

THE LOW BIRTHRATE

(Continued from First page.)

their self-indulgence, and everything must be sacrificed to these. "Formerly it was considered the wholesome duty of the educated and well-to-do, to set an example of high morality and Christian practice to their poorer brethren: now-a-days the position is reversed. Those in high places have acquired the knowledge which enables them to gratify their passions without becoming parents, and they have not only unhesitatingly adopted the practice, but blame the poor for not following their example."

The Psalmist said, "Lo children and the fruit of the womb, are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord." The verdict of the nineteenth century Christianity proclaims them to be "encumbrances." How often do we see advertisements for married people with no "encumbrances." When Israel forsook God and became idolatrous, the prophet Hosea (9 14) in announcing the nation's downfall cried "Give them, O Lord; what wilt Thou give? Give them a miscarriage and dry breasts." A most signal punishment for those who, if faithful to Jehovah, were to be as the sands of the sea for multitude. Now such a condition is considered by many, no punishment at all, but is self-inflicted and rejoiced in. "The joyful mother of children" was, in Bible times, the highest type of blessedness; now she is spoken of by her superior and criminally childless sisters as a "propagating drudge," and is despised accordingly.

Those who adopt some of the various unnatural methods in vogue to save themselves the unpleasantness of child-bearing, frequently claim that there is no harm in what they do, although they acknowledge that other methods are sinful. But I am not afraid to assert that every artificial check is immoral, and that one differs from the other only in degree, not in kind, and the desire of the will is the same in all cases.

To be quite plain, the check must either prevent conception, or it must kill the embryo after conception. If the latter it is absolute murder—infanticide. For it is murder to kill a child a moment after it is born, it is murder to kill it a moment before it is born, or a week, or a month, or nine months before it is born. The very instant conception takes place there is the God-given life, and the sin is the same whether that life is strangled at its very source, or a few weeks, or months, or years afterwards. Even the laws of the land treat this matter as criminal and punish it accordingly when found out. On the other hand, while the prevention of conception does not indeed destroy life, it does destroy the potentiality of life, which is moral murder; for every fraud is a choked germ rendered unproductive,—an indirect infanticide. In other words, although the exact occasions cannot be specified, for they are known only to God, there must be such occasions in the natural course of events, when the check prevents a life from coming into existence. God says "let there be life;" man says "there shall not be life for I will thwart the purpose of the Almighty;" and can this be done without grievous sin?

That you may not think that I exaggerate the prevalence of these practices, that I have set up a man of straw for the pleasure of knocking him down, I will here quote a statement recently made in an American Church Magazine. It says "That the destruction of child-life between conception and birth is a common malpractice among American women, especially of the middle and upper classes, is too notorious to admit of denial, but that this terrible abuse is far more general than most people suppose we have good reason to believe. Abortion is a crime so inhuman, unchristian and damnable that every woman in Christendom would look upon such a criminal operation with the most utter loathing, detestation and horror."

With shame and humiliation we are compelled to confess that among the older women of the Christian congregation, who commune at the Lord's Table and shine as leaders in Church guilds and societies, there are those who actually advise and urge the younger women to resort to an expedient so unrighteous to escape the burdens of motherhood, pool-pooling the idea of its being a sin, and with the shrug of the shoulder saying "Oh, our best people do it, and so it can't be wrong." (Pulpit of the Cross)

Again Dr. F. Napheys, an American physician writes "The detestable crime of abortion is appallingly rife in our day; it is abroad in our land to an extent which would have shocked the dissolute women

of pagan Rome. The crime is common, it is fearfully prevalent. Hundreds of persons are devoted to its perpetration; it is their trade. In nearly every village its ministers stretch out their bloody hands to lead the weak women to suffering, remorse and death. Those who submit to this treatment are not generally unmarried women who have lost their virtue, but the mothers of families, respectable Christian matrons, members of churches, and walking in the better classes of society. Testimony from all quarters, especially from New England, has accumulated within the last few years to sap our faith in the morality and religion of American women? And one more piece of evidence, I could give dozens such, but these will suffice. Some years ago a paragraph went the rounds of the American papers, stating that a practitioner in Chicago acknowledged on his death bed that he had assisted at not less than 1500 abortions. Amid the wailing of mothers who refused to be comforted, King Herod murdered a few dozen of children in the village of Bethlehem, and we proclaim him a most inhuman monster. Today, not in one village alone, but in scores and scores of places in America and elsewhere, numbers of men out Herod Herod in his vile deed, while the mothers shed never a tear, and we must not denounce them for fear of shocking the modesty of our hearers. If this absolute murder is so common an occurrence among educated Christian people, how shall we estimate the frequency of that moral murder which is committed by thousands who would shrink with horror from doing anything wrong after conception has taken place.

