere of history and biography the taboo against obscenity has stood in the way of an accurate knowledge of personalities and events; while now that the taboo is losing its force there is naturally a movement to the other extreme, with a tendency to distortion in the opposite direction, and we magnify the importance of the facts that before we were not allowed to see. For it is not one of the least evils of outworn taboos that even the inevitable reaction they lead to is evil.

It seems so simple, so innocent, so entirely praiseworthy, to put down indecent literature by laws against "obscenity." We are none of us in favour of what seems to us indecent. It is impossible we should be, for the word means, if we search into it, simply what is unfit. Yet the simpler and more fundamental the conception of decency is seen to be the more it eludes any prescription of positive law. It is determined by the nature of the individual himself, by the feelings of his social group, and very notably by fashion. Most of us are old enough to know that less than twenty years ago the whole young womanhood of to-day would have been held guilty of indecency in dress and liable to be

conducted to the nearest police station. In literature fashion is even more uncertain and elusive than in life, for the good reason that it is not produced by mass-action. Endless examples have been brought forward of such fluctuations of opinion regarding books condemned by law; as well as examples of books legally condemned as obscene in England and free in America, or legally condemned in America and free in England. "The obscenity of to-day," it has been said, "will be the propriety of to-morrow."

Law is made ridiculous when it is thus prostituted to the fashions of the hour. It is made immoral when it is perverted to the supposed protection of children. It used to be "women and children" who were held to be in need of such protection from the dangers of "obscenity." It is now only children, for women have rightfully insisted that in this matter they are henceforth to be put on the level of men and not of children. The problem of the child remains. It ought to be clear that we are not entitled to protect children by laws which also extend to adults and thus tend (sometimes with too much success) to convert adults into children. It is for the parents and teachers, one cannot too often repeat, to protect the children, and to protect them, above all, by teaching them to protect themselves, which can only be done by facing evil, and not by fleeing from it.

Yet it is admitted (as by Ernst and Seagle) that there is a "twilight zone of disputed control between parents and government." In the realm of economics it is rightly held that the forces against the child should be restrained by laws prohibiting long hours of work and similar hardships. But to protect the child against "obscenity" by legislation is not only more difficult and more dangerous but less necessary. Pornography has no meaning and no attraction for the healthy child who casually comes in contact with it; the reaction is one of indifference, if not of disgust. To-day if any harm is caused it is less likely to come from pornography than from the crudely exaggerated films of vice, presented by virtuous propagandists of social hygiene, which are apt to cause a painful shock to the virginal mind, just as the tender skin of the infant is injured by the hot bath of a temperature wholesomely stimulating to the adult. There are many uncensored things in life far more injurious to the young than obscenity. "A minors' pornography law" has indeed been suggested by Ernst and Seagle, but tentatively, with much doubt, for, they add, education, through school and home, will prove the better solution. Parents and teachers must be trusted to aid the child in guiding himself safely through these risks, without injury to the freedom of adults. To-day this is being recognised, by

parents and teachers alike, even if not yet always in ways that are according to knowledge.

A revaluation of obscenity is very far from meaning a justification of the things that most reasonable people find ugly and unpleasant. But it means a different attitude towards their suppression in practice. We know the results of the attitude which has prevailed in the past. We have all been the victims of it. A premium is put on things that are dirty and worthless. It is law alone which makes pornography both attractive and profitable. As Nietzsche long ago said: "One cannot do a thing a better service than to persecute it and run it to earth." In England a simple-minded Home Secretary arises and declares that he feels it to be his duty to protect the young from the awful dangers that threaten them in books, postcards, and cinemas. Needless to say the young of to-day are not in a mood to be preserved from these dangers, which can always be reached, sooner or later, with a little trouble and money. And no doubt such things often give rise to some gloating, though, in the absence of prohibitions, they would have induced only indifference or dislike. The motive for producing them would then soon disappear. At the present time, thanks to the premium put on them, the production of obscene postcards and similar things is so large that even the number of those seized by the police soon

mounts up to millions. All of us, it is probable, have once been stirred to gain access to such things simply because they were forbidden. For my own part, I remember how, long ago, in a quiet street of Seville, a furtive and shabby individual drew me aside and produced from beneath his long cloak a little book with coloured illustrations which curiosity induced me to spend several pesetas in buying. I found it pathetically crude and unpleasant, and quickly destroyed it; my curiosity was once and for all satisfied. Such things are far away from art or science, which redeem whatever they touch, if it happens to need "redemption."¹

We must not indeed lull ourselves into the belief that this question is already settled. The dead hand of the nineteenth century is still upon us, even upon those who imagine that they stand in the van of advance. We may trace it in a pamphlet on *Pornography and Obscenity* pub-

¹ The *Bibliotheca Germanorum erotica et curiosa* (1912-1914) of Hayn and Gotendorf reveals the extent, progress and national difference in so-called "pornographic" literature. It appears from this scholarly bibliography that translations from the French account for a large number of items. It is possible to form curves of the rise and decline of such literature; in 1815 and in 1870 it flourished—together with, whether as result or cause, the reaction against it—more than now, since now we possess greater freedom in permitted entertaining literature. In England it has been especially the literature of flagellation and of masochism which has flourished.

lished (1929), shortly before his death, by D. H. Lawrence, who had himself suffered more than once at the hands of the official censors of "obscenity." Yet he falls into strange confusions and would himself "censor genuine pornography." The censorship he would establish, however, might prove more alarming than that of which he complains, and would certainly be even more difficult to work. He has a personal and peculiar definition of "pornography," under which the *Decameron* would go free as suitable alike for old and young—a statement we may possibly be willing to agree with—but *Jane Eyre* and *Tristan* would come perilously near to condemnation, while his test of what is "pornographic" (very different from the original meaning of the word) seems to be a tendency to promote masturbation in place of normal sexual intercourse. How Lawrence could suppose that Charlotte Brontë's novel is more likely to lead to masturbation than *Lady Chatterley's Lover* (assuming that either of them is), or how he could suggest that Wagner should be suppressed, remains obscure. He realises that it is secrecy which causes the evil, and yet he would prohibit and render secret a large part of our literature and art! Nothing could be more muddle-headed.

At the same time as Lawrence's, and in the same series, appeared a pamphlet by Viscount

Brentford: *Do we Need a Censor?* When Lord Brentford was Sir W. Joynson-Hicks and Home Secretary, he became conspicuous by many decisions and opinions concerning the prosecution and suppression of "obscenity" which caused deep and wide indignation among the friends of freedom in literature and art. So that I took up his pamphlet expecting to find full confirmation for the attitude I had adopted in the days when he was Home Secretary.¹ But, to my surprise, the final conclusion he now reaches is entirely my own! Whether it was that his experience had taught wisdom, or that the serene heights of the Upper Chamber had made it possible for him to see things in clearer perspective, I cannot tell. But though in the course of the pamphlet he makes some dubious statements—and still believes that so debatable a matter as morality can be brought within the sphere of law—he reaches the conclusion that this is a matter which really concerns the "heart," and that we are approaching a time when prosecutions will be out of date: "By the spread of education," he concludes (adding, like a good Churchman, "the extension of religion"), "the people will themselves learn to reject all forms of unpleasant conduct, literature, art. If the people learn not merely to disregard, but

¹ "The Censorship of Books," *Nineteenth Century and After*, April, 1929.

to detest all these forms of indecency in thought, word, and deed, the day will come when no form of censorship will be needed, when there will be no prosecutions for breaches of the law, and when Acts of Parliament will be a dead letter on the Statute Book." Indeed, with the zeal of a new convert, Lord Brentford here goes far beyond what we can ever reasonably expect. There will never be a time when the whole population live up to his ideal, nor need we even desire that they should. What we may reasonably expect is that with the spread of education—and especially education in sex—together with the wider extension of that good taste which is at present too exclusively the possession of a small though really increasing class, the evils which Lord Brentford deplors will be negligible.

What, however, Lord Brentford failed to see when he was Home Secretary, and apparently even still failed to see when elevated to the Peerage, is that his ideal can never be approached through a system of repression and prohibition. "Without secrecy," Lawrence truly says, "there can be no pornography." As long as there is secrecy there will be pornography. Obscenity there will be under all systems, for it has a legitimate and natural foundation; but the vulgar, disgusting, and stupid form of obscenity called pornography—the literature and art that are a substitute for the brothel and of the same

coarse texture—has its foundation not on Nature but on an artificial secrecy. So that the net result of that system of repression which still prevails among us is—as Causton and Young well say—“to keep the world safe for pornography.”

On this point I find another ally in the House of Lords whose opinion seems sounder and more temperate, and one who speaks with greater authority, no less an ally than the present Archbishop of Canterbury. He is against censorship in this matter and against taboos. He could not conceive, he has declared (*The Times*, May 29, 1930), any form of censorship which would be tolerable. “Any kind of taboo in these matters was bound to defeat its own ends. There was only one way to prevent the circulation of bad literature, and that was to promote the circulation of good literature. That would do more than any revival of a moral censorship of the Press.” When archbishops preach these sound doctrines of common sense I begin to feel that it is time for me to be silent.

For the truth is—one cannot too often repeat—that literature and art that are “obscene” in any genuinely objectionable sense will be unlikely to appeal to normally healthy minds when not surrounded by secrecy and prohibition. *The market in pornography is artificially created.* That is the central fact of the

situation. No one would read a book because the Home Secretary recommends it; there is a vast public to read a book because he condemns it. He and his subordinates are responsible, not merely for the advertisement of what may properly be termed "filthy," by conferring on it the charm of the forbidden, but, by creating the demand, they are directly responsible for the creation of the "filth" which supplies the demand. That, we must always remember, is the central fact of the situation, so far as the crudest and most offensive productions are concerned. It is the point on which the whole question of obscenity and censorship ultimately turns. For wholesomely born and bred persons obscenity is no problem. Legislation is uncalled for when mischievous taboos are abolished. With children reasonably brought up—for which we need, first of all, the right parents—and progressively familiar from childhood with the central facts of life, the perverse zeal of our Home Secretaries and Public Prosecutors will no longer create a market for pornography.

It is fear—in reality a kind of fear-complex—which dominates the people who practise secrecy and enforce repression in a matter where secrecy and repression are obviously against nature and therefore certain to produce results which are worse than futile. Fear, undoubtedly, is a valuable part of the equipment which Man

has inherited from the higher apes from whom he arose. Their special mode of life, the absence of powerful weapons of defence, and the inaptitude for rapid movement render necessary an extreme degree of shyness, caution, and timidity. Man has built up many walls of protection against the inherited dangers to which he is thus liable, and within these walls, or even without them, he has sometimes shown a new courage which his humbler ape-like kin mostly failed to reveal. But the old aptitude for fear is still too deeply rooted not to be constantly in evidence, sometimes with good reason, and sometimes in epidemic panics.

