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## CHAPTER XII

### THE PART OF TEACHERS AND PUBLICISTS

“The character of every truly great man consists in coming back to realities at all times, in every place and every situation, in taking his stand on things, and not on the appearance of things.”

CARLYLE.

“Men are not taught to be honest, and they are taught everything else.”

PASCAL.

LET us first consider schools of every description and degree. Who will question the fact that teachers and professors can do something, and indeed much, for the restoration of morality and the increase of natality? But they will not be able to do this, unless they carefully reject the methods so unfortunately recommended during the last twenty years by some arm-chair pedagogues, carried away by the wish to appear “up-to-date.” These pedagogues extol what they call sex education in schools, and are confident that the study of the organs of generation and their function is bound to lead us back to the reign of virtue, and that the scholars, better instructed as to the dangers of immorality, will avoid them and so conform their conduct to the demands of nature. I have already explained what this argument of conformity to natural desire is worth; and I adhere to my statement that such teaching would entail very great disadvantages, and would tend to develop the evil which we wish to exorcise. Until the last years of the nineteenth century it was possible to believe, according to the teaching of the philosophers of the preceding century, Condorcet in particular, that it was enough to teach a truth and give due instruction in it, for it to







# TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

*AUTHORIZED TRANSLATION FROM THE FRENCH OF*  
*"D'INDISCIPLINE DES MŒURS"*

# TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

By PAUL BUREAU

*WITH AN INTRODUCTION*

BY

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## TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD

THERE are two points which emerge from the consideration of M. Bureau's elaborate study, on which a brief comment seems desirable.

1. The author's admiration for Malthus and his adhesion to much of Malthus' arguments will come as a surprise to a good many people. It is certain that the soundness of those arguments is admitted by M. Bureau to a degree that many leading sociologists will unhesitatingly repudiate. But in fairness to him, and to Malthus himself, it must be remembered that the original "Malthusianism" is very far from being identical with "Neo-malthusianism," and in one essential particular directly and urgently contradicts it.

2. The volume is a scientific study, not a Christian apologetic. Yet it makes fairly evident to any reader who has not pre-judged the case, that the way of social security and sane progress lies along the sharply defined and well-trodden road of Christian morality.





# CONTENTS

	PAGE
TRANSLATOR'S FOREWORD . . . . .	v
TABLE OF CONTENTS . . . . .	vii
INTRODUCTION . . . . .	xi
AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION . . . . .	1

## PART I.—THE BALANCE-SHEET

### CHAPTER I. *The Facts: The Determination of the Fact: The Conduct of the Unmarried.*

The development of sexuality and moral indiscipline; the four auxiliaries of this indiscipline: prostitution, use of contraceptives, abortion, pornography; the apathy of the administrative powers in repressing them; these various practices correspond to a deep-reaching psychological condition . . . . . 5

### CHAPTER II. *The Facts (continued): The Conduct of Married People.*

Marriage and the motives which lead to it; systematic sterility and its increase; this sterility the base of all our social machinery; abortion; ill-treatment of children; adultery; divorce; statistics of divorce; divorce by mutual consent; by the will of only one party; all our institutions reward celibate or married selfishness; its effect even on the religious side of life; feminism and unity of moral standard for the sexes; "l'association amicale"; moral indiscipline during the war; an order given to the 127th army division . . . . . 51

### CHAPTER III.—*The Theories.*

Civil marriage; the "romantic" school; divorce at the desire of one party and the campaign of the brothers Margueritte; marriage in contemporary literature; the "right to love"; free maternity; neo-malthusianism; its propaganda; the right to abortion; feminism; the inaction and even complicity of its supporters; the efficacy of the propaganda; statistics . . . . . 102

CHAPTER IV.—*The Results: The Great Suffering of France.*

The demographic map of the country; statistics of marriages, births, and deaths, for 120 years; births in Paris 1820-1913; in Normandy; as compared with foreign countries; the great injury caused in all departments of life; the decline of France; the multiplication of foreign residents; decline of French commerce; the growing poverty; Germany's increasing riches; warnings; the ultimate forfeiture and suffering; the war of 1914 . . . . .	156
--	-----

## PART II.—THE FIRST REMEDIES: THEIR NECESSITY AND INSUFFICIENCY

## CHAPTER V.

The "family vote"; the reduction of military service and of direct taxation; premiums and grants; the insufficiency of these remedies; a mitigated neo-malthusianism; the real problems; a collective régime would be no remedy; the five precepts of a coherent sexual morality . . . . .	219
--	-----

## PART III.—A COHERENT SEXUAL MORALITY.

CHAPTER VI.—*Chastity in the Unmarried State.*

The traditional arguments; their value and their insufficiency; the evident social law; the witness of physicians; the conditions of true freedom; chastity exactly responds to the individual needs . . . . .	251
--	-----

CHAPTER VII. *Perpetual Continence.*

Its immense social value; its relations with the principle of conjugal fidelity; and of fecundity; asceticism . . . . .	268
---	-----

CHAPTER VIII. *The Duty of Marriage.*

The splendid service rendered by marriage; the unending battle; the selection of parents; the progress of the race; monogamic marriage assures the progress of the spouses; in what sense marriage becomes a duty; maternity outside marriage; solemnity in the celebration of marriage . . . . .	311
---	-----

CHAPTER IX. *Conjugal Fidelity: the Indissolubility of Marriage.*

Fidelity and Love; the prohibition of divorce by mutual consent or the will of one party; divorce for definite grievances; four facts to consider; divorce and bigamy; the plea of "liberty"; the unchangeable discipline; Goethe's witness . . . . .	337
---	-----

# CONTENTS

ix

PAGE

**CHAPTER X. *Fertility and Continence.***

The social value of a large family; selection in marriage; the problem of excessive fecundity; the argument from "nature"; the teaching of Malthus; its indisputable character; the disciples of Malthus; the results of the teaching; the necessity of control of natality; continence: its social value; conjugal morality . . . . . 367

**CHAPTER XI. *The Working-Class Family and the Birth-rate.***

Syndicalism and neo-malthusianism; the rate of wages and the birth-rate; national solidarity; the slavery of licentiousness; the march towards complete sterility; the extra family wage . . . . . 423

**PART IV.—THE CONDITIONS OF THE RETURN TO MORAL DISCIPLINE . . . . . 448**

**CHAPTER XII. *The Part of School-teachers and Publicists.***

The insufficiency of instruction and the possible evil of sexual teaching; the indirect method; the part for publicists . . . . . 454

**CHAPTER XIII. *The Good Citizen.***

The care of health; love of effort, and the initiative spirit; the simple life; the care of collective social interests . . . . . 462

**CHAPTER XIV. *Religious Belief.***

Religious belief and moral discipline; the theory of "a time of transition"; moral indiscipline and free thought; the religious, and even mystical, character of moral obligation; authorities quoted; religious belief and solidarity . . . . . 477

**CHAPTER XV. *Christian Morality.***

Its agreement with sociological conclusions; various witnesses; the Catholic doctrine; the need of a complete moral education; the progress already realized; the effort of the Protestant churches; and of the "League of Moral Education" . . . . . 503

**CONCLUSION . . . . . 529**

**INDEX . . . . . 539**



## INTRODUCTION

**THIS** book is at once terrible and fascinating. It is terrible because the author puts before us with all the Frenchman's skill in word painting, the condition of the people's morals in the France of the present day. The book is fascinating, partly because the author, having shewn us the existing devastation, and having pointed out the moral and physical ruin to which his country would seem to be advancing, leads us through a long and carefully worked out series of considerations to the refreshing knowledge that after all the ruin is not inevitable, that the great heart of the nation still beats true, and that in the last resort the soul of France lives in unison with the great design of the Creator, as she did in the ages of faith when France loved to style herself "the eldest daughter of the Catholic Church."

This book "Towards Moral Bankruptcy" is not one to be taken up for an idle moment, it demands and it deserves careful study. It contains masses of facts and tables of figures. The author has spared no pains to arrive at the truth, nor is he daunted by the difficulty, I had almost said the loathsomeness, of his task. The book must be accepted by the public in the same spirit in which it was written, and its readers must follow the author through his difficult and very disagreeable exposition of facts and tedious marshalling of figures; they must have patience, faith, and hope, and charity to follow him to the end.

When the publishers most kindly asked me to write a preface to the book, I naturally set to work on reading it in order that I might have somewhat to say. However, the first few sections involved so much moral nausea that my courage almost failed me to complete the task. The

picture drawn by the gifted author of the terrible depths of moral degradation induced a feeling that even to touch the printed page was a contamination, but I read on. Little by little the design of the author became clear. Like Dante's guide, he was constrained to conduct his followers through the many circles of hell where the smell of burning passed on them but hurt them not, until eventually he was able to bring them out on to those "shining tablelands of which our God himself is moon and sun." The reader who perseveres will be abundantly repaid, and a new hope will be kindled in his breast that not France alone but the whole of Christendom can yet, and will yet, be purified from personal and from national sin. France, her friends, her colleagues, and even her enemies, will yet rise phoenix-like from the ashes of moral degradation, and will, albeit through much tribulation, attain to that true appreciation of the nobility and grandeur of sex, to that purity of heart, without which the humblest man and the most glorious nation can never see and appreciate God.

M. Paul Bureau's work, after a short introduction in which he recalls France before the war, "the fateful 1st August, 1914," directs our attention to the three causes of "the great sickness of France," sex, alcohol, and want of self-control, and he directs us, for the moment, to concentrate on the first of these causes.

The book is divided into four parts, comprising many chapters. The first of these four parts is concerned chiefly with the conduct of the unmarried, and this with its Gallic force and terrible realism is the most painful part of the book. M. Bureau has a first-hand knowledge of the difficulties and dangers which beset young people, he knows how the temptations both of luxury and of poverty find a fatal response in the undisciplined and selfish youth of the race. In parts the author's great *élan* carries him away, and as someone said of S. Paul "makes shipwreck of his grammar." However, the facts of the case are stated with convincing emphasis and the picture of the road to ruin is so vivid that one can only too easily realise what it must mean to its victims.

In the second chapter the conduct of married people comes under review, and we see through M. Bureau's eyes the essential identity of their temptations and dangers with those which assailed the unmarried, veiled as the deep identity is by superficial differences. He has much to say of the evils of conjugal fraud and voluntary sterility, and what he has to say is said well. He naturally deploras the consequences of anti-conceptionist practices on the individuals themselves, on the few children of such unions, and on the nation at large. As pointed out by Sir James Marchant and also by M. Bureau, France at anyrate has more coffins than cradles, and the nations of modern Europe are far from being like the Hebrews of old of whom the poet king wrote, "Lo, children and the fruit of the womb, are an heritage and gift that cometh of the Lord, happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them, they shall not be ashamed when they speak with their enemies in the gate." This lesson has been brought home to the hearts of all who love France, and should find an echo in those who have a goodwill towards Britain, for unless these two great and enlightened countries fill their colonies and dependencies full of man-power, the next great war against the countries that have teeming millions, will find them unable to dictate the terms of peace.

M. Bureau does not confine his attention to the evils of the small family, he speaks with no uncertain voice of the national wrong done by conjugal strife and still more by the desecration of the family involved in divorce. Unfortunately in France, as in other countries of Western Europe, the old ideal of the indissolubility of marriage has been gradually obscured, and the percentage of divorces to marriages, has risen steadily since the seventies of the last century.

The third chapter of the first part of the book is given up to consideration of the theories that underlie the stability and the purity of domestic life, and the author traces much of our present troubles to a misinterpretation or exaggeration of the proposals of Malthus. In the fourth chapter we are shewn both by his eloquence and

by means of statistics how the nations have suffered, and are suffering, from the results of their own folly and want of vision. I have no space in which to reproduce these figures but one interesting comparison I must be permitted. In 1814 the population of France was 29,500,000, that of Great Britain and Ireland, 19,000,000, whereas in 1913, France, who was the leader in the restriction of the birth-rate and in the percentage of divorces, had increased her population by 10,000,000 exactly, whereas Great Britain and Ireland had increased by 27,000,000.

In Part II of his book the author treats of the First Remedies, their necessity and insufficiency. He discusses legislative efforts and economic reforms intended to redeem France from her perilous position, and he points out, as many have done before him, that you cannot make a people good by Acts of Parliament. Other remedies have been proposed, such as are recommended in socialist and revolutionary circles, but M. Bureau points out that these also do not touch the root of the matter.

In Chapter VI of this second Part our author lays down the law that the happiness and welfare of nations depend on the happiness and welfare of their component members, and that there is no enduring happiness and no solid welfare that is not founded upon continence in the unmarried and chastity in the married.

With variations that are rendered necessary by successive pictures of morality and immorality, of national righteousness and national unrighteousness, M. Bureau insists page after page, and chapter by chapter, on the deep underlying principles of purity, self-control and love, until in Part IV under the title of "The conditions of the return to Moral Discipline" he shews us the source of the power which alone is able to so strengthen man's weak nature, and to inspire him with a desire to be perfect as his Father in heaven is perfect.

M. Bureau is, of course, a faithful and enthusiastic member of the Roman branch of the Church Catholic,



and he justly points out the glory and beauty of her scheme to secure personal, family, and national welfare of body and soul. But what he has to say, and what he says so well, may be made to apply with equal cogency to every branch of the Church, for everywhere throughout Christendom it is true that "righteousness exalteth a nation : but sin is a reproach to any people."