I said educated Christian people for to our shame be it said, that it is not only the sin of the better classes, but it is also the sin of the Christian, Heathen and Mahometans, so far as I can learn, know it or not; and a recent writer (Ussher) says: "I have taken some trouble to ascertain, and I find that the artificial check system is looked upon with horror by every Jew, both by distinctly immoral, and also wholly ruinous to any nation that might be so foolish as to adopt it." Does it not seem strange that the professed followers of Jesus Christ—of Him who "was conceived by the Holy Ghost and born of the Virgin Mary"—should be the very ones of all others to war so relentlessly against the child-life of today.

But, further, it is not only the sin of the Christian, but it is the sin of the Protestant Christian,—the Christian that does not believe in sacramental confession. Russia, which is under the sway of the Eastern Church has the highest birth-rate of any nation in Europe.

The Roman Catholic Church absolutely denies all use of her Sacraments to those who frustrate the ends of matrimony; so in that community amongst families faithful to their religious duties, such evils cannot exist. And if France with the lowest birth-rate in Europe brought forward to refute this, we contend that France has fallen from the faith, and to a great extent in consequence of this very sin, which leads to infidelity as it is encouraged by infidelity. The census of 1891 gave the population of France as thirty-eight and one-half millions, and out of that number seven and two-third million men were returned as of no religion. This would mean considerably more than half the total number of men, and doubtless many of the remainder were only nominal Christians. One is not surprised at atheists encouraging this sin. They believe that there is no God,—no future life, and they therefore feel a liberty to refuse to call life into existence, or to end it by suicide when and how they please. But no Christian, nay! no one who believes in a God can possibly defend the practice; for it certainly presupposes that there is no such thing as any Divine interposition or guidance, either in the world or in the individual. This is clearly exemplified by the case of Mrs. Besant, whose writings perhaps more than those of any other author taught and encouraged this plan of controlling this birth-rate.

About the year 1878, Chas. Bradlaugh and Mrs. Besant, two well known a heists, gave the first impetus to the movement in England by publishing the "Fruit of Philosophy," an American book which dealt openly with that which hitherto had only been unknown to a few, and for which they were prosecuted as the vendors of obscene literature, but were eventually acquitted. The case, however, created a great deal of attention; and much unfortunate publicity was given to the book itself, which consequently had a very large sale; and from that time the birth-rate in England has steadily decreased. Shortly after this Mrs. Besant published her own book "The Law of Population"

which also had an immense sale, as it was translated into every language and read by millions of persons. In 1891, Mrs. Besant renounced Atheism and became a Theosophist, she therefore believed in a God and immortality. Immediately she withdrew her book from circulation, although she was offered a large sum for the copyright, and confessed her error in writing. She declared that when advocating the system she considered man to be but an organism which was produced on the earth and perished upon it, but that as soon as she realized that man was immortal she became convinced that the practice was not only immoral in itself, but also only put one evil in the place of another. How, then, can any one who names the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ—anyone who professes to believe in the Resurrection of the Dead, and the life of the world to come, for an instant advocate or defend this sin?

Time will not permit me to dwell at any length on the evil effects of these practices upon the individual, upon society and upon the nation. Medical opinion is overwhelmingly against them. French physicians who have large experience are especially vigorous in denouncing their dangers to both sexes. In women they produce hysteria, congestions, inflammations, morbidness and all sorts of nervous diseases, they shorten life and excite a craving for morphine, ether and other drugs.

In society these practices must tend to increase pre-nuptial unchastity; for can our women maintain their high standard of virtue—can the marked difference between the chastity of women and that of men continue, if there is no fear of exposure and disgrace by becoming mothers. Then, too, they greatly encourage divorce. For, undoubtedly, the presence of children over and over again averts the separation of husband and wife. Quarrels are made up and differences are borne with for the sake of the children, and from the unwillingness of either parent to be parted from them. In the case of the childless marriages there is no such restraining influence, and divorce is consequently sought upon the slightest provocation.