Such an epidemic of panic, once prevalent in Europe, was that aroused by witchcraft. For three centuries European life suffered a strange and tragic obsession of fear over witchcraft, leading to endless horrors. A certain amount of belief in witchcraft is indeed world-wide. But even among savages it seldom becomes an overwhelming obsession. It was not so in Europe until as late as the thirteenth century, and the attitude of the Church, which is the institution chiefly in question where demonology is concerned, was one of incredulity and comparative tolerance. In the middle of that century, for instance, the ruling Pope refused to allow the Holy Office to extend its activities to the persecution of so-called witches. It was

during the following century that the change occurred, and early in the fifteenth century, following a Papal Bull, tales of horror concerning the doings of witches had free course in all circles of society. In the famous *Malleus Maleficarum*,¹ published at Cologne before the end of the fifteenth century, the whole theory of witchcraft was codified and expounded, and, as it has been said, the stage was set for a tragedy which during the two following centuries was to be enacted in more or less the same form in every Christian country. The conception was formulated in the heads of theologians and lawyers, and the victims were tortured until "confessions" were obtained corresponding to the ideas of the judges.² There were enlightened persons who realised, more or less clearly, how the phenomena arose, but even in the eighteenth century and later witchcraft was sometimes regarded as a serious matter.

As the obsession of witchcraft died down during the eighteenth century, another obsession, that of obscenity—having a curiously similar origin in perverse religious notions—

¹ This important work has been translated and edited by the Rev. Montague Summers (Rodker, 1928). Summers believes that witches have always been pursued unremittingly.

² Garçon and Vinchon, *The Devil: An Historical, Critical and Medical Study*. Translated from the French, London, 1929.

arose to take its place. It seemed that the prehuman thirst for fear must have something to feed on, and when witchcraft lost its terrors the new diabolic iniquity of "obscenity" was found to serve as well. The witch-finders of the seventeenth century are indeed a close counterpart of the obscenity-finders of to-day. The lurid halo around the witch made her a really injurious influence, just as the glamour we now cast around obscenity imparts to it an influence it could not otherwise possess. Witchcraft, like obscenity, was not always the product of the witch-finder's imagination. But so far as it was real it could not be touched by the ducking-stool or the law-courts. It became harmless under more reasonably humane and civilised influences.

It was precisely at the time when the development of science and civilisation was leading to the proper estimate of witchcraft that the ferocity of the persecution of witches reached its height. We may say the same to-day about obscenity. The old sex-tabooes are dissolving. We are beginning to face openly the facts of sex with a degree of intelligence and frankness which even a quarter of a century ago was impossible. That new honesty and sincerity itself stirs up the persecutorial fanaticism of the descendants of the witch-finders. Yet until "obscenity" goes the way of witchcraft it is idle to talk of civilisation.

The close resemblance of the later obscenity mania to the earlier witchcraft mania seems to have been first pointed out by Theodore Schroeder in 1911 in his "*Obscene Literature and Constitutional Law*". It has often been remarked on since. Schroeder, indeed, denied that there was any objective reality whatever either in witchcraft or obscenity. As we have seen, it is not necessary to go as far as that. There is a natural and more or less morbid element often to be found in the witch, and it is perfectly legitimate to describe obscenity as the usually concealed side of natural fact. It is the development in both cases into an obsession that is unnatural and illegitimate, the tendency by which they are elaborated and formulated into sacrilegious and illegal entities to be haled before tribunals and condemned to punishment. When no such mania is working on perversely ingenious minds, the proper place of witchcraft and obscenity, even if they possess objective reality, is seen to be outside of law-courts.

It is beginning to be seen to-day. The legal conception of "obscenity" has been carried to such dizzy heights of absurdity that it is toppling over into laughter. A new knowledge of the benefits of sunlight, with new habits of dress and new conventions of feminine modesty, have changed our vision of the human body, while the horrors of the Great War, which stands out

as the chief event of the early twentieth century, brought ridicule on the pruderies in action and speech of the Victorian drawing-room. The young generation of the eighteenth century, in their new philosophic enlightenment, had learnt too much to be afraid of witchcraft. The young generation of our own century, in their new sexual enlightenment, have learnt too much to be afraid of obscenity. Yet this episode in the spiritual history of our race, though shorter than that of witchcraft, has been serious enough, for it has maimed the freedom of art, and hampered the finest social and individual activities, alike in deed and speech. Nor is its day yet over. The final conquest of the human spirit over "obscenity" still lies before us, and its decision is in our hands.

V

THE CONTROL OF POPULATION

THE question of the control of population is usually referred to in popular language as Birth Control. The term is of recent origin. It was devised in New York by Mrs. Margaret Sanger and a few friends in discussion. There was already, indeed, the term "Neo-Malthusianism," invented in England, together with the movement it indicated, in the middle of the last century. But it was felt that that term assumed a particular economic theory which might not necessarily be accepted, or even understood, by many who would still be convinced and even ardent advocates of the movement on its practical side. At first, however, the new term was little used, even by those who had devised it; they were content with other terms, like "Family Limitation," which is less satisfactory because it is narrower, "control" not necessarily involving "limitation" at all, and yet being of the essence of the process because it makes clear that children have ceased to be the result of mere chance but that their coming has been desired

and deliberately willed. So that when I first came upon the term "Birth Control," which was before it became general, I at once seized upon it as the best term and have often used it since. It is true, there are some precise people who find that it is not absolutely accurate; but it is a term that cannot fail to be understood, and the more accurate alternatives have not commended themselves.

The name is recent. But what it stands for is ancient. "Birth control," indeed, and its substitutes—especially the latter—have been in active operation ever since birth began to take place on the earth, and even earlier, from the commencement of animal life. That is why it is possible to look at this question as one having an evolutionary meaning.

An old friend of mine, a physician who was also something of a philosopher and keenly interested in the problems of life, once had occasion at his dentist's to take nitrous oxide gas. It not infrequently happens that in this state we are brought before fundamental problems of the world, and my friend found himself in the presence of the Almighty. He took advantage of the occasion to seek the solution of the mystery of life. What is it for, all this toil and trouble that fills the earth? And the awful reply came in one word: *Reproduction*. We may accept that revelation as the

statement of the biological "end"—so far as we may use such a word—of all life on earth.

So vast, indeed, may be said to be Nature's desire for reproduction—speaking in our human way—that in the multiplication of offspring an enormous margin has always been allowed for accidents. A great many more creatures are produced than could possibly subsist if they reached maturity. All but a few do in fact fail to become mature. That is fortunate; for it has been roughly estimated that a single infusorian, if allowed to increase to its full capacity, would soon produce a mass of protoplasm larger than the volume of the sun. A single oyster, if all its progeny survived, would speedily accumulate, it is estimated, a heap of shells eight times the size of the world, while as a cod may yield seven million eggs, and a ling twenty-eight millions, it would need a very short time indeed for a single pair to render the whole ocean a solid mass of fish. The omnipresent English sparrow, it is said, if none died but from old age, would in a few years cover the earth, one to every square inch. Even a single pair of elephants, the slowest animals to breed, would in much less than a thousand years produce ninety millions of elephants. It might be supposed that Man is an exception to this rule. But it is not so. Civilised Man, in some regions, as in the United States in the past, has

been known to double his numbers in twenty-five years, and Darwin estimated sixty years ago, that, at this altogether possible rate of human increase, the population of the United States alone would in a few centuries cover the whole surface of the globe so thickly that four men would have to stand on each square yard. There is indeed one important difference, when we compare Man with other animals in this respect, that while they generally do not increase or diminish at all on the whole (except by human interference, designed or undesigned), any excess or deficiency in one season being soon smoothed out, and the general balance of life thus preserved, Man retains no such equable level, but in a few places tends to die out altogether and in most places tends to overcome the obstacles to increase, though he never anywhere even approximately reaches the rate of increase possible were all obstacles removed.

These are elementary biological considerations. It is necessary, however, to hold them clearly in mind, because they are the foundation on which any human policy of living must be built up. It is necessary, that is to say, in establishing any ordered system of life, that we should remember that life was built up at the first under conditions which presupposed the absence of intelligence and that there was consequently the need of an enormous margin,

to allow for the certain destruction at an early age of the great majority of living beings. As life has evolved towards the higher mammals, living things are better equipped to contend with the destructive agencies of the world, and therefore the offspring of the higher mammals are not nearly so numerous as of the fishes and other lower vertebrates. Yet even the most civilised human races inherit the aptitude to produce an enormous surplus. Whenever, therefore, Man takes up the task of ordering life on a rational and human basis he has to meet the problem of deciding what is to be done about this surplus.

All human societies have been perpetually concerned with this problem from the outset, to a large extent unconsciously, to an ever-increasing degree consciously. Malthus, at the end of the eighteenth century, in his famous *Essay on the Principle of Population*, by a systematic survey of the various races of the world made clear how the natural tendency to excess of population was among every human race naturally checked in a great variety of ways, *preventive*, by the exercise of a restraint on procreation, and *positive*, by the destruction of the excess due to unrestrained procreation. These positive checks, he considered, were extremely various and included every cause, whether arising from vice or misery, which in

any degree contributes to shorten the natural duration of life. Under this head he enumerated all unwholesome occupations, severe labour and exposure to the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nursing of children, great towns, excesses of all kinds, the entire train of common diseases and epidemics, wars, plagues, famines. The whole of the obstacles to increase of population, preventive and positive, he regarded as resolvable into moral restraint, vice, and misery. The wide survey which Malthus made of this process among all the peoples of the earth up to then observed, is quite independent, it must be remembered, of the particular theory of the ratio of human increase compared with the ratio of the increase of the means of human subsistence, with which his name is associated and which has often been violently attacked, no doubt with more or less reason. The facts remained, whatever might be thought of the details of the theory put forward to explain them.

Half a century later Charles Darwin appeared, inspired by the ideas of Malthus, but working in the totally different field of biological evolution. In his *Descent of Man* Darwin briefly discussed and enumerated the influences preventing the indefinite growth of population. The primary or fundamental check he held to be the difficulty of gaining subsistence and of living in comfort,

this primary check acting among civilised nations chiefly by restraining marriage. He added, as very important among the poor, a high death-rate of infants, and a generally greater mortality from disease at all ages. The effects of epidemics and war, he pointed out, were soon counterbalanced, under favourable conditions more than counterbalanced, while emigration he realised to be only a slight and temporary check. He considered that prudential restraints, by delaying marriage and in other ways, are common among savages, and that the offspring of savages are subject to many risks and dangers. He observed that Malthus failed to lay enough stress on infanticide, which is probably the most important of all checks to population. Following Hume, Malthus believed indeed that the permission to practise infanticide was not a check at all but an actual encouragement to population. Malthus also passed over abortion.

During the period that has followed Darwin's work in this field the activity of ethnological observers all over the world has accumulated a vast amount of facts concerning the attitude of different races to the question of population and their actual practice with respect to offspring. The results are summed up in a work, *The Population Problem*, by Professor A. M. Carr-Saunders, which is likely long to remain a land-

mark in the study of a problem of the first consequence for human happiness and civilisational advance. Carr-Saunders made clear that among all savage peoples one or more methods of limiting population are adopted, and that by these methods, working automatically and often consciously, the population is preserved at an almost or quite stationary level. As this holds good of peoples living a nomadic life as hunters or fishers, like primitive man, it seems probable that such controlling influences came into action early in man's career, certainly in the later Paleolithic period, and probably before then.