In conclusion a word must be said about the great task undertaken by the publishers, in offering this book to the British public in the "language understood of the people." The publication of a translation is always a difficult task. No translation can ever convey the innermost spirit and the aroma of the original, still less can any work of French or Italian authors live and glow in an English translation. The genius of our mother tongue, great and admirable as it is, is absolutely foreign to that of the Latin nations. How much more difficult then is it for any translator to do justice to the flowing style and musical cadences, and to the curiously exact meaning of the original written by such a man as M. Bureau. The unhappy translator finds a sentence of more than half a page in length perfectly clear and limpid no doubt in the original, but which when done into English is unmusical, devoid of style, and in many instances not even comprehensible. To reproduce the author's idea the lengthy sentence must be broken up, and probably some word which would not convey the right sense to the author, but which can convey an approximation of meaning to the English reader must be substituted. A minor difficulty arises from the fact that certain words which resemble each other in French and English so far as appearance and sound are concerned, have come to convey quite dissimilar ideas, thus throughout our book the word "fecundity" in English does not mean the same as "fécondité." *Fécondité* in the original must be represented by *fertility* in English, because our word *fecundity* implies an abnormal excess of child-bearing not an ordinary normal number of children.

With these explanations and comments my task is

ended, and it only remains for me to thank the publishers, and through them M. Paul Bureau, for much valuable information and for what has proved to be a labour of love. I can thoroughly recommend the book "Towards Moral Bankruptcy" to all English men and women who are interested in sociological questions, in Imperial welfare, and in the endeavour to build up the kingdom of God in our own hearts and in the hearts of our people. As I began by saying the book is at once terrible and fascinating, but it is well for France and for us that it has been written, and it will be good for France and England if the patriots of both countries will lay to heart the author's facts, figures and exhortations. It reminds me greatly of a book on "Diseases of the Ear," written by Politzer, of whom a very competent critic said, "he has written it with his heart's blood."

MARY SCHARLIEB, M.D. M.S., Lond.

*February, 1925.*

## AUTHOR'S INTRODUCTION

"One can only heal the ills from which society suffers by speaking openly about them."—(J. S. MILL).

FRENCHMEN of our generation will never forget the fateful first of August, 1914 ; on that tragic day a nation that had been weak enough to believe no longer in the possibility of a European war suddenly found itself called upon to defend its native soil against the scientific assault which the Teutonic hordes had been preparing. We know how the challenge was accepted ; this France of ours, which our enemies believed had sunk to the final limits of social disorganization and decrepitude, showed that she had preserved intact the tradition of the warlike virtues of her people. The heroes of the Marne, the Yser, and of Verdun, were worthy of their most famous ancestors,

The stubborn heroism of our chiefs and our soldiers enabled us to impose upon Germany the capitulation of 11th November, 1918, followed by the glorious Treaty of Versailles on 28th June, 1919. A new, and perhaps a harder task demands our efforts ; we have waged and won the war ; now we have to organize the peace, and laboriously to reap its fruits. Matchless warriors yesterday, shall we know to-morrow how to organize a society at once coherent, endowed with power and dynamic force ? In a word, can we squarely face life and be capable of supporting among the nations the *role* to which we are bound and to which the need of Humanity itself calls us ? A question ever charged with pain, which must yet be put in all its troublous plenitude, since it has found no answer either in the minds of our

## 2 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

fellow-countrymen with clearest vision, nor in the thoughts of our most loyal friends. It is only too certain, in spite of the assertions of quack politicians, that France before the war was growing steadily weaker: grave social maladies were exhausting her very life, and these had developed to such a degree that, even among those who most admire our courage, men are asking themselves whether the terrible four years' bloodshed has left us either power or will to combat those maladies effectively.

In any case, there is at least one answer which we can make with certainty to this distressing question, and that answer, partial as it may be, is enough for us; it is that the future of France lies in our own hands, it will be what we ourselves make it, and it depends upon our wisdom, our discipline, and our good-will. To heal the evils of our social life, two efforts are needed: an effort of knowledge, and an effort of action and reform, and in truth the two are but one, since when we betake ourselves to a candid and vigorous examination of our conduct we have already begun our reformation.

Three chief evils have thriven upon our soil, and breed what may be called the great sickness of France: sexual license, alcoholic intemperance, and the lack of power to establish a central authority at once representative and able to defend the collective interests of the country. On these evils many others have in turn grafted themselves and by mutual interaction have contributed to the progress of the evil which has produced and maintains them. In truth, these three maladies are themselves but the triply diversified result of one single evil which will be considered in the latter part of this survey; but each has such a definite character, it is so widely extended, its manifestations are so multiple and so diverse, the number of social institutions of which it has, so to speak, modified both the anatomy and the tissues is so great, that it is of vital importance to make a study of each which shall be distinct from the others, methodical, and as complete as possible.

The present work is exclusively devoted to the study of the manifestations of sexual license, and to the exposition

of the rules which ought to be recognised, with regard to the productive activity of adults in a society anxious for its progress and development. I have followed this study, paying attention solely to the requirements of exact analysis and methodical observation. Sometimes the picture is a sombre one, and on the morrow of a glorious epic one would wish to fix one's gaze on a more encouraging prospect. But reality does not concern itself with our wishes, and the best way to secure success and happiness is to have regard for truth.

The intelligence and good faith of the reader will, besides, know how to avoid generalisations which the author of these pages would utterly repudiate. When a physician describes the frightful ravages of alcoholism or tuberculosis, no one accuses him of maintaining that all French people are victims of alcohol or tubercle. We ask for the benefit of the same rule of kindly interpretation.

The war has given us an incomparable moral situation amongst the nations, and perhaps it is not one of the least advantages of this position that it allows us to examine freely and scientifically the ills from which we are suffering. Moreover, we should be wrong to fear that strangers, whether neutral or our enemies of yesterday, might take advantage of our acknowledgment of these ills to renew their unfavourable judgments, or their calumnies against us. Besides, for such action they do not need our confession, and by so acting they would justify us in suspecting their intelligence or their good faith. Their duty is rather to apply to themselves Virgil's beautiful line :

*Haud ignara mali, miseris succurrere disco ;*

and to remember that they are slipping on the same slope as ourselves though we may be in front of them at certain points of the slide. It is only too true that the American nation is even more hardly hit than ourselves ; that the birth-rate in Great Britain and in her distinctly British dependencies has been falling for half a century ; while we learn the moral condition of

#### 4 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

Germany from the increase of abortions and the number of those who accept, both in practice and theory, the strange teaching of "homo-sexualité."<sup>1</sup> It seems certain that Berlin, with its debased materialism and its gross luxury, is one of the most immoral cities of the universe.

Let us then feel satisfied on this point, and may nothing deter us from the essential but painful task which we have undertaken.

One word more. This work is not a study in morals, still less a philosophical treatise. Not indeed that we do not possess our own convictions as to moral worth and obligation, but it is not the object of this study to formulate them; its aim is exclusively sociological, and it has reference only to social science. There will be found in it neither outbursts of anger nor the indignation of the counsel for the prosecution who demands punishment, nor the "paroles vengeresses" (summing up) of the judge who pronounces sentence. We shall limit ourselves to the description of phenomena, to their analysis, to the discovery of their reactions upon the vitality of the social organism. On the other hand, we shall fulfil this task with sincerity and vigour; if it is true that science bestows neither praise nor blame, it is no less true that it has nothing in common with those superficial and puerile analyses which merely caricature and dishonour it. Moreover, it is in the name of science that surgeons handle the lancet and open the abscess.

LES SEMAILLES, DIEPPE, 21st *September*, 1919.

<sup>1</sup>We may refer also to the Legislature of a canton of German Switzerland, that of Bâle, which has been the first in Europe to vote the legality of abortion when caused within three months of conception. On the second reading, however, the bill was rejected.

PART I  
THE BALANCE-SHEET





## CHAPTER I

### I. THE FACTS : THE DETERMINATION OF THE FACT : THE CONDUCT OF THE UNMARRIED.

“Everyone, he said to me, compares himself in his own sphere to something more or less grandiose, to Archimedes, to Michael Angelo, Newton, Galileo, Descartes . . . Louis XIV compared himself to the sun. For my part I am much more modest, I compare myself to a rag-picker : with my fork in my hand and my bundle on my back, I travel through the kingdom of science and pick up what I find.” (*Panygiric on Majendie* BY CLAUDE BERNARD.)

SEVERAL years before the war, a foreign scholar who had travelled much and observed much, said to M. Charles Gide : “France is a country remarkable for the extraordinary development of its sexuality ; so far no other modern country is its equal in this respect.” We shall see further on whether the remark can be taken as a compliment : however that may be, it certainly describes one of the dominant features of our national character, one of those of which we are most glad and proud. We are the people of the *roi vert-galant* and we do not forget it. In town and country, in the workshops and behind the counter, in the offices of our ministers and the quadrangles of our colleges and great schools, at our officers’ mess, and in the smoking-rooms of our wealthy bourgeois, in our fairs and markets as in the ante-chambers of our ministers, everywhere and almost always, as soon as two men have a moment’s leisure to talk about anything but their professional interests, the unique subject engrosses the conversation ; at once faces become animated, eyes sparkle, the very intonation of the voice alters ; the subject interests everyone, and each one experiences an ever-

## 8 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

renewed pleasure in telling of his feats of gallantry, of his hopes and fears, and in listening to the adventures or the plans of others. By Art and Literature, those reflections and expressions of the common thought, this inexhaustible mine is no less duly worked; newspaper and novel, the theatre and picture-gallery, cinema and song, vie with each other in presenting this great question to all minds; and the interest is so keen that no demand is made on the artists to show us anything new, or to produce anything hitherto unpublished, or even to possess any talent; the robust appetites of an innumerable clientèle accommodate themselves to every kind of food, and the immense majority of the guests ask for nothing but abundant, sufficiently seasoned, nourishment. The most delicate put up with grossness, or even seek it "for the sake of experience," and its lack of refinement seems only to give it an extra spice.

What is the reason of this universal interest? Why does this countless army of adolescents and adults of every age and every state of life, in which rich and poor<sup>1</sup>, aristocrats, bourgeois, and men of the people, intellectuals, business men and manual workers, show such interest in the sexual act and everything that prepares for or recalls it? Everyone would at once answer the question by saying that if the sexual act attracts so much attention and interest in contemporary society, it is solely because of the peculiar emotion which it supplies. To experience this emotion as often as possible, to vary indefinitely, if one can, its circumstances or its accidental features, notably by changing the partner with whom it is enjoyed, such is the fundamental reason for this

<sup>1</sup>A writer on economics lately declared that the satisfaction of the sexual appetite was the pleasure of the poor. He doubtless had never frequented the luxurious night-restaurants of our great cities. We know with what ardour the typical representatives of the aristocracy and the gilded bourgeois rush to them.

It is told that Schopenhauer, who used to take his meals at the same table as the officers of the garrison in a German town, used to put beside his plate a piece of gold, which he pledged himself to give to the poor the first time he finished his meal without the other guests having talked of women or horses. For many months the philosopher continued the practice, and kept his stake.

fearful rush. As in our modern society the sexual act is completely separated, for such as will it so, from the consequences which nature has attached to it, the great majority of young people and of adults, at least of the male sex, consider themselves at liberty to consider nothing but the personal gratification they receive, and one understands how there is, henceforth, no limit placed on the frequency of their experiences, or the eagerness of their desires.

As I am engaged on an inquiry exclusively sociological, I do not need to seek for the physiological and psychological causes which give the sexual emotion a character *sui generis*, the eagerness of which troubles the senses and infatuates the reason.<sup>1</sup> It is enough for me to note that in a period when the pursuit of happiness, even of mere pleasure, holds so vast a place in individual lives and has become the sole guiding principle of an immense multitude, it was inevitable that this particular pleasure should be ardently sought and eminently appreciated. It must be so all the more since, as the philosophers observed long ago, there exists an intimate relation between sexual activity and the imagination. In some manner which we would fain explain, it is certain that even after dissociating from the sexual act the rough sum total of the sensations which attend it, it leaves in

<sup>1</sup> Everyone agrees that "if one sets out to analyse this pleasure in definite terms, one only discovers a content of the very poorest kind." But assuredly our analysis is too brief, and the reality something infinitely deeper. "Have we said everything as to the sexual emotion," writes M. Ruysen, "when we have traced the eddy which it excites on the surface of our consciousness? Have we not, on the contrary, the deep impression that something else is stirring far below, that our inmost self is moved by a force at once close to us and yet stretching infinitely beyond us? Is it, as Schopenhauer thought, some mysterious and imperious will to live which, by our individuality, tries to realize itself under the form of knowledge? Is it our nature which, according to the picturesque phrase of M. André Cresson, summons her servant to work to perpetuate her being? Is it, on the part of one sex, incomplete as it is by definition, an unconscious aspiration towards self-realization in the most intimate of unions? Is it, as Malebranche (before Renan) would have it, the soul that seeks God by obscure paths? We do not pretend to solve this enigma." (*Revue de Métaphysique et de Morale*) 1913, p. 825. The two articles of my eminent colleague have been published together in one pamphlet, to the pages of which I shall henceforth refer).

## 10 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

our consciousness traces both profound and lasting. "All the mental life is affected by it," says a contemporary philosopher, "and a second sexual life, which consists entirely of images, is produced." Certain images, until now merely floating or undwelt on, become defined and fixed and tend to become veritable obsessions: precise memories or images born of touch, odour, colour and form. "*L'idée de la femme nue m'obsédait,*" confesses the sorrowful hero of the *Kreutzer Sonata*. The "Confessions" of Rousseau let us catch glimpses of more than one such avowal.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the sexual act in its accomplishment provokes and excites the imagination, which in its turn provokes and excites the sexual appetite, always demanding more and growing harder to satisfy. Who can say for how many of our contemporaries the desire has thus become a haunting fixed idea, an obsession, and who can number the vast multitude of these adults who, from morn to eve and eve to morn, concentrate all their thoughts on this one subject?

Nature has prepared this amorous emotion in order to bind man to her own service; our civilisation is no longer an arena in which man blindly respects nature's bidding; we only obey her so far as her ends are in accordance with our own. Now in nothing more emphatically than in this question do we prove our independence of her: we take the pleasure and repudiate the responsibility. Not only are the immense majority of sexual acts performed with no idea of transmitting life, but the greater part of the individuals who share in them never even dream of such an end. In "correction" of nature they use all preventives to defeat her designs, and a minority, that grows every year in number, is even prepared to have recourse to abortion when the impossible happens and in spite of all precautions, however ingenious, the dreaded life has triumphed.