And if this system is morally and physically wrong in the individual; if it undermines the sanctity of family life, the very foundations of well ordered society, it is also disastrous to the nation. The decay of the Roman Empire is a striking instance of this. The poet Juvenal describing the many causes which were bringing about the downfall of that Empire, in his sixth satire freely mentions this one, "The wealthy dame is seldom brought to bed." St. Paul in the first chapter of his Epistle to the Romans, also refers to the awful lust of the age. When the Roman women, anxious about their own self-indulgence only, refused to nurse their children and came to look upon infanticide without any shame or horror, the glory of the nation soon departed. And who can fail to see that France of today is rapidly losing her present place among the nations of Europe from the same cause, and a like fate must sooner or later await every nation that yields itself up to licentiousness. God grant that the British Empire may realize her danger in time and return to the paths of matrimonial virtue.

The defenders of these practices plead in excuse that there is danger of over-population; that too frequent child-bearing ruins a woman's health; that people cannot afford large families; that parents in temporary sickness or having chronic disease ought not to beget children, and so on. All which is perfectly true.

But human beings differ from the lower animals in that they are able to control their sensual desires, and in such cases those desires must be controlled, except, at least, at those regular times, when God, who knoweth all our needs, has provided that conception will not take place. Temperance in conjugal matters is as imperative as temperance in eating and drinking; and excess in any of these brings its own punishment. Self control is the first condition of all morality. To command the passions, not to be a slave to them is man's proper state, and the man who does not command them is every whit as bad as the drunkard, although his excesses are hidden from the eyes of his fellows, as the drunkard's are not. The present state of society, the difficulty in providing for large families, or the ill health of a husband or a wife, may demand a greater exercise of self-control, but can never condone a sin, let alone such a sin as infanticide.

My dear brethren, I have felt constrained to speak to you thus plainly tonight, because of the pressing need of checking the insidious vice which is everywhere taking possession of our homes. A few years ago this subject had been better left to some special occasion; but so rapidly has the knowledge of the evil increased of late, that now there is little fear of teaching that which is not already known, and even if this danger did exist, there is the still greater danger of allowing the practices to pass unchallenged for the sake of a warning word. I am sure that many offenders have no idea of the sinfulness of them. They may feel that they are not altogether right and honest; but they know so little of physiology that the enormity of the sin does not manifest itself to them, and how are they to learn it unless the clergy speak out.

I can assure you it has been no easy task for me thus to speak, and if it has given you pain in listening, I am certain my pain in speaking has been tenfold greater than yours. But if my speaking, through God's mercy, be the means of checking this sin in the least degree, if it be the means of winning the light of day and the crowd of life for one babe yet unborn, if it be the means of making husbands and wives realize that married life is for something more than the selfish gratifications of the lusts of the flesh, then I am willing to bear the pain, aye, and the censure that is likely to follow from some quarters, knowing that if I kept silence any longer I should be guilty before God of my brother's blood.

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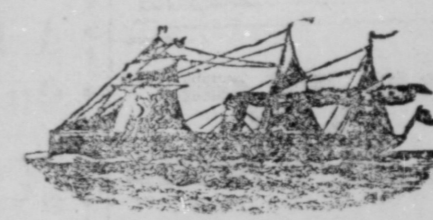
PROWSE BROTHERS,

THE WONDERFUL CHEAP MEN

One word of warning in conclusion. This is far too solemn a subject to just about. If you have to talk of it at all, do it with the full realization of its sinfulness. And judge no one. There are, thank God, many married people, who, although childless, or with one or two children, are living pure, chaste, continent lives. There are others who from some physical cause are temporarily or permanently unfruitful. That such lie under a certain suspicion, in some minds, is unfortunately unavoidable in the present state of society. But I beg of you, in God's name, to judge no one. Exercise your Christian charity;—never say even to yourself, that you suspect any person. Leave the matter in God's hands, where it belongs; and pray ever and earnestly that this stone of reproach may be rolled away, and that once more "marriage may be honorable to all, and the bed undefiled."

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