The methods by which population is consciously or automatically controlled, and increase limited, are numerous. They fall into two groups, the first acting before conception, by decreasing fertility, and the second after conception, and indeed throughout life, by increasing elimination. Most of these two groups of methods are found among peoples even in very early stages of culture.

The methods of the first group, which naturally tend to become ever more prominent as civilisation and the foresight which accompanies it develop, are least important in the earliest stages. Nor are they always to any high degree effective. Thus pre-pubertal intercourse, which has been included among such influences, seems

of doubtful efficacy; it might even be held to act in the opposite direction by ensuring pregnancy at the earliest possible moment, though it may not be favourable to a high quality of offspring. Prolonged lactation is a more effective method, and is not unknown to the lower social classes in civilisation. The women of some savage races continue to suckle their children sometimes for very long periods. Thus the women of the extinct Tasmanians, who were an extremely primitive people, prolonged lactation for from two to four years, the Australian women about the same time, and sometimes even until the child was five or six years old. In quite another part of the world, in North America, the practice is similar. Among some Californian tribes, Schoolcraft (as quoted by Carr-Saunders) found that the child was sometimes not weaned until five years of age. Further North the same practice prevails, sometimes for a still longer period; and in Greenland Nansen even heard of children of ten or more continuing to take the breast. Similar reports come from all parts of the world, not only as regards hunting and fishing peoples, but also agricultural tribes; thus in Africa the suckling period is estimated to last nearer three than two years. During lactation, as is well known, pregnancy is unlikely to occur. That is further ensured, in many parts of the

world, by the prohibition of intercourse during lactation.

This is probably the most important of the taboos which constitute a special group of methods for controlling birth. They were especially studied, first by Robertson Smith and later by Frazer and Crawley, who have shown how for primitive peoples matters of sex are felt to be dangerous, only to be approached with many precautions, and frequently to be altogether avoided.

There are a number of occasions in life when, for peoples living in many parts of the world, intimate intercourse between the sexes is held to be full of risk, spiritual or material. Some of these taboos were only operative under circumstances (such as war and hunting expeditions) when intercourse was not likely to take place. Yet they were so numerous and sometimes so prolonged (the entire population of Egypt, according to Diodorus, had to abstain from intercourse for seventy-two days after the death of a king) that they could not have been without effect. What we now consider the most important method of limiting population, and specifically term "birth control," the method of permitting intercourse but preventing conception, is, and so far as we can tell always has been, rare among primitive peoples of any type, though most savage peoples object to

childbirth outside marriage.¹ It is not surprising when we remember that there is reason for believing that many primitive peoples have not known what precisely caused the production of children and have attributed it to various fantastic causes. Even when we know or suspect its existence, it is often practised in ways so ineffective, and even of purely magical character, that its influence can scarcely have been great. We must not, however, suppose that it was entirely unknown or altogether without effect. The story of Onan in the book of Genesis shows that the practice was recognised in the ancient traditions of the Hebrews. It is worth noting, also, that that story cannot be taken to indicate that the practice was reprobated; it was the motive of Onan that constituted his sin: he objected to obey the divine ordinance to raise seed to his brother's widow, on the selfishly individualistic ground that the resulting child would not be counted as his own; therefore, we are told, the Lord slew him, but we are not told that the Lord had any abstract abhorrence of his method of birth control.

¹ Malinowski, among the Trobriand Islanders of New Guinea whom he has studied so elaborately, found that, though youthful pre-marital intercourse is common and recognised, pregnancy is rare. This remains a puzzling phenomenon.

When we survey the general working of these methods of the first group—the methods of limiting fertility—we are bound to conclude that, though an undoubtedly real influence, they are hardly adequate to account for the very low birth-rate which we everywhere find among the lowest, and therefore probably the most primitive, human races. Nearly everywhere, all over the world, the savage family seldom consists of more than three or four children, counting all births. A family of five children is usually a large family.

When, indeed, we consider broadly the question of the sexual impulse among primitive and savage races we seem to be brought to a conclusion which I set forth some years ago in an Appendix to the third volume of my *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. It used to be thought that savages were more licentious and more sexually inclined than civilised peoples. But the more we know of them the more we are compelled to conclude that that is often the reverse of the truth.¹ Savage peoples must for the most part lead a hard and strenuous life, with little about it to arouse the softer emotions.

¹ We must of course admit wide variations. Thus while among the Trobrianders Malinowski found youthful sexual indulgence generally accepted, in another part of New Guinea Margaret Mead (*Growing up in New Guinea*) found sex minimised, even in early life, by shame, puritanism, and the fear of spirits.

It would frequently seem to be only under special circumstances and on the occasion of some periodic festival orgy that sexual activities are strongly aroused. They remain latent in a much greater degree, and for much more prolonged periods, than is normal among the civilised, even though among the civilised there are usually more restraints on their more easily aroused desires. The small procreative activity of savages and primitive peoples would thus be due not so much to strong measures for controlling and restraining conception—though these often play a large part—as to the presence of a temperament which is without the need for strong measures of control and restraint. Nature herself limits procreation by limiting the impulse to procreate.

This is rendered the more probable when we recall that—as has been pointed out by Walter Heape, the pioneer of the modern study of sexual physiology, as well as by others—we see precisely the same difference between wild and domestic animals. Wild animals, in their natural and strenuous condition of life, are comparable to savages, and domestic animals, in their easier and more artificial life, to the civilised. And we find that there is just the same corresponding sexual difference. Not only is the sexual impulse aroused much more easily in the domesticated, but breeding tends to occur more

frequently than in the natural wild condition, and reproductivity is increased. Thus (as Beebe has shown in his splendid monograph on the Pheasant Family) the Red Junglefowl of south-eastern Asia, which is the aristocratic ancestor of our Domestic Fowl, resembles his rather degenerate descendant in many respects, but in his sexual habits he is notably different. He is monogamous, not polygamous, and in place of the servile submission of the modern hen and the easy callous dominance of the modern cock, she is independent and hard to win, and he must spend much time in a long, arduous, and skilful courtship in order to gain her favours. That is the common and almost universal difference between wildness and domesticity in animals, as between savagery and civilisation among human beings. Thus the conclusion is confirmed that while restraints on the sexual impulse are easier to impose and carry out in savagery than in civilisation, that is because the impulse itself is less imperative and for long periods in a natural latency.

So much for the ways in which among primitive and savage peoples births are controlled by prevention. We may turn to the other group of ways in which, births not having been prevented, the only control must be by subsequent elimination. The chief of these methods are infanticide, hardship, ignorance

and lack of proper food leading to high infantile mortality, wars and feuds, disease, the killing of the sick and infirm. It is the first of these that is the most important, and also the most interesting because deliberate and apparently unnatural. As we have seen, Malthus failed to realise its importance, which was emphasised by Darwin, and even exaggerated by McLennan. How important it is among savage peoples is clearly brought out by Westermarck in the careful and learned summary of facts concerning its wide prevalence and great extent in his *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*. It is frequently not merely permitted, but enjoined by law or custom, even against the parents' wishes. Sometimes not more than two children are allowed to a family; in some regions nearly every woman has destroyed four or five of her children. But everywhere this can only be carried out shortly after birth; later, it would be murder and as such punishable. Moreover—as indeed we might expect—it is usual for the children selected to live to be treated with even an excess of tenderness and indulgence, to a much greater extent than is common among the poorer classes in civilisation, among whom large families, even when not felt to be an infliction, are beyond the strength of the mother to tend. It is found that in small islands, as in the Pacific, the stress

on infanticide is very stringent : without it, the population would soon outrun the means of subsistence, for their territories are strictly limited by inter-tribal arrangement, and so will only support a limited population. But it is also curious to observe that the real reason for limiting the growth of the population is seldom understood by the peoples who practise it, and they commonly assign all sorts of reasons, or merely " custom," for the economic reason which renders infanticide, in the absence of any sound method of birth control, really imperative. The other methods for the restraint on population by elimination are mostly independent of human will, like disease and hardship, or at all events not primarily directed to this end, like wars and feuds. They do not seem to be so important as infanticide. We might expect disease to be full of danger for primitive and savage peoples ; but it is not so. Carr-Saunders has well brought together the facts and arguments indicating that disease is rare among such peoples, of many of whom it can be said, as of the Tasmanians, that " before connexion with the whites the aborigines were a healthy as well as a happy people." Diseases, on a broad survey, seem to be mostly of comparatively modern origin—some of them indeed probably of very recent development—and due partly to the artificial conditions of civilised

existence and partly to the excessive aggregation involved by civilised life, conditions which only begin to be overcome by hygienic and medical skill in the most advanced stages of civilisation. It is hardship and deficient food, common in savage life, rather than diseases, which cause infantile mortality at this stage.

When we turn to peoples in a higher stage, the stage of barbarism leading on to civilisation which comes within the view of history, the picture is modified. There are the same methods of decreasing fertility and of increasing elimination—one or more of which is found in powerful operation among every people on the surface of the earth—but their relative importance is changed and their forms are sometimes modified. Infanticide became still more common, among those who were the leaders in civilisation almost universal. Egypt, China, Japan, Arabia, Palestine, Greece, Rome, Northern Europe—in all these cradles of high civilisation infanticide has flourished; nearly always the infants of obviously inferior quality have been destroyed, but the practice was seldom strictly confined by that consideration. Moreover, infanticide tended to be supplemented, and gradually in part or altogether replaced, by the attenuated form of abortion. This was indeed found among many of the primitive and savage peoples, but with the

growth of refinement it became more common and it has now largely replaced infanticide altogether. As physicians well know, women to-day of all social classes feel no horror of abortion, though they would not dream of contemplating infanticide, and seem often to find it hard to realise that, by the man-made laws of most countries, abortion is counted a crime.

Another check to fertility which begins to acquire a new prominence among the historical races is celibacy, alike in its religious and secular forms, or delay in marriage. Among the primitive and savage races, as we know, though taboos on intercourse were frequent and sometimes prolonged, everyone who was not hopelessly imbecile married usually at the earliest possible age, and the tendency to a single life, which increases with civilisation, cannot but powerfully aid the checks on fertility. At the same time we find, though still so rare as to be generally negligible until recent years, a slightly increased attention to the methods of what we now specifically term "birth control."

All these checks on procreation are then increased. But the increase was necessary, for the energy of procreation itself had increased. Among the historical races families have always been larger than among primitive and savage peoples. The more settled life of Neolithic times, out of which the great historical races

arose, the organisation in closely knit communities and ordered towns, the consequent accumulation of wealth, made life easier and the earlier restraint of hard conditions on life which had itself prevented large families was removed. So that even the increased checks on fertility were not enough to restore the balance, and an increased severity of the methods of elimination was also needed. A new importance attaches among historical races to disease. Carr-Saunders believed that it was, precisely, amid the aggregated centres of population developed during the Neolithic period that many of our modern parasitic diseases arose. So that the same influence which caused the increase in population also caused an important check to population. Wars, too, began to acquire a new effectiveness as a method of eliminating the superfluous human populations, especially when the Iron Age introduced more adequate methods of human slaughter than had hitherto prevailed, a process which has gone on with an accelerated skill and rapidity to our own day, so that it is now estimated that before long, unless some new methods of control are established, it will be possible by pressing a button to destroy the whole population of large areas. The mortality of wars in the past, however, has been due more to the pestilences and famines following them than to actual

slaughter in battle, and, as we know, during the last Great War the deaths due to influenza in various parts of the world were far greater than those due to the war.