Let us dig further into the soil of social facts, and pursue our analysis. Let us compel ourselves to make

<sup>1</sup> T. Ruysen, *op. cit.* p. 17.

it as methodical and minute as possible, by observing in turn the attitude of unmarried and of married people.

## I

If adults were to conform their conduct to the teachings of theoretical morality,<sup>1</sup> the study of the attitude of unmarried people with regard to sexual activity would soon be finished. That attitude would simply be—Continen-  
“Thou shalt desire no work of the flesh but in marriage—thou shalt not be lascivious either by bodily act or by consent” declare to Christians the Sixth and Ninth Commandments of God, and natural or lay morality ratifies, with more or less emphasis, the teaching of the Decalogue. But the precept is far from being carried into practice, and one may even say that it is but an abstract formula which public opinion is very far from ratifying. Most people consider that continence is impossible for young men, at least from the age of seventeen or eighteen, and many do not even suspect that there exists any duty of chastity, or that its observance could be possible. Undoubtedly, in the crowd, there exist young people—whether already resolved to live all their lives in continence, as in the case of clerics who are preparing for the Priesthood, or those who, in view of marriage later on, recognise an obligation to preserve a chastity no less than that which they will require of their betrothed—who observe a strict integrity; but it is notorious that these young people form but a very small minority, and up to the first decade of this century, public opinion was far from encouraging them in their praiseworthy self-discipline; the least one can say is that it left them to the mockery of their comrades who, sus-

<sup>1</sup>This expression, which we shall use in distinction to practical morality, signifies, in our meaning, the sum of the moral precepts which the immense majority of the citizens of a country merely profess with their lips, without any real and sincere effort to conform their conduct thereto being aroused by the form of words. By practical morality we mean the sum of moral precepts sincerely acknowledged and loyally accepted.

## 12 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

pecting them of impotence, held them in very small esteem. Further, to be absolutely honest with regard to this small band, one might sometimes wonder if some of its recruits were not indebted for their virtues rather to their physiological or intellectual temperament than to the virility of their character; some of them appear amiable, kindly, and docile, but give very little impression of capacity, force or vigour.

In any case, for the immense majority of their companions, the question did not even arise. They had made up their minds beforehand, and most of them entered on their sexual experiences well before the age fixed by the code as that of matrimonial puberty. A boy must wait to be married until he is eighteen, but he thinks it would be quite a mistake to wait for that age in order to amuse himself, and since the sexual appetite knows no rule but that of seeking its own gratification, each will steep his lips as soon as he can in the intoxicating cup. It is a fact that in the large cities and the industrial centres, small boys of thirteen and fourteen are already initiated, often by old stagers; some anticipate even this early age, and when several years ago Pope Pius X. decided to advance the age for First Communion, the precocity of sexual perversions among young boys and sometimes even among little girls was given as one of the arguments in support of the reform.

The average moral standard, certainly, condemns emphatically these precocious liberties; on the other hand, it tacitly approves, and even encourages, the sexual performances of young and adult men. Parents shut their eyes to their sons' pranks, and even congratulate themselves when the erotic experiences of their masculine offspring have taken forms which appear to them, often quite mistakenly, less compromising and not at all disturbing. These reassuring forms are held to be a good sign,<sup>1</sup> since

<sup>1</sup> A young man of excellent (!) family, whose name is known in aristocratic circles, told me one day that his parents wished him to enter into a desirable connection with a married woman in high society. It appears that this very stable arrangement gives entire peace of mind to the youth's family.

"youth must pass away," and "the youngster must sow his wild oats." The amorous amusements of the young man are considered innocent and free from all moral consequences, so long as the four accidents which may follow imprudent conduct are avoided: venereal disease, prosecution in the criminal court, an action for damages before the civil courts on the charge of seduction or paternity, and the establishment of a lasting connection, the prolongation of which would make an advantageous marriage later on impossible. Except in these four cases the family shuts its eyes, if it does not even feel a secret pride in learning of its son's "success." Does not such good fortune prove that the conqueror is a nice boy and has the right kind of disposition? This pride almost persists even in the case of the seduction of a virtuous girl; it is so universally admitted that different obligations bind each sex, that one readily throws all the blame on the seduced girl or her family: "My cocks are abroad, take care of your hens," say the peasants.

Thus, under pretext of satisfying the demands of nature, young people secure for their sexual appetites all the satisfaction they desire, and one knows whither this indulgence leads them. How many there are who at the time of their first fall thought no consequences need follow, but have since discovered the greatness of their error; urged on by curiosity and lust of the flesh, they have gone from one fall to another to the lowest depths of debauchery and the vilest orgies. From time to time, notably if some unfortunate death has happened, it becomes an affair for the police and the criminal court, and the names of the unlucky heroes of the scandal are whispered abroad; when we read the report of the case our pharisaism asserts itself, and we lift our hands to heaven. In reality our astonishment is merely a pose, and every well-informed man is perfectly aware that scenes of wild debauchery are nightly repeated in Paris and our great provincial towns. The police know the right places, but have received the hint to lie low: a raid would compromise people of reputation and disgrace their families. Those who know quote by the dozen the

names of their friends, high officials, members of Parliament, business men, rich bourgeois, famous doctors, whose youthful adventures ought to have brought them before the Assizes on the charge of abortion or countless other exploits of which young people have been the victims; but these are considered to be merely youthful pranks, not in the least serious, it seems, nor at all dishonourable.

When in a great civilized country, endowed with large resources, a countless number of young people and unmarried men consider themselves to possess such rights of sexual indulgence, it is inevitable that the exercise of these "rights of men" take shape in social institutions of great extent and powerful organization. It is beyond our power to discuss all these institutions; we shall confine ourselves to a summary of the four chief—the vast organizations of prostitution, anti-conceptionist practices, abortion, and pornography. As we shall see, we are dealing here with vast organizations; casual meetings and chance happenings would not suffice; once more the function has created the organ, and the immensity of the *clientèle* and of its appetites must of necessity produce the formation of powerful organizations, which can alone suffice for its needs.

## II

It is not our purpose to draw up a balance sheet of the immoral resources at the service of society, nor to explain even in summary form the ingenious and indefinitely varied methods which this exalted commerce relies on to meet the wants of its customers. It is enough to say that these resources are enormous, and that the business is conducted to perfection on the most up-to-date commercial lines. In a report published several years before the war, M. Bulot, the attorney-general, estimated at half a million the number of women who devote themselves to this industry, and the estimate does not appear exaggerated when one knows what an im



mense number of various establishments are devoted to this special business of sensual gratification, from the private house to the luxurious flat of the *demi-mondaine* who is sumptuously maintained by the old libertine who pays liberally and asks but little, from the house of ill-fame to the shameless café-chantant on the outskirts of our great cities. Since this heterogeneous clientèle is recruited from all ranks and conditions, each member of it must be able to find at the hours which suit him, the kind of amusement that suits his tastes and his means, with the additional comforts that appeal to him. These are never lacking, and those who provide them grow more clever every day in their work. Advertisement, in every shape, is brought into requisition; there are notices in the newspapers and by picture postcards, by telephone call and personal invitation written on fancy paper.<sup>1</sup> No artifice is neglected which can serve the double purpose of obtaining merchandise to sell and purchasers ready to buy. At the doors of workshops and registry-offices, in front of the notices on municipal buildings, even at the entrances to hospitals, these levellers do their work, transforming themselves into lovers and seducers, assuming in their bearing and behaviour such attractive respectability and even distinction as might deceive anyone. Woe to the girls who listen to them! They entice their victims into orgies cunningly graduated, where other women, their own accomplices, understand how to

<sup>1</sup> The organization of "war godmothers"—the ingenuous founders of that kindly institution never dreamt of such vice!—was promptly utilised by systematized prostitution, the initiative coming at once from both clients and vendors. Several daily journals with a large circulation, and notably two large illustrated papers, *Fantasio* and *La Vie Parisienne*, have found great profit in advertisements requesting or offering to provide these "godmothers"; a single number of the *Vie Parisienne*, at the beginning of 1917, had as many as 199 such offers advertised. As, by a law of the previous year, advertisements had, during the war, to obtain the *visa* of the Commissary of Police, a number of Vigilance Societies and anti-pornographic committees exerted themselves to obtain from Government the suppression of these scandalous advertisements, or from the Law Courts the prosecution of publishers guilty of public outrage on morality. All was in vain, and as usual the public authorities refused to interfere. The owner and manager of the *Vie Parisienne* also concerned himself in organizations in aid of nursing mothers!

## 14 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

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## 16 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

stifle at once the first revolt of the girl's conscience. The hapless young women go to a moral death as assuredly as if they had incurred a life-sentence of hard labour. In Paris, a short time before the war, an agency was established on the principle that every woman, whatever her condition, her surroundings, her fortune or her habitual moral conduct, can in the long run be brought to accept the chance of "a new experience;" while any man who wishes to enter into relations with *anyone* of the other sex has nothing to do but communicate with this agency, send twenty-five francs for expenses, and state the amount of money he can offer to the person to be solicited. The agency transmits the request, and on receiving the reply informs the customer that he must abandon his plan "at least in the meantime," or, on the contrary, that his application has been favourably received. I am assured that the double list of correspondents makes most instructive reading; all the social and financial world of Paris is creditably represented.<sup>1</sup>

These immoral exploits are also carried on in broad daylight, under the official protection of the police and the municipal authority, and with the tacit consent of a great number of honest (?) folk of all conditions and all opinions: people say that the establishment of these houses "which the police allow and morality condemns," is necessary for the protection of decent women in the streets. And public authority sometimes intervenes to compel their miserable inhabitants to re-enter the horrible den where they are choked with shame and succumb to exhaustion, as happened in 1912 in a small village in

<sup>1</sup> Alongside of this aristocratic way of keeping the business going, there are other cheaper and simpler ways. "At X. the performers at a café-chantant are put into a lottery; they themselves offer, in the hall, tickets at ten centimes each; the winner can keep the woman and her room for the night; the key is outside the bargain. At T., there is a kind of exhibition of the female personnel of the music-hall; the director, before a crowd of spectators, fixes the prize for each of the artistes, by the month, day, or night. It is a veritable market—the white slave traffic." *Le Bilan de la Pornographie*, a report presented to the second National Congress against immorality, held at Paris in March, 1912

Eastern France, where the mayor compelled the return of a girl who had endured, all day long, the abominable embraces of forty-seven customers.

These "déclassées" are outside every social grade. With regard to them the public authorities consider themselves quite justified (at least in our country, in which, one hundred and twenty five years after the Declaration of the Rights of Man and of the Citizen), in subjecting them to the dishonour of the "Police des Mœurs," to arbitrary arrest and imprisonment without trial. They are creatures whom nobody names, and yet people of position use their services in secret. Is it not on them that this mother counts for the initiation of her boy into vice, and this husband who lavishly shares his leisure and his purse between his wife and his women? Perhaps even his wife shuts her eyes with wonderful heroism, and sacrifices herself for her children's sake—a shameful capitulation, if made only for peace's sake. "Thus some subterranean canals connect the sewers with water superficially pure, and in this lies, no doubt, one of the most hateful forms of the immorality of our time." The degradation of some women is the security of the rest, and sometimes, on the day of a fashionable marriage, at church or meeting-house, the wealthy crowd that come to congratulate bride and bridegroom, and rejoice that so earnest a young man has found so charming and so richly endowed a girl, have no doubt as to the remote and shameful collaborations which have made possible the festivity which they admire. If the prostitute had not offered her services, it would certainly have been necessary to divide his parents' fortune between several children, and the bridegroom would have found the dowry too meagre. But the prostitute was there; thanks to her, everything is managed, and the unfaithful husband excuses himself by saying that he has injured no one, that he is "merely sharing in a situation which is not of his making."

Sometimes some of these prostitutes climb to high positions in the political, financial, or aristocratic world.

## 18 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

History records their names and boasts of their influence.<sup>1</sup>

Often the exploitation business is complicated by the kidnapping of minors, and by frantic orgies which fall under the Penal Code. But the Courts shut their eyes, and powerful intervention secures silence. The magistrates who dislike these affairs, think it more prudent to have nothing to do with them. We may also add that in a particular section of our social life solidarity is like a sacred tradition, and was almost always scrupulously observed, to the benefit of all parties, at least before the war of 1914. Conservatives and progressives, radicals and socialists, profit by the same good-will; a commissary of police, a procurator of the Republic, especially a prefect of police, are in possession of valuable secrets: various instances are related in which they have made use of them to discredit an opponent of the government.

It goes without saying that the exploitation of this business is extremely lucrative. Often the directors quickly realize a veritable fortune, and as in the great cities greater capital may be required, professedly honourable tradesmen supply it, and as sleeping partners reap huge dividends.<sup>2</sup> Money has no evil odour, and to get it all means are good. Moreover, these houses have their own reputation and standard of honour, and the smartest of them are determined not to be slandered or confused

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes men of intellect are not insensible to their charms: Lately, a widow whose husband had left her a considerable fortune made a speciality of consoling the old age of several celebrated "intellectuals"; she was known as "the old men's twilight."