These are the general tendencies which have been at work during the ten thousand years or so of the historical period; such have been the influences increasing fertility and such have been the influences counteracting that fertility. On the whole they have been fairly successful in maintaining, not without much friction and misery, an even balance. It has been roughly estimated that up to the year 1800 the natural increase from the beginning, that is perhaps for a million years, had only attained a world-population of about 850 millions. But since then a cataclysmal change has taken place which, in one way or another, has affected nearly the whole of the earth's population. This change has been of a three-fold nature. There has, firstly, been the immense stimulus furnished by the Industrial Revolution beginning near the end of the eighteenth century and associated with the steam engine and the subsequent outburst of mechanical inventiveness; therewith the whole of life—production, consumption, procreation—was speeded up. Secondly, following on this and to some extent even preceding it, there came the development of the medical, sanitary, and

hygienic sciences and arts which not only countered the new risks to health and life of urban over-population caused by the Industrial Revolution but went further, increasing the health and longevity of the whole population everywhere, and vastly diminishing the mortality and the prevalence of some of the most devastating epidemic diseases all over the world. Thirdly, and acting in the same direction, the slow development of humanitarian feeling, the feeling of Christianity in particular and civilisation in general, has largely suppressed many of the methods by which fertility had always been diminished and most of the chief methods by which the population is directly and deliberately reduced. Thus three new forces of world-wide influence, yet unknown in the world before, all began to exert pressure in the same direction at the same moment, early in the nineteenth century.

These three great movements are still working among us, still developing, even taking on new forms, and leading to new social impulses never dreamt of by those pioneers who first worked to initiate them.

I do not propose to discuss in detail these new forms, and it would indeed be premature, for it is not profitable to deal with situations which are independent of our determining influence until they actually arrive, all the less perhaps

since, until they have arrived, they are apt to arouse a ferocious antagonism in many excellent people. Any remarks I may here put forward are, therefore, uttered *sotto voce*, as it were in a kind of self-communing which no one need overhear.

In the first place, one cannot but note that the stimulus of the eighteenth-century Industrial Revolution is entering a new and totally different phase. The revolt of the workers in the early nineteenth century in the belief that the machine would destroy the worker, with the machine-destroying riots in the North of England, was on the short view mistaken. The immediate effect of machinery was to create a real and effective working-class. "Labour" in the modern sense was born, and soon gained power, and therewith came trades unions, socialism, communism, and the rest. But in the long run that dread of the workers lest machinery should extinguish them is likely to prove to some extent justified. Man has harnessed Nature to the car of labour, all the natural forces are being utilised or transferred to replace human work.¹

¹ As I write I come on an excellent statement of this process by Professor Leopold Ziegler (*Forum Philosophicum*, Vol. I., No. 1, 1930): "There is no flowing water, no seam of coal, no metallic stratum or oilfield, perhaps soon no ray of the sun nor lightning flash, nay, no atom, no elemental quantum of matter which will not yield up its

The workers are reduced to a minimum, while, on the other hand, the production of commodities, which the unemployed workers cannot afford to buy, is accelerated to a maximum.¹ This phase, which we are now entering, is sometimes termed that of "rationalisation," and it brings with it, as Hobson points out, the realisation that some degree of international government must override national sovereignty, where the wider human interests are concerned.²

But at the present moment the process, however rational, means that the world contains far more workers than it can employ and far more goods than it can consume. So that we view

chained energies to the insatiable hunger for more power. Man is being freed from manual labour and Nature allowed to create and work. Here stands, the centre of all admiration, the power-plant automatically set and kept in motion, from whose clear and well-lighted halls the occupants have almost completely disappeared, while generators, dynamos, and turbines run by themselves. If the modern strategist is proud of the 'empty field of battle,' the engineer, the real man of the hour, is no less proud of the empty field of work."

¹ Thus in the United States, even if we go a few years back, it was found in 1927 that with 5 per cent. fewer employees American factories were turning out 7 per cent. more product. No end can be seen to this process, for the possibilities of technological improvement are practically unlimited.

² J. A. Hobson, "A World Economy," *New Statesman*, April 18, 1931.

an unexampled world-wide condition of unemployment and industrial stagnation, which, while it will not in its present state prove permanent, represents a temporary exacerbation of what must be a permanent tendency until we have stabilised industry and prices, and that can only happen when we have stabilised population. One result will be an internecine struggle (such as at the moment exists in Australia) between Labour and the industrial system which Labour was created to carry on, a struggle in which one party can only strangle the other and therewith itself. Industry, which once loomed so conspicuously on the stage of the world, is retiring into the background as a comparatively unimportant though still essential part of life. The workers will shrink into a comparatively insignificant, though still valuable, section of the community, and will be transformed in mental and physical characteristics, for in many spheres, with the new mechanical delicacy now secured, a child can perform to-day what it needed a navvy to perform yesterday. That indeed is recognised as an essential part of the process now going on, for as industrial progress becomes more specialised skill becomes less so, and labour is tending to become to a large extent merely automatic machine-tending. The proletariat—at the very moment when its triumph is being proclaimed—

is approaching extinction, and as it draws nearer to the goal its mental abilities dwindle.¹

But though the labouring class shrinks it remains alive—even more alive under our present comfortable conditions of life than ever before—merely becoming the “unemployed.” While human skill is, on the one hand, working to make human beings comparatively unnecessary, it is, on the other hand, working with equal zeal to keep human beings alive and even to multiply their number. With that fantastic absurdity which puts him apart from all other animals, Man undoes with one hand what he does with the other; he creates life with tremendous energy, even as though he were thereby fulfilling a divine mission; and at the same time he devotes an equally tremendous energy to the task of making life almost

¹ These lines were scarcely written when a statement absolutely in harmony with them appeared from the pen of a distinguished economist, J. M. Keynes (“Economic Possibilities for our Grandchildren,” *Nation*, London, Oct. 18, 1930). “The economic problem,” he here declares, “may be solved, or be at least within sight of solution, within a hundred years.” But this can only happen, he points out, provided we control population, avoid wars and dissension, and give to science the control of those matters which concern science. Meanwhile, he continues, let us encourage, and experiment with, “the arts of life.” This has been my own view of the problem for over forty years (as in the Introduction to *The New Spirit*, 1890).

impossible. Thus in England at the present moment forty million pounds a year (quite apart from an equal sum devoted to ordinary Poor Law relief as it used to be termed) are spent on keeping alive the vast unwanted army of workers no longer needed, and all the resources of science, medical, hygienic, and sanitary, are employed to prevent or cure disease, and increase still further the ever-increasing longevity of the population and the ever-diminishing chances of death.¹ At the same time the Governments of the nations are blind to the devastating effects of the vast flood of human life which they recklessly let loose on the world, not only doing nothing to stay it but on the contrary seeking to tie the hands of those who would educate the nation in the vital task of controlling procreation. This has brought about what has been called "a systematised lunacy." It was fabled of old that the world was destroyed by a flood; it is by a flood that the world is threatened to-day, but not of water, and not by Jehovah, but by Man himself.

Ziegler believes that, by transferring its hand-work from human workers to mechanical automata, society is making of the displaced working class its own mortal enemy, and

¹ Thus as regards infant mortality the average in London at the middle of the last century was 157 per 1,000; in 1927 it was only 59.

perhaps preparing the downfall of our civilisation. The cloud-castle of prosperity is fading to nothingness, as an unintended secondary result of the inevitable rationalisation of commercial life. At the same time the vast industrial army of unemployed and unemployables, bred in intensive culture as parasites, prey upon the marrow of the nations, and being hopelessly demoralised by the compulsory idleness which soon becomes second nature, will become, Ziegler believes, the vengeful soldiers of any upheaval.

But, I have asked myself before and would ask again, why need this now unprofitable army be maintained? If the old industrial system, which involved a vast proletariat army of often ill-used units, is now over and done with, why should we not recognise facts, rejoice in them, and prepare the way for a new and better order? No doubt there must be a painful stage of transition. But to allow the continued procreation of an army of workless parasites which may at any moment turn and rend those who feed them is a kind of lunacy which scarcely deserves even to be called systematised.¹

¹ By Act of Parliament (Mental Treatment Act, 1930) there are legally no longer any "lunatics" in England; but it is a good old English word, and I propose to continue to use it, when it seems to me required, any reader who objects being requested to substitute mentally for the term "lunatic" the term "fitting inmate for a mental hospital."

Our period of rationalisation, which cannot be carried on indefinitely, needs to be followed, as Ziegler himself states, by "a period of deliberate irrationalisation," that is to say a deeper and wider grasp of the elements of reality in life. There will always be workers, and work is always good, while a workless class—whether the masters of old Rome or the unemployed parasites of to-day—is an evil and destructive element in society. But the possibilities of work are infinite.

This extinction of the industrial proletariat of the past does not mean that workers will be abolished. On the contrary, it may more truly mean that there will be no class but that of workers, with the important distinction that none of them will constitute a proletariat and that even the machine-tenders, who must always be a considerable body, will be left free by their simple activities to develop themselves in some wider field. Work, it must be remembered, is natural; all animals tend to work; idleness and parasitism only occur among creatures whose ordinary or previous channels of work have for some reason or other been closed to them, and without work they degenerate. There is, therefore, no disrespect to work or the workers if we state that the machine-workers of the former industrial age are tending to be extinguished, for that merely means that, ceasing to constitute

what is called a proletariat, they will reappear as a higher working class with greater possibilities of absorbing all other classes.¹

I am not called upon to say what the chief forms of work will be that lie before that coming class. If I were, I should say that it can only be what in the widest sense may be called Art. For the possibilities of art, and the variety of mediums in which it may be exercised, are practically endless. It must needs be so, since art, rightly understood, enters into all human activities and all the satisfactions of human needs. I speak of art without mentioning science, by no means to belittle science, but because even science, when it is not debased, is itself an art. All the great representatives of science have been great artists, and while life is not possible without the everlasting thirst of science it is also true that science is not wholesome unless it is kept true to the whole of life, which is essentially art. And if there is any

¹ When this was written I had not read the admirable essay on "Revolutions," in Aldous Huxley's *Do What you Will* (1929), in which the disappearance of the proletariat is discussed and explained. But I consider that Aldous Huxley views the outlook too pessimistically. In the worst ages of the world there have been delightful redeeming points, and even the same age has often been glorified or damned according to the standpoint of the spectator. At the worst we are free to follow our own daimon, and if men therefore wish to kill us, well, as Charles Kingsley would have stammered, "L-l-let 'em!"

one art which comes before us as of fundamental importance and immediately urgent, it is surely architecture. To take only the city with which some of us are most familiar, the destruction, the replanning, and the rebuilding of a great part of London is a task that cannot be too soon undertaken, for the comfort of its inhabitants and the joy of future generations.

The third movement, that of humanitarianism, which acquired such enormous momentum during the nineteenth century, is, above all, the modern movement which now needs to be guided into the channels it must in any case sooner or later inevitably find. With its earlier forms we need not quarrel; we can recognise them as beneficial and even necessary. The task of making sanitation, wholesome hygiene, the extinction so far as possible of devastating epidemics, due consideration for the lower animals, the cure and prevention of disease, the preservation of life and the extension of longevity, into national aims has been a social discipline of inestimable value. Even its cost in time and labour and money has constituted a precious part of that discipline, and the fact that it has been faced and accepted is a promise that the same courage will be found to face and accept the new forms of humanitarianism which now lie before us.

The discipline was needed. When we look

back at the social history of even a century ago, as recorded in the newspapers of that age, we see prevailing a degree of callous brutality, if not of absolute cruelty, in an atmosphere of indifference and sometimes of complacency, which to-day seems to us appalling. The voice of humanity was, indeed, from time to time vigorously raised, but it with difficulty effected any practical change, and humanitarian social feeling had no existence even as a phrase.

Humanitarianism has now become a part of our civilisation. It has been indeed so intensified, so driven into special channels, and these have been so fossilised, that it needs to be revived and reinvigorated and enlarged. There is such a thing as a morbid humanitarianism, and beneficent as was its first movement a century ago, it now needs fresh blood and the energy for new movement. Consider, for instance, the present so-called humanitarian attitude towards capital punishment. When a man was hanged for burglary and even lesser offences, that question was rightly regarded as urgent. To-day the abolition of capital punishment may still be desirable (and perhaps especially desirable on account of the morbidly sensational interest it arouses in the vulgar crowd), but to regard it as urgent, to make of it a cause for energetic propaganda, to show so much anxiety to preserve the lives of feeble

and anti-social specimens of humanity for the torture of life-long imprisonment while yet tolerating the destruction of hundreds of thousands of the best lives in war—that is an attitude which would be ludicrous if it were not pathetic.

The humanitarianism that will soon be called for, if it is not already demanded to-day, is at once both broader and more discriminating. The excessive horror of pain is out of place when we realise that pain is an essential part of all growing life, and that it is only unessential and unprofitable pain that we should seek to prevent. The destruction of life, similarly, has itself been a part of all life from the beginning. It was rooted in Nature long before Man appeared, and Man cannot with impunity escape it, though he may exercise control over it. That control is most wisely exercised by ensuring, so far as possible, that the finest specimens of our race are not destroyed. To foster wars, in order to kill our "heroes," as we regard them, while taking so much care to safeguard the lives of our "criminals," is not the course of wisdom.¹

¹ It may be that the future, instead of trying to safeguard the lives of criminals, will cultivate a more enlightened conception of criminality. If, as is now held, the criminal is essentially the anti-social person, the murderer or the burglar is not the only anti-social person, or even perhaps the worst. The person in authority who impedes the accomplishment of any great beneficial move-

We cannot expect, and we cannot desire, that the vast army of persons who become maimed or diseased through no fault of their own, should be killed off. Future ages may well look back with horror at the days when everything in life was planned except death, and men and women were meekly content to let their exit from the world be ordered by the chances of disease. We can at least ensure that those who find life an intolerable burden should have social support in the courageous resolve to throw off that burden, and accept what is termed euthanasia. Moreover we can adopt beneficent measures to diminish at the outset the number of those who are, or will probably prove, maimed or helpless.

It is here, indeed, that we still have an opportunity of manifesting that heroism which so many think we shall lose when war and the militaristic attitude are things of the past. It is, of course, a foolish thought. There is just as

ment bringing health to body or to mind, whether of the individual or of the community (some, no doubt, will think of those who impede the spread of birth control or censor the manifestation of art), is, in accordance with the great principle long ago magnificently asserted by Milton, worse than any ordinary criminal and may some day be considered more worthy to be hanged. A crude and narrow view of criminality is the inevitable consequence of superficial life-values, and so long as our public retain a crude and narrow intelligence we shall have all—or more than all—the criminals we deserve.

much room for heroism in peace as in war, and it is just as often being manifested, though for the most part in unobtrusive ways that are not announced on newspaper placards. But the militarists may be cheered to think that, even when war is totally abolished, there is still a place in morality for murder, and an infinitely more humane place than that occupied by murder in war, that is to say by killing the unfit, not by killing the fit. Only so can we be true to the instincts that have created Man.

It is the aim of eugenics to eliminate, so far as possible, the unfit stocks, which by their constitutional defects lower the level of human achievement and increase the difficulties of social life. But in the state of our knowledge to-day, and probably for some time to come, this is extremely difficult. So complicated is heredity, so various the order followed by the inherited genes in constituting the new individual that the more cautious Mendelian investigators sometimes think it may take thousands of years before we can make much progress, through methods of deliberate selection, in raising the level of the race.

But there is a simple method of working towards the purification of the race which has perhaps prevailed from the beginning and been held in honour in the highest civilisations, including those of Greece and Rome from which

we ourselves so largely descend.¹ It is one of the unfortunate results of Christianity among us to-day—amid other results more fortunate—that we were led to reject infanticide, and that we still feel compelled, to our own pain and trouble, to the injury of the race, and to the misery of the victims of our supposed “humanitarianism,” to keep alive even the most hopelessly maimed and defective of new-born infants. We know in the back of our minds that we only do it out of a quaint superstition. So timid a race have we grown, so meekly crushed by the dead hand of a tradition that for us has ceased to have any meaning, that our “humanitarianism” is now a ghastly spectre! We suffer the fate we deserve.

It used to be said that the Great War has cut us off from the past and led us into a new world. It is not probable that many still cherish this delusion. There seems to be no animal so thick-skinned as Man. A sharper prick than that of the Great War—sharp as that seemed at the time—is needed to pierce his tough hide, to arouse into action those

¹ While a general right of life and death over the new-born infant was recognised in Greece and Rome, it was usually only as regards defective and monstrous offspring that the duty of destruction was enjoined. (See, e.g. Westermarck, *Origin and Development of the Moral Ideas*, Vol. I, pp. 408–11.) This limitation seems altogether reasonable and desirable.

sensitive impulses of which, now and again, we catch a glimpse that quickly passes out of sight. I have faith that some day, in whatever poignant shape, the truth will come to Man that life is an art, and that in art there is no place either for violence or for sentimentality.

Yet a sane attitude towards life may be nearer than perhaps we know. When once we have put war out of the world—as sooner or later we are bound to do in a world that is so small and amid a human race so closely knit together—and all the wanton and cruel and mischievous methods of violence associated with war, we shall be able to face life more reasonably. Pain and death are a part of life. To reject them is to reject life itself. But we have to learn how to apply them and to put them in their right place. There is no longer any room for war in the world, but there will always be room for heroism, and with the highly sensitive and sympathetic disposition that civilisation may in time generate, the choice of pain and death, for others and even for oneself, cannot fail to call out the heroic spirit. The old humanitarianism, with its morbid terror of pain and death, effected much that was good. But its day is nearly past. The abolition of war, when that comes, will finally abolish it. We are reaching the day of the New Humanitarianism.

These statements, I repeat, though intercalated here, are not put forward for discussion. They merely express the vision of the things that await humanity along the road we are now following. Nothing is gained by discussion. The most vital revolutions spring up from within; they are born in the heart and not on the tongue. They come, and are there before we know it.

How enormously effective these three great forces have been we witness to-day, although so novel is the situation that few have yet grasped its terrible significance. The population of the world which during a million years had grown so slowly, suddenly, in the mere flash of time which a century is in the earth's growth, doubled its numbers, and at the present moment is increasing more rapidly than ever in history before. Knibbs, a statistician in this field of the highest competence, estimates this increase as nearly twenty millions every year, so that every two years the world has to provide fresh food for the equivalent of a new France. Professor East, content to be more cautious, estimates the increase as fifteen millions per annum, and making a careful survey of the possibilities of the earth's surface and of the development of agriculture, he believes that the maximum population the earth can support is a little over five thousand millions. Here,

he says, is "the heart of the matter." At the present rate of increase the time when there will be no more room left on the earth is not so far distant but that some of our grandchildren will live to see it.

Now it is certain that the present rate of increase will not be maintained. The growing difficulty of obtaining food must cause an ever-larger number to perish long before every swamp has been drained and every desert and mountain-top rendered available for agriculture. But, if we assume that Man will continue to make but feeble efforts to control his own fate, while the final catastrophe will thus be delayed, it will not be averted. All life, when left to itself, follows the same laws, and it is quite possible to devise a small closed universe with lower organisms and to observe the result. Dr. Raymond Pearl, of the Johns Hopkins University, has done this with a small family of fruit-flies of the genus *Drosophila*. He took a pint milk bottle and furnished it with a soil of banana pulp and agar-agar sown with yeast, roughly corresponding to the closed-in universe of the earth on which we live, but of more convenient size. As the Adam and Eve of this universe a couple of flies were introduced with a normal progeny, and the bottle was stoppered with cotton wool which admitted nothing but air, and kept in a uniform tem-

perature. Every three days a census was taken. Life went on as in the larger universe, and it was found, moreover, that the rate of increase followed just the same course as that of Man through the ages. At first very slow, the rate gradually increased, reaching the maximum,—probably the point at which Man is now arriving,—and then began to decrease in rapidity, though numbers still increased, finally reaching a point at which the density of the population resulted in complete saturation.¹ There are disturbing influences in our larger universe not found in this smaller one, but the general drift of events is evidently the same. The rate of increase will be slackened. But it lies with us to decide whether this shall happen destructively, with accompanying misery and degeneration, or constructively, in accordance with increasing knowledge. The “unclean spirits” which now possess Man may rightly be termed Legion. We know what happened to those Gadarene swine who were possessed by the spirits of Legion. But it is still not too late for mankind to check the swift career down that steep place into the sea where the two thousand swine were choked. The goal of human life on earth, to return to Pearl’s conclusion, is now visibly in sight, and the great

¹ Raymond Pearl, *The Biology of Population Growth*, 1926.

question before us is : What kind of people are they to be who will inherit the earth? To-day it is still in our power to determine the answer to that question.

Here, at the threshold of eugenics, we must conclude our brief survey of the course of "birth control" and its substitutes in the past. Those methods of the past are no longer practicable; they are too crude, or too ascetic, or too cruel; that is why they have decayed. The method which comes before us to-day as a reasonably practical instrument, whatever its defects, for limiting the family and eugenically moulding the future race is the method of contraception, henceforth perhaps the most obvious though not the only form of "birth control." It is practically a new method, and as yet it has no measurable influence in restraining the ever-increasing flood of human fertility. The pessimists may shake their heads, but it is too early to despair of the future of humanity and meekly become the humble adherents of the Gadarene swine. Some day, let us be sure, the world will recognise all that it owes to those noble pioneers who, at the risk of obloquy, had the vision to see the fate that threatens Man and the courage to face it with hope.