<sup>2</sup> In a large Norman town one of the chief houses of ill-fame had as a sleeping partner one of the best tailors in the place; his open trade thus gave valuable help to his secret business. In 1917, in one of the most populous towns in the South-east, the military authority had assigned for the use of the garrison two cafés which were at the same time (as was well known), immoral establishments for the service of a select clientèle; several women had conveyed venereal diseases to the soldiers. The deputy interested in the management of these houses went to see the prefect, and the orders were at once revoked.

with rivals of an inferior type.<sup>1</sup> I have said enough to demonstrate the power and wide extent of the undertakings to promote vice which operate in our country. One of our few politicians who interest themselves in the study of this scourge, M. Ferdinand Dreyfus, member of the Senate, declared at a congress, a few years before his death: "Prostitution, one of the most grievous of our social scourges, is not only at the present time an isolated fact, *freely accepted* by certain unhappy women who have been led to it by misery, abandonment, or bad example; but it has become, by the allurements of the vast profits which its agents can secure, an organization, an industry, a business. It has its recruiting agents, its travellers, its markets. Young girls, even children, are merchandise for import and export, and little ones *under ten years old are especially sought for.*"

This powerful organization is, therefore, not exclusively national. In connection with similar undertakings in foreign countries it maintains complicated and profitable relations. This will be seen when we come to discuss international relations: we need only say that the commercial methods employed are so modern and complete as to fully equal those of the great steel or petrol Trusts or the German Kartell Company for supplying colouring materials.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On this point may be read in the *Relèvement Social* of March 15, 1916, two curious authentic letters, reproduced by that valiant lecturer of the "Ligue française pour le relèvement de la moralité publique," M. Emile Pourèsy. In a town in the South-east a section of this League organized a specially active propaganda of moral teaching among the young people of the class of 1917, so successfully that not one of them frequented the "maison publique" of the town. The manager was much upset at this, and wrote the Commander of the 30th Company of the — regiment of infantry, two most comic letters in which he asserts the "respectability and good style" of his establishment.

<sup>2</sup> The great export houses of which the chiefs reside at New York, Rio de Janeiro, and Buenos Ayres, are organized like any commercial companies. The two principal houses of New York have each a president, vice-president, a secretary, and an administrative council. All have their legal counsel to defend them in case of legal difficulties, and all have agreed to adopt the same telegraphic code of which they only know the cypher. (Documents taken from M. Bèrenger's articles).

## 20 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

According to the degree of culture which our modern society has attained, sexual liberty for the unmarried and prostitution inevitably involve the establishment of two powerful supplementary organisations—that of anti-conceptionist or neo-malthusian practises, and that of abortion. Undoubtedly with the greater number of professional prostitutes, these two practices are scarcely necessary in order to hinder the transmission of life: the unnatural strain on the genital organs is sufficient to make it impossible for them to function normally. But the women who give themselves to this life are not all professionals of long standing: there are the beginners, and the occasional professional, without reckoning the possibility of fecundity, an accident which may always happen when least expected. So these preventive or curative helps are indispensable.

Under the name of anti-conceptionist or neo-malthusian practices are to be understood all the methods of which the end is, by mechanical or chemical means, to hinder the woman's fertility. To appreciate the importance of the services which these practices, working with that of abortion, afford to the sexual freedom of unmarried people, it is enough to consult the statistics of illegitimate births. There are many less legitimate births, but the number of illegitimate children is no greater, and the "compensations" which some accommodating moralists used to promise us have not materialized.

Here are the numbers:

A publicist, who is by no means given to romance, writes that he knew a gentleman, an elegant and distinguished young man, the owner of a superb country house, of horses and carriages, who lived with a woman no less elegant and distinguished than himself. These people, whom one understood were of some social position, made it their business to frequent the great millinery and dressmaking shops in order to debauch the work-girls.

If it is now desired to judge of the extension of this white slavery, here is one statement (among a hundred) which will give some idea: The President of the Immigrants' League of Chicago received during fifteen months the addresses of 7200 girls who were coming to settle in the United States. On enquiry, it was found that 1700 had reached their destination: The other 5500 could not be traced! . . .



Illegitimate Births.

1851	:	:	:	:	70,000	1903	.	.	.	.	.	73,000
1856	:	:	:	:	68,000	1904	.	.	.	.	.	72,000
1861	.	.	.	.	77,000	1905	.	.	:	.	.	71,000
1866	.	.	.	.	77,000	1906	.	.	.	.	.	71,000
1872	.	.	.	.	70,000	1907	.	.	.	.	.	71,000
1876	.	.	.	.	67,000	1908	.	.	.	.	.	70,000
1881	.	.	.	:	70,000	1909	.	.	.	.	.	68,000
1886	.	.	.	.	75,000	1910	.	.	:	.	.	67,000
1891	.	.	.	.	74,000	1911	.	.	.	:	.	65,000
1896	.	.	.	.	76,000	1912	.	.	.	.	.	65,000
1901	.	.	.	.	75,000	1913	.	.	.	.	.	66,000
1902	.	.	.	.	74,000							

As no one claims that marriages have increased in France for the last hundred years, one can on reading these figures appreciate the rapidity of the ever-accelerating decline which, if pushed to its limit, would bring the number of illegitimate births to zero: thus, in two years, from 1908 to 1910, the number of these births fell from 70,000 to 67,000. A decline quite logical; besides, in proportion to the diffusion of modern ideas, the clearing out of "backward population," and the recoil from traditional teaching, facilitate the extension of what one author calls neo-malthusian knowledge. Improvidence, and ignorance of all natural processes which can serve individual selfishness, are defects against which our contemporaries are better and better protected. Besides, every year the number grows less of little instructed and possibly even honourable individuals who might be exposed to the misfortune of an illegitimate offspring. And one may be sure that the recent promulgation of the law of November 16, 1912, as to inquiry with regard to paternity will contribute to a further diminution of such births.

Here again we find ourselves facing, not isolated acts, the result of chance meetings or inexperience; but a powerful organization, duly officered and systematized with the object of putting itself at the disposal of unmarried men who wish to use their sexual activity without incurring the responsibilities which nature has attached to that function. A numerous body of publicists and lecturers, physicians and apothecaries, midwives and

## 22 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

commercial travellers, using the most up-to-date methods of advertisement and demonstration, has assumed as its special mission the instruction of an ever-growing clientèle in the vast apparatus which a perfectly developed technique places at its disposal.

It does not enter into the plan of this work to describe this apparatus: one understands that it consists essentially in taking advantage of the conditions, now-a-days familiar, under which the wonderful work of conception takes place, and in preventing the contact of the ova with the fertilizing spermatazoa. It is enough to say that under various forms and systems it is extremely ingenious and gives almost complete security to those who make use of it.<sup>1</sup> Not less ingenious are the means employed to secure its publicity and make known its advantages. The "butterfly"<sup>2</sup> and the hand-bill, the pamphlet and the lecture, are multiplied beyond number; the propaganda is therefore carried on openly, in broad daylight, for the evolution of "morals" is sufficiently advanced for it to seem quite natural. In the great towns the preparations are always on sale in the windows of certain herbalists; on several occasions mayors have lent school premises or town halls to commercial travellers masquerading as disinterested propagandists who come to advertise an invention that makes for freedom, and many Labour Exchanges have opened, more or less officially, special counters for the sale of the helpful merchandise.

As I write these pages I have before me some

<sup>1</sup> But the "advantage" has to be heavily paid for. Cf. p.

<sup>2</sup> By this graceful name are designated the little gummed labels which are easily affixed by hundreds and thousands to the walls and show-cases of a populous quarter, or of a whole town, when a vast propaganda campaign is about to be launched. Here are some of the sentiments on these advertisements: "Abortion is dangerous. *Prevention of pregnancy* is easy and safe. Let us have few children! Science teaches women to be pregnant only when they *wish*. Let them have few children! Women ought to know how to avoid pregnancy without depriving themselves of love. Let them have few children!" The reader will remark the cleverness of these sentiments, in which apparently disinterested advice is joined to practical instruction, thus increasing the force of the latter.

disgusting prospectuses and catalogues, duly illustrated, in which the obscenity of the instructions is accompanied by the most minute details of how to make use of the apparatus suggested. The vendor prints his name and address openly. One of these publications—I choose the least disgusting—is not afraid to announce that his preparation deserves to be called “the happiness of the infinitely little; it removes all danger and all possibility of surprise in the relations between the sexes.”

More than this even. It is known how in Germany the great chemical industry and the powerful works for producing colouring matter, not content with circulating all over the world voluminous catalogues which are models of their kind, also send to the principal countries engineering experts who may explain, on the spot, to their customers how they must act in order to gain the advantages of the new chemical product, and the right way to use it. The dealers in and manufacturers of anti-conceptionist preparations act in the same way, with the co-operation, more or less gratuitous, of theorists whose measure of disinterestedness it is sometimes difficult to estimate. Public meetings, lectures, with or without illustrations, accompanied if necessary by experimental demonstrations, have largely contributed to the sexual education of the large audiences where they attract. These lectures are frequently combined with various entertainments which become veritable fêtes: the ascent of a balloon bearing an absurd name, such as *Maternité consciente* or *Grève des ventres*, concludes the ceremony. I have before me prospectuses which announce various lectures of this kind at Tourcoing and Roubaix. “The moral appeal to married people,” renews the arguments with which we are familiar. Then we are told: “At the close of the lecture, ascent of the balloon *Cauchemar biotiste et Grève de la maternité*.” “The league has the honour to inform the public that the general assemblies take place on the second Sunday of each month at 4 o'clock. At each meeting a course of practical study of the various means to avoid maternity will be given. Women are specially invited. Those not be-

## 24 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

longing to the league may be present, without charge, at the demonstration. All the means to avoid pregnancy may be obtained at the premises of the league." A list of the articles recommended with a note as to price, and the addresses of the agents, follows.

Thus the lecture is arranged on an exact system. We have seen one course announced as intended especially for young work girls who are solicited at the factory doors; they are sometimes divided into groups of about a dozen, the intimacy of a small circle permitting a more exact demonstration, and instruction at the same time theoretical and practical. The "demonstrations" appear to be carried out only by means of pictures, but one does not see why these professors stop half-way: their teaching certainly does not justify their reserve; it is merely desired to give public opinion time to become trained, and if the pace of the last ten years is maintained the delay will not be long.

There is but a step between these "demonstrations" or "courses" and the innumerable laboratories which are their inevitable complement. There is in Paris an anti-conceptionist agency which the founders have the incredible insolence to style "Œuvre maternelle medicale." It was inaugurated in 1907, and publishes a journal called *Maternité*, "the true guide for families," the object of which is to describe in detail all the most modern anti-conceptionist methods. A subscription for six months gives the right to free medical advice, given either personally or by correspondence, from the principal physician connected with the organization. It goes without saying that this journal publishes an illustrated catalogue of all the anti-conceptionist appliances, which it offers to its subscribers at a greatly reduced price.

Such is the powerful organization of neo-malthusian commerce; its activity is strictly bound up with the propagation of its teaching, and we shall return to its achievements in the chapter devoted to the study of its "principles."

## III

If we are to believe the neo-malthusian theorists, the development of anti-conceptionist practices must lead to the disappearance of abortion, since methodically applied preventives make curative treatment unnecessary. The facts are very far from justifying this assertion, and it is certain that during the twenty-five years that have especially seen the increase in France of anti-conceptionist methods, the number of criminal abortions has not become less. Whether the precautions are not as efficacious as they are given out to be, whether those using them are in some way negligent, or for some other reason, and undoubtedly because during the last two decades the idea of abortion has become so familiar that it no longer excites repulsion, it is beyond question, that abortion has become, in the France of our day, a social fact the frequency of which has raised it to the rank of an institution, and in the service of that institution a great number of people, lavishly remunerated, and well organized, live and work.

As to the extreme frequency and extraordinary increase in the number of abortions in the last twenty years, no doubt can be entertained, and, if there is need to corroborate the unanimous witness of competent men, it would suffice to state how greatly the sentiment of reprobation and disgust, which the very thought of abortion excited until about 1880, has declined. To-day abortion has gained a civic position; many "respectable" people speak of it without disgust or think of it without repugnance: practically, it is tolerated each year with a more willing resignation. Those who practice it, moreover, scarcely take the trouble to hide what they have done. The law, always behind-hand with practical custom, still regards this mal-practice as a crime and punishes its victims with imprisonment and its perpetrators with hard labour; but the law merely thunders in our social life; it is no longer applied, and the "eccentrics" who protest against its desuetude seem like the ghosts of another age. "Abortion," says M.

Berthélemy, professor of law at Paris University, "has wormed its way into our moral standard. It is no longer anything but a venial sin," that awaits the day, maybe close at hand, when it will be nothing more than a peccadillo, nay, perhaps even the exercise of a right, as the legislature of the Canton of Basle decided in June, 1919.

That is where we stand. Let us try however to make our analysis more precise. As to the exact number of abortions annually, and their extraordinary growth since 1895, only approximate figures can be given, but as we shall see authentic information supplies this apparent uncertainty.<sup>1</sup>

In 1868 Professor Tardieu already denounced "the extreme frequency of this crime, which has developed, as we can prove, into a veritable industry." What would he say to-day, if he returned to us! In 1902, at the Congress of Montauban, Dr. Delbet declared :

"Seven per cent. (in the 'Service Necker') are under treatment for deliberate abortion, a considerable number if one considers that many of the sick under hospital treatment have not reached the age of fertility, and, on the other hand, that a great number of abortions take place unawares."

At the time 7 per cent. seemed a great number, and yet at the very period when the eminent doctor expressed his feeling on the subject, the social evolution, pursuing its headlong course, was hurrying us towards further developments.