VI

EUGENICS AND THE FUTURE

I

THUS we are brought to eugenics, a study in which all races of living things have from the first been unconsciously concerned, though it is only in the higher forms of human civilisation that it becomes a conscious concern. The word "eugenics" has, it is true, together with the supposed aims of its partisans, often been the object of cheap witticisms. Ground for amusement has in fact not seldom been afforded alike by cranks and by well-meant cranky legislation. It is just as foolish to suppose that a new race can be created by legislation as that a new morality can be so established. Professor East remarks that the word "eugenics" has been so bandied about by the self-complacent and the waggish that he hesitates to use it at all. But there is no occasion to allow weak brains to rule in this matter; the word is a good sound word, and it was the word finally chosen by Galton, to whom we owe the modern foundation of this supremely important

study. The figure of Galton, indeed, grows greater as the years pass. He was not only a highly original and versatile man of science—a supreme representative, one may indeed say, of the scientific spirit—but charmingly human, with a humorous common sense which preserved him from the fads which have been associated in some eyes with “eugenics.” All his general pronouncements on the matter, as apart from scientific studies, are gathered together in one small volume written in simple language; and to read this is to realise how far the chief exponent of eugenics was from those silly notions which have filled the minds of the opponents of eugenics.¹

The details of the methods by which the human race may be purified and invigorated Galton always left free and open; he knew that at the present stage of investigation they cannot be determined. He would rather have eugenics to be a kind of religion than a subject for legislation, doubtless realising that Parliamentary statutes are only sound in so far as they approximate to common law and merely assert that which the community is already spontaneously doing. It is education that,

¹ Sir Francis Galton, *Essays in Eugenics*, 1909. The *Life, Letters and Labours of Francis Galton*, completed by Karl Pearson in four large volumes (1914–1930), now renders possible a comprehensive study of his work.

above all, we need, education in existing knowledge and a determination to aid the further growth of knowledge, together with a training in personal and social responsibility. The English Society for the promotion of eugenics, founded under the inspiration of Galton, was originally called the Eugenics Education Society. Hasty or injudicious legislation has sometimes impeded real eugenic progress, which must work mainly through the free and deliberate choice of the individual. It is true that the most urgent eugenic task appears to be, not the propagation of what we imagine to be good stocks, but the elimination of those which, certainly or probably, are injurious to society or to themselves, and that the members of these stocks must sometimes in the last resort be induced by social pressure, and even perhaps by legislation, to undergo sterilisation. But it is beginning to be recognised that, in our social state, the really serious factor is to be found in the class of the population above that comparatively small stratum unquestionably unfit for society. A decrease among the grossly defective class may be accompanied by an even greater increase among the less defective class just above them. This is the opinion of Professor East as regards the United States, and Major Leonard Darwin—son of the great Darwin and long the distinguished President of the

Eugenics Society—believes that such a process is now probably taking place in England, with a threat of national decay, for “the whole tone of a nation is permanently affected by the moral and intellectual contagion which is due to the presence in its ranks of persons of inferior type,” even though they are not of the lowest type. No compulsory sterilisation can be enforced here; it is a problem which must be met indirectly.

This, we have to recognise, is one of the problems of eugenics which stretches beyond eugenics. For these are people who pass muster in the crowd, and they are so numerous that they have a controlling voice in the policy of a nation. These are the people who, whether they belong to the labouring class or the capitalist class, can take in times of industrial prosperity, but cannot let go in times of industrial depression, with no intelligence to see that they are thereby cutting their own throats; these are the people who in time of crisis snatch at the easiest and quickest and cheapest policy, without the foresight to know that they will repent of it at leisure; these are the people who are perpetually passing laws for the reform of other people which produce results the exact opposite of what they were intended to effect; these are the people who daily make their more far-sighted fellow-citizens realise that, even if

democracy is to-day the only tolerable form of government, a democracy of fools can but lead to ruin. Our eugenical prescriptions are helpless here. We cannot expect a democracy to eliminate—either by violent or by mild methods—the kind of people whom it often elects as its chosen representatives. It is probably education, in the largest sense of the word, that alone helps here, the education that lies in the ever wider expansion of that vision of the world which the few slowly create, together with the increase of the sense of social responsibility which must in the end bind together all the peoples of the earth. We must never imagine that eugenics alone can cure the ills of humanity.

Equally, however, it is not education alone. The danger to-day is, not that eugenics will be over-valued, but that education will. We find abroad in our democratic world an immense faith in a crude conception of education, witnessed, for instance, by the anxiety of Labour governments to prolong the school age, a step which may or may not be beneficial, and is probably not beneficial if applied indiscriminately to children whose capacities are limited and who might be better enabled to develop if removed from the confusing atmosphere of the schoolroom to the larger field of the world. Instruction, the piling in of facts, is not educa-

tion, and cannot safely be pursued with children of limited capacity; it is merely the overloading of weak stomachs, a process leading to various unpleasant results, none of them beneficial. Education, as the word implies, is the leading out of aptitudes latent in the individual to be educated, of which one of the chief is intelligence. But supposing the aptitudes are not there? We have to learn either to cut off the education at the point where it ceases to be beneficial and probably becomes mischievous or to cut off the stocks which fail to show in sufficient measure that prime quality of intelligence which, with the stable nervous system on which it normally rests, is essential to a wholesome life in our difficult and dangerous world. So that, even when we follow the path of education, we are brought up to eugenics.

The chief instrument by which eugenics must work, as we view it to-day,—a more essential and reliable instrument than the only less important one of birth control,—is sterilisation. In former days sterilisation meant castration, and while it was carried out extensively in that form, not only in the East for the production of eunuchs, but even in the West, where it was approved by great moral theologians of the Catholic Church as a remedy for sexual offences, or (with Papal approval) adopted merely to preserve the singing voices of boys,

it has now been superseded.¹ Castration, it is recognised, is harmful by depriving the organism of the internal secretions necessary for full development, which was indeed precisely the reason why it was adopted for the Papal choir. The methods of sterilisation now employed have no evil effect whatever on the organism. They merely prevent the sperm-cell or the ovum from reaching its normal exit, and so inhibit procreation, while leaving sexual desire and sexual potency intact in either man or woman. The operation itself is so slight that, on the man at all events, it can be carried out without

¹ Minor ecclesiastics and even the present Pope Pius XI (in his Encyclical *Casti Connubii*) have fulminated against sterilisation. But the Church attaches immense weight to tradition (I recall how, as a boy, a friend told me he had once heard an eloquent sermon from Cardinal Wiseman, and the impressive refrain throughout was: "The Church never changes!"), and it must be remembered that great moral theologians have found no objection to castration. The greatest of all, Thomas Aquinas, approved of it. Liguori, also, and other prominent moral theologians had no word of criticism for the castration of the soprano choir in the Pope's private chapel, which went on for centuries, until, indeed, it was considered that soprano voices were not needed. Dr. Joseph Mayer, a Roman Catholic priest, has studied the question of the Church's attitude to castration exhaustively in a work which has received the imprimatur of his ecclesiastical superiors (*Gesetzliche Unfruchtbarmachung Geisteskranker*, 1927). He comes to the conclusion that the Church approves of sterilisation in suitable cases. This view is widely shared by Catholic theologians in various countries.

interference with his daily work. That is why sterilisation has become the safest and surest method of contraception when procreation is undesirable. So simple is it indeed that the fear has been expressed (as by Dean Inge) that it "might become popular among men who for selfish reasons did not wish to have children." That possibility, however, it should be added, is by no means to be regretted. People who do not wish to have children are the last people who ought to have children; they could only make undesirable parents, and it is in the social interest that they should be shut out from parenthood. This is beginning to be seen.

Yet there are many prejudices and misunderstandings still lingering on from the past. The castration of old days left behind it traditions of punishment, ignominy and obloquy, at the least of a kind of shameful dishonour, and such notions, it is likely, still largely prevail among the populace and become attached to the new sterilisation. Even scientific men, ill-informed concerning recent advances of knowledge in this field, have thrown doubts on the desirability of sterilisation. Especially have they questioned the eugenic benefit of sterilising defectives. Such arguments, when they are not directed against extravagant claims for sterilisation, usually rest on fallacies, and it

would be out of place to discuss them here.¹ There can be no reasonable doubt that it makes for some benefit to the race, and is certainly for the benefit of the children who remain unborn and the parents who are spared the pains and trouble of begetting them, that parents who are mentally abnormal or defective should not beget or conceive children.

It is true, and well recognised, that a large number of defective children are the offspring of parents who are not under restraint and approximate to the normal; so that they cannot be brought under legal control for purposes of sterilisation. But these parents usually belong to neurotic groups, and it is possible to recognise them and to bring social influences to bear on them. Cases constantly occur in which to parents of this kind child after child is born in rapid succession, all more or less defective, one way or another, or even in the same way, as in a family of eight, all epileptics. After the first child in such a family (if not before) sterilisation might automatically take place,

¹ All aspects of the question are discussed in the *Eugenics Review*, the organ of the English Eugenics Society, and sometimes in the *New York Journal of Social Hygiene*, as well as in *Eugenics*, the organ of the American Eugenics Society. I may add that Dr. E. G. Conklin has dealt with the special and rather radical objections of Raymond Pearl to eugenics in Cowdry's *Human Biology and Race Welfare*, 1930, Ch. XXIV.

either voluntarily or by social pressure; yet, as Norman Himes and others have pointed out, how seldom at present is this done!

A question of frequent debate is how far sterilisation should be voluntary and how far regulated by legislation. My own prejudices in this matter have always been strongly on the voluntary side. Some surgeons appear to have a nervous terror that if they sterilise they may be doing an illegal act, even if they do so at the wish of the patient, and some legal opinions seem to support it, though it is difficult to see who could dispute a voluntary sterilisation, and on what grounds.¹ A law to regulate sterilisation, standing by itself, would look like class legislation, and be in consequence resented by those who ought to feel, not that

¹ The opponents of sterilisation have even fallen back for support on the ancient principle of common law concerning *mayhem* or maim, a word so old that its origin is unknown, though it was an important principle in a primitive community where everyone needed his own strong arm. "The loss of those members which may be useful to a man in fighting alone amounts to *mayhem* by the common law," Blackstone stated. Moreover, to constitute an indictment of *mayhem* there must, it is said, be "lying in wait," which covers the whole question of consent, while minor wounds, such as sterilisation is, were, it seems, not held to amount to *mayhem*. It is fantastic to invoke that ancient principle in this connection, and it is impossible to invoke any statute law, for none has ever been enacted in England for the purpose of impeding sterilisation.

a punishment is being inflicted on them but that a privilege is being brought within their reach. That result is best achieved by the free and open practice of voluntary sterilisation among all classes of the community.

At the same time, provided that such voluntary sterilisation is openly encouraged and practised, I am now willing to admit that legal facilities may be desirable to bring this method within reach, not only of the poor who otherwise would not have the means or the opportunity to secure it, but of the insane and feeble-minded under control, who can legally only give their consent through their nearest relatives, but for whom, alike in their own interests and those of their possible offspring, procreation is undesirable. It is quite possible for such parents to have tolerably normal children, but, with our increased sense of social responsibility, we begin to realise that in so serious a matter no risks must here be run.

In the United States a number of laws have been passed in many States for ordaining compulsory sterilisation.¹ These laws were often badly made as well as premature, frequently repealed or declared unconstitutional, and sometimes never carried out; they have even

¹ The position of the laws in the various States was fully set out up to date in 1922 by Laughlin in his *Eugenical Sterilisation in the United States*.

at times had the effect of preventing the operation from being any longer performed, thus, as it were, sterilising sterilisation. It is in California that a sterilisation law, not indeed entirely admirable, has been most effective, having been applied to many thousands of subjects and worked in a reasonable way.¹

The sterilisation of the insane or defective in California, being in the ordinary course carried out by agreement with the husband or wife or nearest relations, when the patients are not legally competent to give their consent, it is interesting to know what on liberation they ultimately think about it. Those who oppose sterilisation seem to be under the impression that sterilised persons would regret an operation done on them in a legally irresponsible state. In Californian mental hospitals, indeed, sterilisation is not performed if strong objections are offered to it, though, by a wise precaution, the inmates of Mental Homes are not allowed out, even for a short period, without sterilisation. Yet, in spite of the operation being, at all events by law, compulsory, there is no reason to believe that the sterilised persons often resent it. A special inquiry at a later date among persons who had formerly been inmates

¹ Dr. Paul Popenoe has dealt in detail with the results in numerous articles in the *Journal of Social Hygiene* (1927-8) and elsewhere.

of such Homes elicited the fact that only a small proportion, whether of males or females, regretted it or were displeased, while none showed any indignant resentment. This is the more notable as among such patients—abnormal, morbid, and sometimes liable to strong and fantastic prejudices—such resentment might well be expected.¹

The insistence on sterilisation is needed because of late the subject has become a battlefield for the opposing opinions of those who assert and those who deny its eugenic value and general advantages. The belief in its value is growing, but there are always those who on the other hand bring forward arguments which are sometimes sound, though we may believe that they are far from carrying all the weight that their advocates would attribute to them. Thus it is said that the compulsory sterilisation of certifiable defectives alone would have but little effect in diminishing the number of defectives in the next generation. This may well be, but those who bring forward this argument do not seem to be aware that, none the less, the majority of defectives come of parents who are totally unfit to procreate, subjects of mental instability, subjects whose germ cells are in some way faulty, and who are

¹ Paul Popenoe, "Eugenic Sterilisation in California," *Journal of Social Hygiene*, May 1928.

the carriers of defects more serious than their own. These people constitute a considerable proportion of the community, and are often worthy members of it. But they are unfit to procreate, and, in so far as they do so, they are anti-social members of the society to which they belong. It has been estimated that the sterilisation of even one-tenth of the population would produce an appreciably beneficial eugenic effect on the whole nation.¹ To make such a statement should also be to state by implication that there is here little room for legislation. It is by the increase in the knowledge of heredity, by the spread of education among the masses of the population, and—perhaps above all—by the growth of the sense of social responsibility, that alone real progress is possible. It should be added—and indeed importantly—that, at all events in England, there is a singular timidity among surgeons and among persons in authority with regard to carrying out sterilisation, and a mysterious dread of possible disapproval, even when there is complete assurance of the beneficial

¹ This is the estimate that has repeatedly been put forward by, for instance, the *British Medical Journal* (e.g. July 5, 1930, p. 27), though without actually advocating the measure, and it is not sufficiently emphasised that such sterilisation must be, in the main, voluntary, and that legislation here would, even if possible, prove futile and mischievous.

nature of the procedure. Timidity is in moderation a desirable trait, but in excess it is a form of imbecility and ought to be regarded as a disqualification for any position of high responsibility.

The study of eugenics, regarded as a biological science, will, we may reasonably expect, throw light on our path through difficulties which cannot be confined to a single nation. It is probable that the United States of America will here play a conspicuous part. Just as Germany has taken a leading part in the study of sex on its psychological side, and the Institute of Sexual Science in Berlin is the first of its kind to be established in the world, so the seed of that special branch of the study of sex on its biological side which we call eugenics may be said to have been planted in America. It was Noyes, an American whose name is not likely to be forgotten, who threw out the first modern suggestion of "Stirpiculture" in practical shape. Half a century later it was in the United States, at Cold Spring Harbour, and in close association with the station for Experimental Evolution, that was erected the Eugenics Record Office, the first building to be devoted solely to the study of human evolution or race biology, under the direction of Dr. Charles B. Davenport producing so much fruitful work.

Social movements embodying the impulses

of racial regeneration must necessarily be altogether apart from purely scientific studies in biology, though they cannot fail to derive inspiration and guidance from them. Sexual choice, sexual mating, to some extent even the production of offspring, remain personal matters. They belong to a sphere in which the individual is supreme. In this field, as we know, a change is taking place which, though not originated, has been accelerated by the Great War, and may be observed alike in Europe and in America. What is needful is that this movement should follow lines that make, not for deterioration, but for social and racial progress.

We see that the real question of population has become the question of eugenics : how can we now replace the aim of quantity by that of quality? When we grasp that problem in all its branches we see, further, that it is most intimately bound up with our personal lives. And when we recognise how the problem presents itself to-day we shall realise that, from the wider human standpoint, it is also the most vital problem of society.

II

“What remains to a legitimate eugenics movement,” it has been asked, “when the race problem is dropped from its programme?” It

is a reasonable question to ask. At a time when the eugenics programme of many eager would-be eugenists contains so many items that had better be dropped, one may well ask what remains.

As I am one of those who, like Dr. R. H. Lowie who asks that question, believe that much remains, I should like finally to state the grounds and the nature of my eugenic faith. And in the first place, as Dr. Lowie states, it is important to clear away the rubbish that merely encumbers the ground on which a sound eugenic faith has to be built up.

The race problem, with which some have sought to obscure the eugenic problem, may indeed be eliminated at the outset. It is another question, and a question only profitable for the historian to consider. Even apart from the important fact that there is probably not a single person of really pure race to be found anywhere, the eugenicist as such is not concerned to decide which is the best race, nor even to assume that any race is better, taken all round, than any other race. There is something to be said for every race, and the more to be said the better we learn to know it. The preference for one race above another is little but the outcome of prejudice, often due to the fact that one believes, rightly or wrongly, that one possesses oneself a strain of that preferred racial blood.

The eugénist is not called upon to prefer one race above all others and to work for the extinction of the others.¹ If we come to that, it is quite likely that, on a referendum being called, the darker races of our earth, who happen to be in a large majority, might vote for the extinction of the white race, and, moreover, find many excellent reasons for that decision. Ultimately, we are bound to conclude, pigmentation is a question of exposure to the sun's rays, whether ingrained in race by natural selection or acquired by heredity; it is a problem, not for the eugénist but for the biological anthropologist. The eugénist, whether the dark-skinned eugénist or the white-skinned, is not called upon to make any decision in the matter. He is simply called upon to improve the stock of the race within which he belongs. So far as Europe is concerned, and the lands which have been peopled by migrations from Europe, there are, as we know, three main races, though it might be possible to reduce them ultimately still further: the Mediterranean Race of dark long-heads, the Nordic, or, as it might be better to call it, the Baltic Race, of fair long-heads, and, as a wedge driven in between these two from the East, the Alpine Race, round-heads of

¹ Elie Faure has suggestively discussed the virtues of white, yellow, and black races in his *Trois Gouttes de Sang*, 1929.

medium pigmentation. Each of these races finds its partisans, especially among those persons who believe that they themselves belong to it. The Mediterraneans may claim that they were the pioneers in European civilisation and progress, the larger part of classic antiquity, and the still more ancient cultures on which that antiquity was founded, being to their credit; the Alpines boast their proficiency in the arts of peace, and point to the fact that the man of genius tends to approximate to their type, whether or not of their race; the Nordics claim to be the most adventurous, the most individualistic, and sometimes the most warlike. It is the Nordics who have perhaps been loudest in proclaiming their own virtues, above all in Germany, where, however, they do not predominate, but also to some extent in France and in England and in America.¹ It may perhaps be permitted to a largely Nordic person, ancestrally rooted in a mainly Nordic region, to attempt to take a reasonable and impartial view.

There are some persons, to-day, who deplore the approaching extinction of the Nordic race, for they believe, on the most dubious grounds,

¹ The rather careless statements into which even a moderate and sagacious champion of the Nordic race may sometimes fall are illustrated by Professor McDougall in his Lowell Lectures: *Is America Safe for Democracy?*

that it is perishing. But without the least wish to deny the great achievements of the Nordic peoples in the world, it may well be that the Nordics possess many qualities which have sometimes proved mischievous. It has, for instance, been possible to maintain that it was mainly the lust of conquest, the ferocious procreative instinct, the immoderate greed for wealth, the cunning intrigues, of largely Nordic peoples, not on one side only but on both sides, which led up to the Great War, as well as to many European troubles of earlier times. If there is any likelihood of the Nordic Race leaving the earth, it is to be feared that many will be overheard to murmur: Thank God.¹

These, however, are not problems which directly concern the eugenist as such. It is really sufficient for him to know that, excellent or pernicious as Nordic blood may be, we scarcely can find it unmixed, but nearly always

¹ Professor Nicefero, the distinguished Italian sociologist, in his learned work, *I Germani*, has dealt faithfully with the extravagant claims of Nordic champions. In the reaction against such claims, however, we must not undervalue the great Nordic qualities of individualism, essential to all high culture, and too easily submerged at a time like the present when collectivist and standardising movements, alike in Russia and America, are so pronounced. See a thoughtful and well-balanced discussion by Dr. Lars Ringbom, *The Renewal of Culture* (1929), written from the standpoint of Finland, where the two opposing ideals are both racially represented.

blended with Alpine or Mediterranean stocks or both, and that when we do find it comparatively pure, we find peoples who are of less account. The same, indeed, may be said also of the Alpines and the Mediterraneans. Wherever any of these three races are comparatively pure, whether in Sardinia, or in the isolated mountainous districts of the Central European Highlands, or in remote Northern regions, we are in the presence of peoples who have been left behind in the race. It is the hybrids who have come to the front, not only as individuals but also as nations. Germany, France, Great Britain, the Scandinavian countries, Russia, and Holland, that is to say the chief lands in which there is a large Nordic element, also possess a large Alpine or Mediterranean element, if not both. This is notably so as regards France and England. In both those countries all these races are blended, and that, without doubt, is a large part of the secret of their powers of achievement in the world. It is open to the narrow-minded partisan to assert that one race alone in the blend is the superior element. This has been amusingly illustrated in England during recent years. Before the Great War it was commonly believed that this superior element was the Nordic. But the War caused many people to think that terrible vices might be inherent in the Nordic Race, and so-called

anthropologists came forward to assert that the English nation was largely of Mediterranean Race. They were quite right. If Spain and Italy had joined in the War on the opposing side, these same people would have come forward to declare that, after all, the English nation was largely of Alpine Race. They would still be quite right. Eugenics, properly understood, has nothing whatever to do with these squabbles. It accepts the race of a human stock, or its blend of races; it desires that the stock shall produce the finest results of which it may be capable.