In 1905 Dr. Dóleris submitted other figures to the Obstetrical Society. "Seven years since, at the Boucicaut Hospital, the proportion of abortions to deliveries was 7.7; it is now 17.7. The progression is met with at Tenon, Beaujon, Lariboisière, and above all

<sup>1</sup>The following publications can be particularly consulted: Balthazard and E. Prévost, *Une plaie sociale*, a brochure of 131 pages (Paris: Maloine, 1912); A. Nast, *La loi sur l'avortement*, pp. 102 (G. Crès); finally, and most especially, the brochure published by the Société Générale des Prisons (pp. 128), in which is to be found, following the Report presented by my learned and laborious colleague, M. Berthélemy, Professor of Law, Paris, the reproduction *in extenso* of the discussions which have taken place at several of the Society's meetings.

at the Hôpital Saint-Antoine, where the proportion has grown from 6.66 to 18.49." In seven years the increase has been approximately threefold.<sup>1</sup>

Several years later Dr. Mauclair gave information of the same—and still more serious—character. When taking over the surgical practice of a great Paris hospital where 50 women were cared for, he found that 20 of these had used measures to procure abortion. The multiplication of abortions has become such that an administrative circular of January 26, 1910, was obliged to lay down that no women should henceforth be received into Maternity Hospitals except for confinement. The abortion cases were taking up so much room that there was no longer accommodation for expectant mothers. The circular merely transferred the mischief elsewhere, as the lack of accommodation now presses on the surgical hospitals, which have no longer room for women who need surgical treatment before or after their regular confinements.<sup>2</sup> Of the women treated at these hospitals

<sup>1</sup> Yet M. Lucas Champonnière (surgeon) has challenged these figures as insufficient. He notices that since 1904 Maternity Hospitals have been obliged to refuse women suffering from unnatural miscarriage; such were sent for surgical treatment. The figures therefore must be considerably increased. M. Champonnière himself relieved, in the two months preceding the meeting at which he made these statements, 23 women suffering from abortion. (Dolérís, *Annales de Gynécologie*, 1905, p. 206, and Boissard, *Société d'obstétrique de Paris*, 1907, p. 53). Dr. Dolérís added that at Tenon, on January 11, 1905, (the day on which he prepared his statement) he had 23 abortion cases, excluding those from the Maternity, which he did not reckon. At that hospital the percentage of abortion cases was in 1901 5.7, in 1905 15.06.

The following are figures that concern Boucicaut Hospital: in 1898, confinements, 502; abortions, 43; in 1904, confinements, 599; abortions, 130. In seven years the number of abortions has increased threefold, while the confinements have only increased by 19 per cent.

<sup>2</sup> At the Beaujon Hospital the wards are at times so crowded with such cases that it becomes impossible to receive women coming for their confinements. To deliver at one stroke his wards and his conscience the distinguished Professor X. has hit on this ingenious plan: Some morning or other he says with a loud voice to the sister-in-charge, so as to be heard by all the patients: "Madame, you should keep particular watch to-day as to the good order and propriety of this ward, as I have received notice that M. le Juge d'instruction is coming for information in connection with the prosecution of a number of women on the charge of criminal abortion." By the evening, the beds are empty as if by magic; most of the occupants have by their own request left the hospital.

## 28 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

whose pregnancy is for any reason interrupted, it is computed that more than three quarters are victims of abortion.

These enquiries relate to Paris; but their witness is paralleled by that of almost the whole of France. Some great cities have no reason to envy the capital, and the country districts rival the towns. In many rural parts abortion has become a regular practice; but as public opinion is a little less developed, a case is attributed to a fall on the stairs or an accident at work. Everyone understands the euphemism and family peace is not disturbed.

Does one wish to ascertain the aggregate figures applicable to the whole country or to great centres of population? In his *Précis de médecine légale* Professor Lacassagne of Lyons, basing his estimate on very grave reports which it is impossible to reproduce here in detail, reckons the annual number of abortions committed at Lyons at ten thousand. Now the population is about 550,000, and the annual birth-rate between 8,000 and 9,000.<sup>1</sup> According to the same physician, one may estimate the annual abortions in France at half a million, *i.e.* two-thirds of the birth-rate. As to Paris, Dr. Robert Monin says: "We reckon 100,000 as the annual number of abortions, and we are pretty sure this is below the truth." Professor Bordin reckons at 500 a day, *i.e.* 182,000 a year, the number for the whole country. Dr. Paul Landroy, formerly President of the Société de Médecine, maintains that there are now-a-days more abortions than births. These estimates are far from agreeing with each other. If I may add my own opinion, I should say, without entering into the details on which it is grounded, that the number is, approximately, between 275,000 and 325,000, and this figure agrees

<sup>1</sup> According to Dr. Boissard (*Journal du praticien*, 1908), there were at Lyons 150 midwives, of whom at least 100 were suspects. One of them acknowledged that she caused about three abortions a week—150 per annum. Taking the suspects' average at 100, one arrives at a total of 10,000 abortions for 550,000 inhabitants. There are therefore at Lyons more abortions than births.



with that reached in 1909 by the Societé Obstetricale de France, which reckoned that abortion destroys about one-third of the results of cōception.<sup>1</sup>

It would be superfluous to describe the causes of this extraordinarily rapid increase of criminal arrest of pregnancy; they are but those which have influenced all other species of sexual licence. The chief cause which has hastened its advance has been the abolition of risk in operating, through the progress of aseptic and antiseptic surgery. The preservation of the race was for a long time secured by the fear of danger. This feeling has disappeared; and while bourgeois speakers go on repeating that abortion is extremely dangerous, the people, better taught, and the "new" bourgeois scoff at the warning; once more science has triumphed over nature. "One can get abortion performed as easily as one can get a tooth drawn now-a-days. It is nothing at all; so quickly done, with so little risk. So goes the whisper round the workshops. So spreads the knowledge in every class of society . . . and so the evil spreads."<sup>2</sup>

When a social practice has become so general as this, it is a sign that the public conscience is prepared to welcome it, and that it no longer rouses in the great majority of people, nor even among the most select of respectable folk, the mental sensations that it formerly provoked. One could supply numberless proofs of this.<sup>3</sup> One of the

<sup>1</sup>The neo-malthusian journals estimate the number at a million annually, but it seems clear that they are simply boasting.

<sup>2</sup>Berthelemy, op.cit. In 1910, at the Medica! Congress, Dr. G. Bertillon related the history of a rich "avorteuse," whose place of abode is no mystery, and who never charges less than a thousand francs for her services. She is very highly trained, and has never been interfered with, because she has had no misadventures.

<sup>3</sup>In Paris, among the crowded quarters, when a workman's or an employé's wife becomes pregnant for the second or third time, and the patient, concerned by the prospect, expresses her anxiety lest a future of excessive fecundity awaits her, the midwife usually does not fail to reassure her. "Come, my dear, cheer up, you are quite wrong to be so distressed. You know quite well that we are not women to leave people in a scrape. If 'that' arrives again, you have only to let me know during the first three months of pregnancy, and I will set you free. It is no big affair, the

most convincing is afforded by the infinitesimal number of prosecutions. M. Garraud, Professor of Penal Law at the University of Lyons, wrote: "For one abortion which is followed by prosecution, there are perhaps a thousand which are not." This proportion with regard to a crime punishable by hard labour, was already significant; nevertheless it was but a halting-place, and we do better to-day. "We speak in hundreds of thousands," wrote M. Bethélemy, "when we estimate the real number of criminal abortions; it is by dozens or units that we reckon the condemnations." We add a statistical statement which is very instructive reading:

Years	Cases classified without protection	Not proceeded with	No. of cases tried	Cases tried. No. of accused	Acquittals	Condemnations.
1909	688	136	27	77	57	20
1910	760	154	34	103	69	34
1911	895	147	30	78	48	30
1912	858	166	45	96	57	39
1913	856	213	89	287	193	94

Thus in 1913, among 300 abortions only one leads to prosecution, and but one prosecution out of three results

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price will be just the same, and you will be at peace." (Information furnished to the author by the rector of a suburban parish)

Here is another story, related by M. Emile Pouresy in his pamphlet, *Immortalité et néo-malthusianism*, published by the League "Pour la Vie."

Some time ago, in the outskirts of an industrial town in the south east, a doctor attended, at a midwife's house, a young girl under age, whom the mayor of a neighbouring commune had seduced. To avoid scandal, the girl's father, by agreement with the seducer and the chief of police, decided that her confinement should take place far from home. At the moment of leaving, the doctor commended his patient to the midwife, who was matron of the nursing home, and who, to reassure him, whispered: "Be quite easy, it will be to-morrow." "What will be to-morrow?" "Why, we shall 'disembarress' her to-morrow. Isn't it for that you have brought her? It is always to 'disembarress' them that people are brought here." "Take good care what you are doing," added the doctor, "her father and the Procurator of the Republic know exactly what her condition is." These houses for the purpose of "debarras" are innumerable in France.

in a sentence of condemnation. The crime no longer disturbs public opinion, *therefore* neither does it disturb the magistracy. There is absolute impunity; without recourse to Parliament custom has abolished Law. We should notice, too, the constant increase of acquittals. The proportion was formerly 70 per cent. of the prosecutions; then it rose to 75 per cent. In these later years the judges have again advanced the limit; in 1903, out of 48 prosecutions there were 32 acquittals; 1904, out of 49 prosecutions, 35 acquittals; the same proportion in 1906 and 1907; in 1908, out of 66 prosecutions, 54 acquittals—a record.<sup>1</sup>

Since there is no longer any risk of judicial consequences, there is no need to vex oneself. So the pregnant women no longer find any difficulty in relieving themselves of the burden, nor the licensed "avorteuses" in operating. The one freely talk about their adventure, the other operate in broad daylight—and they swarm. In all the great towns and industrial centres these "makers of angels," these "mères Tiremonde," are

<sup>1</sup>"The jury is indifferent; the case does not interest it," we read a few years ago in a local newspaper which gave a report of a trial for abortion before the departmental Cour d'Assises.

The signal for these acquittals was given, it seems, with special resonance in 1891, by the jury of the Seine, in the "affaire Thomas." The woman Thomas and her lover, who was her crimp and accomplice, carried on their business at Clichy. Forty-nine women were charged along with them. Thomas and her lover were condemned, but the forty-nine "avorètes" were acquitted. This verdict roused great feeling, and was the origin of the proposal of M. Trouillot, made on December 28, 1891: "The Department, in its statement of motives, has hitherto been able to represent the constant acquittals as decisions arising out of the special circumstances of the case. But how can it justify these 49 acquittals pronounced *en bloc*, which include at once all possible kinds of crime? It is abortion itself this time, and no longer this or that prisoner, which has been acquitted, and legalized acquittal of crime that instals itself unchallenged in our courts of justice." The future has justified this prediction at all points.

Moreover, certain midwives use special, and sometimes very simple means, to make prosecution impossible. One of them confined herself to keeping very exact accounts, with the names and addresses of her patients. One day, on the accusation of a housemaid, she was arrested. One of the first of her effects to be seized was, naturally, her account-book. Her safety was assured. The book contained the names of the wife of a judge, those of several officers, and a number of merchants of good standing. (Speech of Dr. Le Bec, at the second National anti-pornographic Congress of Paris).

familiar to the inhabitants and the authorities ; they can attend peaceably to their occupations, and when the neighbours see one pass with her basket, they merely say : "There goes Mère Untel again on her little business."

At Tourcoing, in 1907, following a neo-malthusian propaganda campaign, thirty girls and young women became pregnant, to their great astonishment : one of the most highly qualified representatives of the house of Baudriche et Cie had therefore given several lectures, accompanied by demonstrations, in the hall of a café. Abortion was touched upon, and some matrons went on to operate for "débarras," in the shop at the back of the café, using hat-pins for the purpose. Most of the patients were seriously wounded and some died. The Court began prosecutions which were soon abandoned owing to the intervention of influential people.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, by the side of these practitioners who are at the service of the democracy, there are others to attend to the "petite" and the "haute bourgeoisie."

"There are now," declared Dr. Burluraux in 1909, "for patients of this kind, comfortable and luxurious establishments, where all the advantages of hygiene, as well as of obstetrical science, are to be found. In the midst of the most minute antiseptic precautions, with the most complete apparatus, midwives duly qualified,

<sup>1</sup>This town, specially exploited by the neo-malthusian propaganda, contained at that time, according to Dr. Julien, more than 30 "avorteuses." M. Dron, mayor of Tourcoing and deputy for the constituency, knowing that he could do nothing with the municipal police against these people, wrote to M. Clemenceau, at that time President of the council and Minister of the Interior, and asked him for the co-operation of Parisian detectives. This was granted ; and M. Georges Bertillon has told what happened :

"The detectives arrived at Tourcoing, accompanied by a woman to aid them in their work. They accomplished it so easily that they obtained the consent of 26 "avorteuses" to operate on this woman. An appointment was made for this with one of them. On the day fixed, the woman lies down on the couch, and at that moment the detectives interrupt the performance and prepare the indictment." As a fact, the prosecution could not be carried out, because our jurisprudence, *abandoning in this exceptional case the usual principle as to attempt at crime*, lays down that the "avorteuse" is not punishable if the patient is not pregnant, which was the case with the woman of whom the Paris detectives made use.

or even, it seems, medical specialists of consummate ability, carry out these operations which under these circumstances appear to expose the woman to no risk." These great establishments have their agents and correspondents, whom they remunerate by commissions or the classic method of dichotomy; their methods of publicity are as subtle as they are extensive.

The returns of these undertakings often reach very high figures—fifty, sixty, a hundred thousand francs a year, while no other employment lends itself more readily to swindling: the purveyors of Dr. X's tabloids or Dr. Z's inhalers realize enormous profits, and the seizure of their correspondence, in the course of judicial proceedings, enables us to compare the cunning cynicism of the swindlers with the folly and meanness of their dupes and victims.<sup>1</sup>

Moreover, this trade has been going through a serious crisis for several years; the "avorteuses" have swarmed to such an extent that, in spite of the extraordinary increase of customers, it runs a risk of no longer making a living by the business, and all the more so because "the mechanism of abortion is to-day so well understood that it is no longer necessary to have recourse to professionals"<sup>2</sup> It is sufficient to secure the help of an accommodating friend,<sup>3</sup> and to get the necessary instrument. Sometimes

<sup>1</sup> Compare several specimens of these letters in the pamphlet by MM Balthazar et Prevost, quoted above.

<sup>2</sup> Note by M. Mourral, judge of the Court of Appeal at Rouen, at the meeting of the Société General des Prisons.