We must not only dismiss from eugenics the endeavour to foster one particular race of mankind under the impression that it is superior to all other races, we must also refrain from trying to cultivate, within the race, only one particular type of individual man as our exclusive ideal. It has taken some time to understand this point. Even Galton, the founder of modern eugenics, so moderate and reasonable in most of his demands, was inclined at first to think that we should actively seek to promote the production of the best stocks. There are two possible divisions of eugenics: positive eugenics, directed to the improvement of good stocks, and negative eugenics, directed to the repression of bad stocks. In 1901 Galton thought that to increase the productivity of the

best stocks is far more important than to repress the productivity of the worst. But seven years later he declared that this latter task of repressing the worst stocks is " unquestionably the more pressing subject." It is evident that he was on the way to the conclusion that it is negative eugenics with which alone we can be, directly that is to say, actively concerned. It must not, however, be supposed that Galton had an unduly limited conception of what the " worth " of good stocks meant. One has heard it stated by ignorant persons that he advocated an ideal of civic worth which would shut out from life all who were not stodgy, narrow, commercially-minded, and probably hypocritical Philistines. It was not so. Galton himself remarked that " society would be very dull if every man resembled Marcus Aurelius or Adam Bede," ¹ and he even asserted that in ascertaining the desirable hereditary qualities " we must leave morality as far as possible out of the discussion," for otherwise we entangle ourselves in hopeless

¹ Bateson, similarly, in his characteristically pungent way (Herbert Spencer Lecture on " Biological Fact and the Structure of Society "), remarked that " if we picture to ourselves the kind of persons who would infallibly be chosen as examples of ' civic worth ' the prospect is not very attractive. We need not for the present fear any scarcity of that class, and I think we may be content to postpone schemes for their multiplication."

difficulties, since goodness or badness of character is not absolute but merely relative to the current form of civilisation. Health, energy, ability, courteous disposition were the desirable qualities on which Galton insisted, since "all creatures would agree that it was better to be healthy than sick, vigorous than weak, well-fitted than ill-fitted for their part in life." He summed up the three eugenically desirable qualities as physique, ability, and character, and he put character last, though in real importance it stands first of all, because of the difficulty in rating character justly.

In putting aside positive eugenics, to which so much importance was once attached, I was careful to say that it is the *direct* furtherance of good stocks that we are called upon to avoid. Even by devoting ourselves directly to negative eugenics we are thereby really effecting much for positive eugenics, more indeed than we could possibly hope to achieve by more direct efforts. This in two ways, the one material, the other what I should like to call spiritual.

(1) The material way is that, by accumulating among us, as for a century we have been actively doing, all those who are in any category of unfitness, enabling them to be procreated, guarding them on every side from disease and death, protecting them and supporting them in expensive institutions, we are placing an ever

greater burden on the fit, who, the more fit they are, the larger the burden they are thus called upon to bear, so that if they exercise foresight—and foresight is one of the chief qualities which constitute fitness—they are compelled to consider how far they can themselves play a procreative part in the world. The result is that, as compared with the less fit, they are ever taking a relatively smaller part in the reproduction of the race. By working towards the elimination of the unfit we are indirectly lifting a great weight off the fit and conferring upon them far more power than we could hope to impart by direct action. (2) The evils on the spiritual plane which are inflicted on the fit by the growing predominance of the unfit are even more serious, especially in that democratic phase of society when it is quantity rather than quality of votes which is the decisive factor. It is to the shortsightedness, the callousness, the selfishness, the greediness, the hysteria of the unfit majority in any age that the evils of the human world, its criminal wars, its sometimes yet more criminal peaces, and all its manifold disorders, are to a considerable extent due, and in all these evils it is the fit, and sometimes the fit first of all and above all, who are called upon to suffer. Nor is it only in the major evils of the world, in its minor evils also the unfit are for ever exerting

a limiting and lowering pressure on the fit. Their illegitimate activities are constantly making impossible the legitimate activities of the fit. All the immense web of taboo I have already discussed—the by-laws and regulations, formulated or not, which society is weaving, and binding round itself—is merely meant to restrain the unfit, although in so doing it also restrains the reasonable activities of the fit. It is easy to give examples: I read in the newspaper, for example, that the Countess of Derby, finding the chestnuts in her Park so plentiful, resolved to share the harvest with her neighbours and threw open the park to the public with permission to gather the nuts. But she speedily had cause to repent: so much damage was done to the plantations and fences that the Countess was compelled to close the park and invoke the services of the police. The unfit were unable to see that their selfish and mischievous activities were curtailing even their own privileges, and the fit were compelled to suffer for offences they had not committed. It is a process which, in one field or another, is going on unceasingly.

There is yet another item to be eliminated from every sane programme of eugenics, and that is the mania for an ill-judged or premature appeal to legislation. It is common, indeed, but sometimes mischievous, and usually futile.

We do not know enough to legislate on eugenic schemes, and even if we knew more we cannot legislate ahead of public opinion, because our laws will be evaded, while if public opinion is educated up to the level of the laws, those laws will be superfluous. All this has been well illustrated in the United States. But I pass by this point, since it may be unnecessary for any reader who has followed me so far, and turn to yet another form of activity which, immensely important as it is even in its influence on eugenics, we must refrain from including under eugenics, and that is the amelioration of the environment. There are two ways in which we can work socially for the good of mankind : by acting on heredity and by acting on environment ; they have been ingeniously termed eugenics and euthenics. Others term the two ways that of Nature and that of Nurture, though this terminology is not very sound, for the main object of Nature, teleologically speaking, is Nurture, and there is nothing in Nurture which is not ultimately Nature. There can, indeed, at the roots be no conflict between eugenics and euthenics. Each form of social activity is equally necessary ; both are indispensable. To dispute whether one is more important than the other is to carry absurdity to its extreme limits. It is a discussion just about as profitable as a discussion on the

problem whether our legs are more useful than our arms. It remains true that the task of the eugenisist is distinct from that of the euthenisist. Each must walk along his own lines and in his own field. The more faithfully each keeps within his own sphere the more completely will be revealed the beautiful harmony between them, and the more powerfully will each be found to aid the other.

You eliminate racial competition from eugenics, one may be told, you eliminate positive eugenics, you eliminate compulsory eugenics by law, you eliminate action on the environment,—why, what is there left? There is very much left, so much that it might well fill all our lives and still take centuries to accomplish.

Galton, to whom I once more appeal—for modern eugenics owes far more to him than its name—was accustomed to declare that it is the task of eugenics to act upon Public Opinion. That itself is a never-ending task, for opinion, to be effective, has to become so deeply rooted as to be entwined with the instincts, and so to be a guide to action. It might be supposed indeed that the paths of eugenics are pleasant, for as the eugenically fit people are the attractive people and the unfit the unattractive, to bid youths and maidens fall in love only with the fit seems a piece of advice that it is not

hard to follow, provided there is sufficient insight to discriminate between genuine attractiveness and its merely meretricious and superficial counterfeits. But, as we know, it is less easy than it seems, for, in civilisation, there are many qualities other than eugenic attractiveness which prove seductive, some of them qualities which also prove fatal to the mate who is seduced by them. Evidently Public Opinion has still much progress to make.¹

Moreover, there is at times a more intrinsic difficulty in the fact that there are at least three qualities—physique, ability, character—that go to make up “fitness.” Ability and

¹ At the same time it must always be remembered that even here the individual, in every state of society, including those we count primitive, automatically acts in accordance with laws, and follows unwritten taboos which limit his choice. There are thoughtless libertarians who do not seem aware of this elementary fact. In some parts of the world there are so many prohibitions that the marriage class open to a man to choose from may be very small. (See, for instance, Mrs. Brenda Seligman, “The Formation of Marriage Classes,” *Journal of the Anthropological Institute*, July–December, 1927.) Among ourselves marriage in the same social class is the rule and there are difficulties, with frequently unfortunate results, in marriage outside the same class. We even have a tendency to marry within the same caste, and I note among my own ancestors in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries that the parsons tended to marry the daughters of parsons or the widows of parsons. There is nothing unnatural or difficult in the formation of eugenic marriage classes.

character, for instance, may sometimes prove attractive when there is no physique to speak of, and when this happens various problems arise. Is this attraction justifiable? Should it lead to marriage? If so, should it also lead to children? And if not, what measures ought to be adopted?

It is evident that the growth of Public Opinion, however sound and automatically operative a conscience it might in time implant in the heart, is not enough. To deal with the difficult problems that arise, intelligence and knowledge are required, and these cannot be secured in a day. A greater degree of intelligence is, indeed, itself one of the gifts which we may hope some day to secure through eugenics, and knowledge can only be slowly built up. On one point, certainly, knowledge—and practice in accordance with knowledge—has been accumulated and widely disseminated during the past century, especially the last half-century, and that is in regard to birth control. It is worth mentioning that point again because, although eugenics can by no means be reduced to birth control, it is yet vitally true that without birth control there can under modern conditions be no eugenics. Eugenics without birth control is simply a castle in the air, a beautiful vision in the clouds no doubt, but not to be brought to earth.

Birth control—in the wide sense which includes sterilisation and some day perhaps even more radical measures—is the chief instrument vouchsafed to civilised men wherewith from the infinite possibilities of brutal procreation to carve the great race of the future.

It is knowledge, as well as goodwill, that is needed to learn how to use that instrument wisely. The field that opens before us is large. And a more fruitful field than that of biological genetics could not well be found. Not all may be equipped to explore it. But every man, if he will take the small trouble needed to acquire the necessary data, will find in his own family and ancestry a fascinating study full alike of interest and profit. Every honest investigation, however narrow, helps to build up the great watch-tower from whose heights the paths of a new race can be traced in the future. We cannot all learn to be wise but we can all learn to know and to will in accordance with knowledge. With so noble a task before us it matters little that there are still some among us content to wreak folly and destruction. Their time may be short. The path is slowly growing clearer. The future is to those who have the insight to see it, the skill and the energy to work towards it.

No community of Man, it is true, has ever known beforehand the fate of its civilisation.

It has left future ages to disinter and attempt to reconstruct the dead civilisations of the past, and we are always discovering new ones. We cannot doubt that there are advantages in not knowing that fate. There would not be any advantage whatever in fixing our attention on the annihilation which is Man's final end. Exuberance and effort and hope are of the essence of life. It is the dead amongst us, and not the living, who shake their heads over eugenics.

Let us remember, moreover, that we have already ascended from the ape, the wisest of animals, and that it is our privilege to press on consciously towards those highest things he so daringly pioneered, meanwhile casting aside, if we can, some of the foolishness of which he would never have been guilty.

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