<sup>3</sup> At the Assizes of the Seine-Inférieure circuit in February, 1916, one of the six cases of abortion submitted to the jury concerned a factory worker, married, the mother of a family, and with her husband drawing high wages. She was accused of six abortions committed from 1913 to 1915, and suspected of many others. Now "this woman was not keen on making money; practically, she asked for a slight acknowledgment, contenting herself with something for the housekeeping—a rabbit, fruit, vegetables." (Note by M. Mourral, quoted above).

In the maternity wards of the Paris hospitals, almost all the women voluntarily relate the circumstances of their—"accident." "The criminal proceedings," writes Dr. Hubert Legrand, "are almost always the work of a neighbour or of the husband. It is, in fact, an operation continually

the lover or husband or mother lends assistance, sometimes the woman operates on herself.

The reader will excuse these manifold details; they are indispensable for anyone who wishes to study methodically the real social condition and the moral psychology of our contemporaries, and later on we shall draw important conclusions from them. Let us notice that the social phenomenon emerges here into full daylight, and if the consequences to society were not so tragical, the student, treating the question from a strictly scientific standpoint, would be justified in saying that we are here engaged on an "interesting case." Five and twenty or thirty years ago abortions were comparatively rare, and a superficial observer might have concluded that French moral feeling was in profound revolt against such crimes. Really, his conclusion would have been a mistaken one, he would have been deceived by appearances. The outward respect for pregnancy still prevailed, but the moral principles which alone can give such respect a solid support and an enduring foundation were already tottering or had even disappeared. The fear of a worse evil was the guide of conduct; people dreaded to expose themselves to a risk far more formidable than the acceptance of a child developing in its mother's womb. A scientific discovery, the wonderful discovery of Pasteur, "precipitated" the elements already in suspension in the social atmosphere. There was all at once a kind of liberation of all these potential forces that were waiting, if I may so express it, to fix in

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done among the people, without the least fear; when the abortion is in progress, the woman contents herself with getting admission to the hospital, and avows quite openly what has taken place." (*Revue professionnelle des sages femmes*, Feb. 1911). In 1910 a mattress-maker told Mme. Leroy-Allain that every time there was occasion she operated herself on her three daughters. Dr. Hubert Legrand adds elsewhere: "There are also very many cases of women causing abortion by their own act. Nothing is easier, and they know very well how to inform each other." One of my personal friends, a doctor of medicine, has told me that one of his patients is a woman who has caused abortion to herself thirteen times.

our moral system the intensive practice of abortion  
Then there came a rush towards safety!

Would that men capable of solid thought would ponder this deplorable story : for my own part, I do not know one that is more startling or more fruitful in its teaching.

In the wake of abortion come infanticide, incest, and crimes that outrage nature. There is nothing special to say about the first, except that the crime has become more frequent in spite of all the facilities offered to unmarried mothers and of the extension of anti-conceptionist practices and abortion. It no longer arouses the same reprobation among so called "respectable" people, and juries usually return a verdict of "not guilty." It does not even seem that the war has lessened this sickly, unhealthy pity, which is accessory to all kinds of cowardice and defilement; some unknown outside practitioner comes to testify that the girl-mother might have acted unconsciously under the force of an irresistible impulse, or temporary insanity, and this is enough to convince the jurors, whom the remembrance of their own ill-deeds no doubt disposes to condone yet more culpable indulgence.

There is not space to insist further on the questions of incest and unnatural crimes. Let it be enough to say that immorality between near relatives, even sometimes between father and daughter, and between brother and sister, are not very uncommon in certain districts of France, and certain populous quarters of our great towns; while sexual relations of the kind to which

<sup>1</sup> On February, 1918, the Court of Assize for the Loire district acquitted, in two separate affairs, two women guilty of infanticide, the girls F. and D. The former had drowned her infant, though her relatives had offered to bring up the child, as they had done in the case of another to whom she had previously given birth. The girl D. had strangled her baby and finished it by knocking its head against a wall.

In March, 1918, the jury of the Seine even surpassed this, and acquitted a dancer at the La Scala, Maria M., age twenty-one, who had tried to tear out her infant's tongue, crushed its skull and cut its neck. She had then hidden the body in a cupboard. And this took place in March 1918, in the capital of France, on the eve of those bloody days when the flower of the country's youth went to face death that France might live!

Lesbos and Sodom have given their name are still less so. When, twelve years ago, in my *Crise moral des Temps Nouveaux*, I drew attention to their comparative frequency, many people thought I was exaggerating; but since 1907 some flagrant scandals have shown how the evil has spread, and yet the administrative authorities almost invariably hush up affairs of this kind.

#### IV

These great establishments of luxury and debauchery, have a most active auxiliary in pornographic literature, which is at once the preparation and the satisfaction of sensual appetites which ever grow more exacting. As the subject is familiar to the public, it will be sufficient to note some of its essential characteristics: if one wished to give even a summary of this powerful organization with its innumerable tentacles, it would be necessary to devote a long chapter, or a whole book, to it.

The first impression given by the study of this industry, which in our modern society supplies the demand of an ever-growing clientèle, is that of extraordinary ability and irresistible development. If it is defined, as I propose to define it, as the exploitation, with an erotic or obscene intention, of the resources which literature, the drama, and pictures place at men's disposal for their mental refreshment and repose, one may say indeed that there is not one of these which pornography has not successfully employed, and in every branch of its business it has secured markets, the extent of which may be gauged by the ingenuity and excellent commercial organization of the directors, the enormous amount of capital, the unexampled perfection of the methods employed. I noticed at the beginning of this chapter, a special characteristic which is extremely important for the sociological study of the sexual emotion; its tendency to leave throughout the whole intellectual life deep and lasting traces, owing chiefly to the relations which exist



between the sexual powers and the imagination. The impression experienced has been so strong and so unique that the whole psychological life of the individual is affected by it, "and a sort of secondary sexual life, which exists wholly in the imagination, is created." Sight, representation, mere description—less than that, the odour of a scent, the charm of a flower, the rustling of a dress—suffice henceforth to excite certain exact sensual reactions. "All pornographic and sadic literature," writes M. Ruysen, "secures in this psychological law the most powerful enticement which it exerts over an innumerable number of readers, and the flourishing circulation of this literature shows beyond dispute that those who live a secondary sexual life through their imagination are legion, not to mention those in lunatic asylums—especially in a period like our own, when the abuse of newspapers and books creates around all consciences what W. James calls a plurality of under-universes, "in which each can lose himself, and forget, along with himself, the duties of the present hour."

Let us endeavour to see how, in reliance on this psychological law, a powerful trade comes into being; its clientèle is immense, its requirements boundless, its technique modern and perfected to the last degree; all it needs besides is to find contractors—I use the word in the commercial sense—whom no scruples will stay in their course. There will be no lack of these, for everything points to a huge success. We will look at them at their work.

To everyone the honour that is his due. We must first consider the Press, under its two-fold division of daily and weekly newspapers, and of illustrated papers and periodical reviews. It is no exaggeration to say that the regularity with which certain daily Parisian and provincial papers serve their readers every day with the spiced dish which their robust appetite demands is the best guarantee of their steady advance; according to circumstances the dish to be tasted is either a "broad" story, or the account of some occurrence adorned with obscene details, or the publicity of the fourth page.

Often, too, the management unites all these features in one number, and the readers appreciate, as is fitting, this happy arrangement, since a well-ordered meal includes several courses. Before the war, one Parisian journal had achieved its incredible prosperity by the strong and unwonted crudity of its "broad" stories; helped by its colourless politics, it commends itself to thousands of young people and adults, of both sexes, who are grateful for its never-failing fidelity in gratifying their sadic tastes. The names of members of the Academy and celebrated novelists are to be found affixed to these filthy little stories. The war cleansed these nauseous cesspools for a while, and some hoped that the cleansing was permanent. That is of course a delusion; in any case if the news-sheet in question does not return to its old loves, one may be sure that some competing enterprise will drain the pockets of its clientèle. In our present moral state, a journal of this kind answers too perfectly to a demand for such a precious vein of wealth to remain unworked.<sup>1</sup>

We may add—as a last word on the daily Press—that this one, in order to exonerate itself from all responsibility for objectionable advertisements, has invented the ingenious legal theory of immunity through absence; thanks to this theory the proprietor of the paper, who pockets the vast receipts, pretends that he is not responsible for the equivocal or lewd notices on the fourth page.<sup>2</sup>

The second class of journals are illustrated and

<sup>1</sup> Why does our most important evening paper think it necessary from time to time to clear itself of its traditional strictness by publishing the highly-flavoured reports of one of our most erotic journalists? One is compelled to believe that the immense body of professors, working people, and merchants who constitute its subscribers do not protest against, but even appreciate, the series that has been going on for many years. Yet this writer has talent, and the great journal ought to know the deepest needs of our democracy.

<sup>2</sup> A midwife of the first order, a maternity professor, inserted in this way a discreet advertisement in the great daily papers, several pornographic journals, and many illustrated sheets intended for aristocratic and middle-class girls. I reckon that three millions of copies daily thus extolled her professional talents. One of my friends, besides, possesses a visiting-card

frankly pornographic. Their names, the multitude of them, their prosperity, and their obscenity, are too well known to need insisting on. Before the war several of these rags made a speciality of representing the officers of our army as vicious adventurers and *habitués* of brothels. Then came the war: the "lace-uniformed ones" who served as a target for caricature went to their death on the Marne, on the Yser, or at Verdun, while the caricaturists went on pocketing the huge gains of their profitable trade.

The journal and illustrated paper prepare the way for the pamphlet and book, the picture, the album and photograph. The production of obscene pamphlets and books reaches, in France, proportions of which few people have any suspicion. Some of them have reached a circulation of 50,000 in the first edition, and are now being sold in their sixtieth, at 95 centimes. The price varies; so does the degree of licentiousness. Thus one can buy *Trois nuits d'amour* for 30c., *Les péchés roses* for 25c., *Les Aventures du roi Pauzole* or *Mariette* for 95 c., and for 3fr. 50c. *La Mort des Sexes*, or *Aphrodite*, or *Les Demi-Vierges*, or the *Journal d'une femme de chambre*, or . . . the whole endless series of romances by well-known authors. To write a licentious book is counted no dishonour; still better, if it runs into many editions, its success may lead to a chair in the Academy, or at least to the Croix d'honneur. Sometimes the honourable author sits as a judge at the Assizes or in the Criminal Court in cases of abortion or injury to those under age, but such, it seems, are merely youthful sins, which a kindly judgment easily pardons, and some questionable performances no more hinder a fine literary

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left by her at the Birth Registry Office of a mayor in the centre of Paris, thus inscribed "Mme. X. (name, degree, profession) has the honour to inform her kind client that, in case of need, she can restore all the signs of virginity, without operation and with the utmost discretion." I borrow this piece of information, and some others which follow, from the very exact evidence which the admirable agent—general of the *Ligue Française pour la retèvement de la moralité publique* presented in 1912 to the second National Congress "contre le pornographie."

career than they compromise an advantageous political one.

In default of talent, inferior authors secure the sale of their wares by excess of licentiousness: the reader whose taste has been dulled by use demands a more highly seasoned dish. A girl in Society (with a big S) remarked. "How tiresome it is: I can't find anything more to read that makes me blush."

The cheapness of these pamphlets and books puts them within everybody's reach, and the number of readers is enormous: tobacconists' shops and newspaper kiosks, libraries and railway book-stalls, are fairly encumbered with them. Along with this licentious literature there is another, frankly obscene and reserved for debauched exquisites and special collectors. "The Lyons and Paris catalogues advertise, one 114 different works rising to 20 francs the volume, the other 229 works from 5 to 10 francs, of which I forbear to give the titles; there are copies at 60, 100, and 150 francs. The very abundant "littérature Flagellante" includes 22 books by the same author . . . Among foreigners, Italy and Spain are the chief centres for the French output. One catalogue, "No. 108," published at Madrid, advertises 298 works of the most obscene kind. It may be had for a franc. The price of the volumes varies from 10 to 15 francs. Another catalogue, from a Barcelona depot, which must, however, be obtained from Turin, includes a hundred series still more varied and more obscene. The English works advertised in this list are represented by 113 various titles—a copy costs from 25 to 250 francs. There is one book in six volumes of which the price is a trifle of 1875 francs.<sup>1</sup>"

On February 15, 1912, the Court of the Seine seized 6000 kilograms of these obscene works in one shop. Yet at least 20 shops which specialize in the sale of them are known to exist. Prosecutions are extremely

<sup>1</sup> Emile Pouresy, *loc. cit.* The employment of these depots for foreigners' use makes it easier to escape the penal laws. It goes without saying that these powerful houses utilise simultaneously all the resources of legal science and of a wide publicity.

infrequent : they are scarcely announced before deputies and celebrated literateurs intervene to secure their abandonment. It appears that the liberty of thought and of Art would be compromised, and that we should be menaced with clerical interference.

This obscene literature leads its readers on to still more revolting productions—obscene photographs. But here we enter on the indescribable, the unrelateable, and on whatever is most unclean. I shall therefore refrain from all details, but in return I beg my reader to take my word for it when I tell him that there are in France twelve firms and factories of which the depots I have alluded to are the great centres. The customers seek these goods at special counters of the recognized shops, and thousands upon thousands of chapmen sell them in secret on the terraces of cafés, at the doors of warehouses and workshops, of colleges and great schools. Well-dressed men buy much, and at a very high price, of what takes their fancy. This trade is in possession of a powerful international organization which pushes the kind of goods sold because photography shares with the other plastic arts the privilege of a free circulation on which diversity of language places no check. "Portugal, Spain, Italy, Holland, Hungary, Germany, Belgium and Switzerland encircle France with their obscenities." Perhaps our country is in this respect more threatened than threatening<sup>1</sup>; the Paris houses are managed indiscriminately by Frenchmen and foreigners. One house alone in Amsterdam sells 6,000 different series, each containing 25 photographs; another at Turin puts out several series at 500, 2,000, 3,000, 5,000, and even 7,000 francs each. Certain authors, in order to escape responsibility and the logic of facts, have since the war wished us to believe that this filth comes from Germany. "The Boche back is broad enough," writes M. Pourésy, "but truth obliges us to say that every week more than

<sup>1</sup> This does not mean that our home production languishes. In June, 1909, the Prefecture of Police conveyed to the court on a truck drawn by two horses, more than 1,500 kil. photographic plates, and more than 60,000 francs' worth of photographs seized in Paris.

300,000 copies of illustrated French papers, published in Paris, by Frenchmen, commend to the public lists in which the most licentious series are advertised."<sup>1</sup>

This clandestine trade, to which the police shut their eyes, occasions ravages, the gravity of which is not suspected by the public. "These filthy photographs," says M. Emile Pourésy, "produce an incredible disturbance of the senses, and tend to urge the unfortunate people who buy them to the most monstrous crimes. Their disintegrating action upon boys and girls is fearful, and we have seen many colleges ruined morally and physically by their means. For girls there is no more powerfully destructive agent. We will say nothing of their effect upon rakes, libertines and old men, whom they lead quickly to sadism and satyrism."

I only mention in passing the illustrated post-card; the number of immoral cards in circulation during the last twenty years is estimated at hundreds of millions; sometimes they are openly obscene and form public outrages on chastity.<sup>2</sup>

From these obscene photographs we naturally proceed to the second kind of undertakings, exploited with the avowed intention of supplying this second sexual life, which exists wholly in imagination, with a nourishment that can maintain and develop it; I refer especially to the theatre and its democratic extensions, the music-hall, café-concert, and cinematograph. A few brief comments will suffice.

<sup>1</sup>And the gallant lecturer adds: "We will not be the dupes of journalists, authors, and congress orators, for we know from an absolutely reliable source that these works are written by French authors and circulated by the French press. It is infinitely more convenient to put them down to the credit of foreigners; we are thus dispensed from cleansing our own stables." *Bulletin d'information anti-pornographique*, 1st April, 1917.

<sup>2</sup>In the production of the incredible variety of these cards a French designer, of Lyons, holds the premier place. He has produced over a thousand series of subjects, almost all of an immoral kind. Neither sentences in court, nor periods in gaol, have so far improved him; his imagination continues to combine pornography with the progress of science. Aviation has supplied him with a quantity of subjects." Emile Pourésy, *loc cit.*

As with books, so with the stage, we find two distinct categories. Everyone knows the first, the bourgeois theatre. Who does not know, in France or among foreigners, how perseveringly our dramatic authors have devoted themselves, these last thirty years, to place on the stage all the most scandalous passages of adultery and free love, of licentious life and of divorce? Under the pretence of representing the manners of our time, one would imagine that France had none but unfaithful spouses, no husbands except bores and fools, and that women of the demi-monde have a monopoly of delicate and honourable sentiments. The manners of abandoned persons, the vilest passions, alone deserve the honours of the stage; it goes without saying that the impulse to which the leading character yields is irresistible, and the playwright would be disgraced if he introduced on the boards people capable of respecting the laws of traditional morality: of controlling the passions, of securing the dominion of the will, of remembering domestic and social responsibilities; all this only belongs to people "not in the running"; the new sport claims the right for each to live his life at the sacrifice of that of others. But these characters of our contemporary stage are too familiar to need insistence. I only beg the reader to reflect on the kind of mentality which takes for granted that such a theatre will suit an audience who for thirty years, and unfailingly, has kept it going with their money. Dozens of these openly licentious plays have won fame and made their authors famous; the most moderate, the most middle-class, the most conservative newspapers have eulogized them, and the provinces have been bound in honour to follow Paris in applauding these piquant dramas in which, according to the classical formula of the dramatic critics, the author "presents with so much power one of the most disturbing problems of our contemporary life." One might have believed that through being dragged into the open, free love, adultery, and secret immorality, might have at length given up all their secrets; vain hope! Soon the first night of a new play comes to tell us

that the inexhaustible theme still holds in reserve throbbing mysteries which we are in honour bound to explore to their very depth.

When the theatre patronized by good society and honourable people has fallen so unutterably low, and has thus definitely proved that the drama depends for its success almost entirely on the irregularities of sexual passion one understands what the popular immoral theatre must be like. The people—and this trait does them much honour—have no love for the complicated Pharisaism which our middle-class is so ready to confound with virtue; to the advance of which it is really one of the greatest hindrances. The people go straight to facts, they have no fear of speaking plainly, and they love sincerity; therefore the theatre beloved by them has no need to use caution, and the brutality of its language rivals the obscenity of its situations and its actions. *Maman Calibri, Education de Prince Monsieur de Courpière, Lysistrata, les Travaux d'Hercule, Xantho chez les courtisanes, Une nuit de noces* have been illustrations of this sort these last few years. Their obscenity is enough to satisfy the most exacting. Huge audiences expect, demand and acclaim these dramas. Special companies hawk these plays of which Paris has enjoyed the first fruits and sealed the success, through the whole of France; the use of perfectly contrived scenery makes it possible to associate the inhabitants of the smallest towns with this triumph. It goes without saying that the obscenity of the bills and advertisements announces and ensures the obscenity of the performance. This is what is called the "free" or "realistic" stage.

The music-halls and café-concerts are formidable competitors of the authentic stage, and this competition is only possible if they cater for the licentious and erotic taste of their customers. Such a condition is far from displeasing to either managers or artists, who accept it with entire satisfaction. Here again we find two sorts of establishments: one reserved for a refined clientèle, the other wide open to the people at large: the tone, the furnishing, the decorations are different, the obscenity is



equal in both, and that is what matters, for the "elegant" customers will not suffer themselves to be deprived of their rights to licence and debauch under the pretext of respecting good manners. If a choice must be made, they would prefer rather worse manners and rather more obscenity. The two stories I have already told refer to this class of *café-chantant*:<sup>1</sup> here are others which apply equally to both kinds. "At B, monologues and songs are grossly obscene: the tableaux and dramatic scenes go so far as to picture the sexual relations. The audience—there are more than a thousand distinguished spectators (at least they appear so)—applaud frantically. At N, the little songs, the most obscene monologues, and some gestures which are veritable public outrages on chastity, are applauded by children and young people under the approving eyes of their parents. At L, a very numerous audience calls five times the 'cabotin' who ends his turn with the most lascivious little song imaginable."

The "revues" in which there is even more intrigue, are greatly appreciated, because they afford opportunity in every stanza for the greatest excesses of filthiness. Erotic tableaux vivants, and exhibitions of almost naked women, of the type of Regina Badet, form the chief part of these performances. In the spring of 1914—I insist especially on the date—it was thought that the public were sufficiently inured for the last halting-place to be passed; absolutely naked women were, to my knowledge, exhibited simultaneously on more than a dozen little Parisian stages, and the thing seemed so simple that the entrance was not ruinous: 5 or even 3 francs! Vague

<sup>1</sup> pp, 16, 18 (notes).

<sup>2</sup> Emile Pourésy, *Rapport au 2me Congrès national contre la pornographie*. Sometimes the actor himself, though an old stager in this kind of entertainment, in a sudden access of disgust, is obliged to curb the appetite of the audience. This was the case one evening at R, where a mixed audience noisily recalled the singer of an exceptionally obscene item. On this occasion the "cabotin" grew angry, and in the middle of his performance, called out indignantly: "Dirt that you are . . . you don't see that there are children here," and, without finishing, retired to the green-room.

protests appeared in several Paris journals of different political colours, but the press as a whole, including the conservative papers, kept silence. How could it be otherwise since, at that very time, the "best people" of the capital gave France the scandal of their "bal de pierreries," of the "bal de Quat-z-arts," and of the traditional and revolting "Bal de l'Internat?"

Lasciviousness displays itself to such a degree on the stage that M. Adolphe Brisson, in one of his "Monday Chronicles" in the *Temps* newspaper, gives vent to his indignation: "We are driven to wish that the sexual act might take place on the stage (as in the time of the celebrated M. de Chirac) and so the police, if other censorship has been abolished, might be forced to interfere. The limits of toleration being at last passed, the public will revolt and by their protestations provoke an inevitable reaction."

The second category of music-halls and café-chantant includes the "beuglants" and the "bouis-bouis," infected places where everything is degraded, filthy, oozing with lasciviousness and alcoholism. "Night cabarets, soldiers' cafés, never well lighted, easy of access, cabarets where flow passion, alcohol, and death; there are 1,500 of them, where the girls of the people prostitute themselves to gain a livelihood, corrupting their brothers the workers." With the 50,000 of these women, who only live by prostitution and debauchery, as Ibels lately described in his beautiful letter to M. Clemenceau, they provide the worst instincts of the human beast with the daily provender to which he is accustomed. The gluttony of the consumers gives a sinister commentary on the words of a Father of the Church: "Vitium hominis, natura pecoris—man's vice is the nature of the brute."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>A word must be said about the foreign shows and anatomical museums. The strolling life of these establishments favours obscenity, and its exploiters take advantage of this opportunity. Booths and shooting-galleries of ambiguous character instal themselves in our great squares, and everyone, beginning with the police, knows that they are but brothels. The foreign cinemas are distinguished by their special obscenity. This is one of their usual dodges: "On three or four nights, before they leave the foyer, programmes with the titles of the films are

By the side of such things, criminal or licentious films appear almost innocent, yet who will deny their powerful co-operation in exciting the grossest sensual desires?

I have finished this quite incomplete summary of the pornographic manifestations of the beginning of the 20th century. In closing it I desire to make one observation of great importance in sociological studies. For a long time in France voices have been heard deploring the almost always licentious, and often obscene, character of our romantic and dramatic literature; what politician has not complained of it, what minute-book has not deplored it? One cannot describe the fatal effects of this school of perversion upon our young people, and the damage caused to our good name throughout the world. God forbid that I should contest these statements, but one recognises in them, only too clearly, the bourgeois hypocrisy which is debasing our moral standard to-day.

Without insisting on the too often doubtful sincerity of certain people who wail in public, that their past and their private life have been a bad preparation for the role of public censors, I remark in the first place that the administrative authority has not merely done nothing, but has never wished to do anything, to combat the scourge. Mayors and prefects, commissioners of police and procurators of the Republic, magistrates and ministers, deputies and senators—they all agree to fold their arms in the face of this solidly organized army of the exploiters of licence—and these functionaries who take no action, who are they? Are they strangers come from a country which (*per impossibile*) knows nothing of such disgrace? or innocent young people without experience, carried away by youthful impetuosity to tolerate the worst excesses of licence? Not at all, they are men with an

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distributed to the men. It is indicated that there will be no light except on the film, and no music. This is to safeguard amateurs who don't wish to be recognised. At Bordeaux, Tours, Béziers, Quimper, Rochefort, and many other towns, such is the procedure. At La Rochelle, on the complaint of a vigilance committee, the Central Commissioner caused several plays to be suppressed, to the great astonishment of the management, which declared that during six months of their performance, no one had ever protested." Emile Pourésy, *loc. cit.*

ordinary past, well over forty years of age, men with experience of life, and who therefore know well what tears, what hidden agonies, what irreparable ruin, accompany this Bacchanalian procession, which looks so joyful and which in truth marches along roads all watered with tears and blood.

But there is more yet. These people of repute, who differ so widely in their opinions but are so remarkably alike in their administrative apathy, not only do nothing, but even when with truly super-human efforts our Vigilance Committees, Leagues of Public Morality, Associations for the Protection of Young Girls, etc., have secured a prosecution or an official order, and sometimes even the insertion of a clause in some Act, whom do we find step in to stop the prosecution, and ensure the practical futility of both order and law? Again, and always, public officials, mayors, magistrates, politicians, celebrated men of letters, sometimes members of the Academy. Some invoke the liberty of Art, others the requirements of Commerce, others again (and chiefly these) bluntly invoke personal liberty. Very few possess a sense of individual responsibility and care for the higher interests of their country. In order to secure the acquittal of the most criminal dealers in licentiousness, the most flimsy extenuating circumstances are complacently recalled, the possible severity of legal theories is deliberately exaggerated, and when in spite of this treasury of indulgence a condemnation is inevitable, the benefit of the "loi Beranger," due to the initiative of wealthy men bent upon signaling their own performances, is accorded (supreme absurdity!) to the condemned.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Must it be said that amid all this failure to act and desertion of principle, the line taken by the judges of assize is the most discouraging of all? When in 1911, an enquiry was laid before the Courts of Appeal as to the usefulness of a reform of the law in the direction of giving the immediate right of prosecution to associations established for the public weal, an unfavourable opinion was given; and yet the Courts knew better than anyone why the police-courts are powerless to secure the repression of vice. In the same way, again in 1911, was it not the Court of Appeal which gave to the law of April, 7, 1908, so strange an interpretation, that

The truth is that while all these immoral and pornographic undertakings are evidently the *cause* of demoralisation, and daily lead astray thousands of young people of both sexes, they are also and chiefly the result of an already existing demoralisation which creates, maintains, and demands them. Willingly would we try to believe that the directors of these establishments are foreigners, dispatched on occasion by our enemies to pervert us, and operating with foreign capital, but this happy explanation will not stand methodical analysis; the authors, the directors, and the publishers are, in the immense majority of cases, genuine Frenchmen; it is other Frenchmen who guarantee their gains, and, finally, Frenchmen who, invested with delegated public authority, let things alone and refuse to interfere. Let us not try to deceive ourselves; in the depths of our

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this law, from which much might have been expected for the repression of obscene notices and advertisements, has become almost useless? Where could the Court make the discovery that the fact of advertising articles or services of an immoral description was only an outrage on public morality when "the terms of the advertisement were themselves obscene?" The Act does not whisper a word of any such condition; at this rate "avorteuses," prostitutes, and vendors of anti-conceptionist apparatus need no longer trouble themselves to entice their clientèle by costly advertising, and one knows that in fact they make use of this freedom. When in 1908-1910, the exhibitions of the nude then beginning on the stage became the subject of several prosecutions, many criminal courts gave, in favour of acquitted prisoners, sentences which are master-pieces of legal machiavelism at the service of licentiousness. In the same way, again, my learned colleagues, MM. Barthelemy and Garcon, have exposed, at recent meetings of the Société Generale des Prisons, the action of magistrates and professors of law who have framed from all sources, and in the teeth of the clearest statutory authority, the strange doctrine of professional secrecy which, interpreted as it is with us, and as it is *not* in Great Britain, nor in the United States, nor anywhere else (and it will be confessed that in these two great countries the sentiment of professional honour and of loyalty is not less developed than among ourselves) almost compels doctors, especially those in hospitals, to be the ready accomplices of every kind of "avorteuse." And how many more illustrations might be brought forward! What witchcraft condemns our French magistracy to be thus for ever behind-hand in regard to any useful suggestions or reforms?

Not so long ago, in the reign of Louis XVI, our parliaments opposed the wisest reforms, and thus did their part in making the terrible shock of the French Revolution inevitable; in our days, imprisoned in the out-of-date idea of an anarchic individualism, our magistracy sets itself in opposition to the most urgent moral reforms.

## 50 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

French society the craving for licentious or obscene shows and lectures is daily growing; bourgeois and manual workers, peasants and townspeople, unite to form the queue at the doors of the establishments where the coveted merchandise is sold. Doubtless, the sale itself of the article again arouses, through use, the regular customer's desire, and awakes it in the innocent passer-by, who perhaps is thinking of something utterly different; but this reciprocal action and reaction is inevitable, it is not peculiar to this special branch, and it is, after all, the business of all commercial enterprise to develop continually according to the needs of their clientèle and the numbers of its customers. Also, the constant checks sustained by societies which try to revive a pure theatre and cinema, and many other good things, prove the determined and resolute taste of the patrons. If these societies do not secure the co-operation of a similar propaganda of moral regeneration, their efforts fail, and fail logically, because the goods offered do not please the buyer, and nothing is offered which does please him.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FACTS (*continued*): THE CONDUCT OF MARRIED PEOPLE

“We hate the truth, we hide it from us; we wish to be flattered, we flatter ourselves; we love to be deceived, we deceive ourselves.”—  
PASCAL.

OUR social code, we have seen, leaves to the unmarried at least to those of the male sex, entire freedom to satisfy their sexual appetites; and as this satisfaction is free from responsibility, if not from risks, and social custom gives countless privileges to the unmarried, powerful arguments appear to be in favour of continuing in that condition. It is also agreed that the number of celibates—I mean those who remain celibate for the sake of pleasure, who must not be confused with voluntary celibates from devotion—is sufficiently large in our country.<sup>1</sup> All the same, for the immense majority of adults there comes a time, variable in its arrival, when this state ceases to please, and when the individual thinks it well to marry. After the information we have given, it is evident that for the great majority of men the desire to satisfy a sexual instinct which has hitherto been restrained by chastity has nothing to do with the decision; and common opinion does not err when it says that the young man who marries makes an end and goes to a burial—he buries his youthful life—expressions little calculated, we must confess, to encourage his fiancée. Yet would to heaven this burial was sincere and loyal, and that the leavings of the

<sup>1</sup> *Vide infra*, the resumé of French marriages since 1801, p. 160

meal which he brings to the conjugal table were such as are fit to eat.

About 600,000 persons make up their minds to be married every year; to be exact, 299,000 marriages were celebrated in 1913, 312,000 in 1912. According to the staticians these figures are satisfactory since they vary between 7.8, 7.9, and 8% for 1000 inhabitants, while in Germany, with a much larger proportion of young men and women, the percentage was 8.2 in 1906, 8.1 in 1907, 7.9 in 1908, 6.7 in 1909. Let us remember these figures and reserve our satisfaction: let us try, on the other hand, to discover what motives conduce to marriage, what ends the young spouses set before themselves, and how their conjugal union is in point of fact conducted. Without at all prejudging the result of our enquiry, we must all the same confess that the morals of our young men make us fear that they are but indifferently prepared to become husbands.

For many centuries, beneath the sway of the better traditions of the ancient Roman social code, and still more beneath the strong discipline of the Catholic Church, marriage was thus defined: The indissoluble union of a man and a woman, joined together for their mutual moral and material good, and in order to ensure the continuance and the progress of the human race. This definition, which is not even legally exact with regard to our modern societies, and which we all know to be manifestly inexact as to our social life, fits in so well with our habitual insincerity that it still inspires our gestures and our attitudes when our *talk* turns on marriage. But our acts give the lie to our words; we salute the formula with respect, but we take good care not to assimilate it, and with the great majority of Frenchmen it scarcely evokes a memory, it is a tradition, which the progress of civilization has definitely repudiated.

We have not time to explain here what persevering effort and artful cleverness our modern society has employed, while retaining the word, to empty it of all substantial meaning, and to degrade, little by little, the



institution of marriage. It is enough to say that it finds itself face to face with a problem, which may be expressed almost exactly as follows: "To institute the kind of marriage and of conjugal life that suits the tastes, the requirements, the capacity, and the morals of young people accustomed to look upon the sexual act as a mere means of enjoyment, and as little inclined as possible to shoulder the responsibility of a healthy and vigorous family." We shall go on to see how it has succeeded, and how, just as in our days, according to current morality, the unmarried state does not in the least imply any obligation to abstain from sexual relations, the married state equally infers no obligation to fulfil those duties which in former days the great majority of husbands did not fail to implement.

First of all, in what spirit and for what reasons do people marry? It scarcely seems an exaggeration to say that they do so for all kinds of reasons except to have children and to realise the ends which morality assigns to marriage.

Among the aristocracy, the middle-class, and the peasants, vanity and avarice are responsible for a vast number of marriages. The daughter of a manufacturer or a rich merchant feels inexpressible joy when she hears that she is to become the wife of a count, or even of a gentleman with a "de" before his name. As neither she, nor her family, nor any of her friends, have haunted the Heralds' College or even the Faculty of Law, she is totally ignorant of the value of that precious particle, which was never a token of nobility, and still more of the origin, often fraudulent, and usually quite recent, of the name which has captivated her; but what matter these details? Her soul is full of joy, and her eagerness not to let so wonderful a chance slip does not leave her time to examine other questions which yet are important. This hurry is, besides, a stroke of luck for her fiancé; too often his name is his sole asset, and his bride's family would never have chosen him for a son-in-law if he had only borne one of the ordinary names of the French people.

To the vanity of one side corresponds the avarice of the other, and the young man whose social rank—and most of all, want of capacity—forbids him, apparently, to follow his father-in-law's profession, sees nothing unbecoming in seizing at one stroke the results of the other's patient toil. Moreover, his behaviour wins the secret approval of nearly everyone, and most of those who maliciously criticize it seem so little sincere in their condemnation that in listening to them one's thoughts turn at once to the fable of the fox and the grapes. The desire for money and material advantage is in fact the most usual motive with those intending to marry. If even before the war girls had, on their side, to consent to sacrifices, young men had, on the other hand, countless opportunities of making a good thing of the arrangement. We know that they did not let them all slip. I have told elsewhere how, for a crowd of young men of the middle-class, marriage is the great business, the supreme financial operation of life. The youth sees before him the chance of gaining in one moment wealth—a fortune which could not be acquired in 20, 30, or 40 years of work—he argues that this is the one chance of his life, which will never return, and that not to give his whole mind to such an opportunity one would need to be a saint . . . or a young man capable of gaining his livelihood honourably. But the immense majority of our young men have no pretension to saintliness, and their education, which as a rule has but little developed their initiative or power of work, has been a bad preparation for making their own way honourably: therefore they and their family will devote their unremitting attention to this matter. In the first overtures their cunning strategy proves their cleverness, and one fairly wonders at the prodigies of tenacity, disciplined perseverance, and diplomatic finesse, which they manifest. To see them in their everyday life one would believe them less well endowed with intelligence, but the allurements of money has discovered something of a second nature in them. Besides they are surrounded with the advice of relations and friends, since

for the great transaction one must mobilize all possible resources.

But marriage is entered upon for many other motives besides: to obtain an advantageous post, to join two properties, especially two landed estates, to regularize a former connection or to legitimize a natural child;<sup>1</sup> to provide unfailing and devoted attentions for a man's rheumatics and old age, to be able to choose the place of his garrison at the time of conscription,<sup>2</sup> to benefit by the military allowance, even for the purpose of debauch.<sup>3</sup>

In fine, and chiefly among the young men who do not marry for money, marriage is contracted to put an end

<sup>1</sup> It is known, besides, that among the working classes the husband agrees to recognize before marriage, and then to legitimize by marrying, a child who is not his. One might admire this trait of generosity; if one did not know that lack of any sense of paternal duty has much to do with this easy acceptance of a stranger. A judgment of the 5th Chamber of the Civic Tribunal of the Seine, delivered on January 10th, 1917, provides us with a curious document. During the action, the following was produced: "By these presents I declare to my husband. That in our union I have only the object of legitimizing the children born of our "free" union, which lasted from 1901 to 1905, and not that of resuming our life together. I leave him on the day of our marriage at 5:30 p.m., in order to escape from conjugal duties which I have no intention of fulfilling; I give him by these presents a deed of separation, to serve towards what is necessary in order to obtain a divorce." The divorce was, in fact, pronounced "on the ground of the serious injury done to him by his wife's declaration."

<sup>2</sup> The recruiting law of 21st March, 1905, in enacting that the conscripts called to the colours should have the right to perform their military service in the town nearest to their place of domicile, soon caused such crying abuses that the military authority was obliged to institute supplementary investigations in order to estimate the moral value of marriages duly contracted and registered. Apaches, maintainers of harlots, rogues of every kind, appreciated this kind of marriage, which enabled them to live close to the large town which suited their tastes so exactly. Some years ago, at the Pepinière barracks, a woman appeared one day asking news of her husband whom she had not seen for two months. "How is that?" the captain replied, "for we give him leave of absence every Saturday evening for 36 hours, to go home and help you in the housework and the care of the children." The enquiry brought to light many cases of the kind and the military authority revised the regulations.

<sup>3</sup> This last evil is steadily increasing. As among the working classes, in which the daily wage is the one source of livelihood, marriage entails no obligation capable of civil enforcement, it has become advantageous to

to a life of vice, of which they are beginning to weary, and to substitute another form of sexual life, less animated, more calm and quite restful. "At the present time," the principal of one of our great Paris colleges said to me "many young men see in marriage, nothing but the means of securing a mistress at home"—a word of profound thought, which does more honour to the clear-sightedness of him who said it than miles of plans and statistics showing the happy signs of the French marriage returns. In place of going into raptures at these satisfying lists, let us have the courage to confess that the reason given above is the chief one which leads a great number of our boys to marry, both in town and country. For ten or twelve years they have roved a little in all directions, tasting various forms of licentiousness in various degree. A day comes when they tire of this restless and irregular life; they take a lawful wife, convinced that with her will be combined the advantages of safety and tranquillity with those of a licentiousness, modified indeed, but still sufficient and refined, to suit a less exacting appetite. No doubt the solution is not perfect, and has also some danger; but since divorce has become legal these are much lessened, and then one must be sensible; we don't do all we want, and it is something to enjoy a fairly large part of what we do; experience shows that there are still those who know how to content themselves with the wise arrangements which are most successful in getting one out of a scrape.

Thus a great number of our modern young men reason when they think of marriage. In any case they

seduce an honest girl by this means. After the legal ceremony the fellow has no money left, and even the girl's relatives approve of his leaving her, according to custom. The blackguard can defile at will her whom he has cheated. At the end of a few weeks, his lust being satisfied, he abandons her, and the family dissociate themselves ["*se débrattille*"]. I knew a young girl lately, the child of most respectable parents, who was in this way the victim of the shameful conduct of her husband, as she was in poor health she did not even care to apply for a divorce: she died four months after the marriage. If these things go on it will become imperative to pass a law, enacting severe penalties in order to secure the repression of such crimes.

come to be married from various motives, even sometimes from really high ones which conform to the purposes of the union of man and woman. Far from me, indeed, be it to assert that by the side of those candidates for matrimony whose moral dispositions I have been trying to analyse there are not others who are obedient to the noblest ideals. There are even some of these, a trifling minority, who to these lofty sentiments, join the privilege of an unstained purity, and bring to their bride that which they claim from her. But how many can we place in this class or even in the former? Are they both together more numerous than they were in France 25, 50, or 75 years, or, on the contrary, is it not certain that their ranks are thinned? An agonizing question, to which statistics will give the answer later on. Besides, there is no lack of parents who, looking for a suitable son-in-law, show some preference for the young man who has known how to sow his wild oats without scandal. Some see in this a proof that he is a man of quality; others, more cunning, believe they can find in it a pledge of good conduct and fidelity for the future, and in any case a safeguard against too frequent pregnancies . . .

Do not tell these newly married couples that the conjugal union is the union of two beings who are united for their whole life, and who, having given to each other the best they have, seek by mutual help to perfect themselves, and to realize the ideal of beauty and perfection which their souls have conceived . . . Neither tell them that, having come to full age and the fulness of their powers, their duty is to recognize the good deeds of their ancestors by handing on in their turn to a numerous posterity, the life which they have received. Neither tell them that nature has implanted in them an instinct at once splendid and formidable, of which the reckless indulgence tends to lead them to utter filthiness and the worst moral downfall, if they do not submit to the salutary and fortifying discipline of an indissoluble and fruitful marriage. Do not tell them, in fine, that this instinct, so homely in its physiological roots, only takes its human worth, and can

only enter into the scheme of a growing spiritualization of both the individual and the race, in so far as it accepts before all things, in submission to the mastery of a purified will, the carrying out of the ends which nature has intended by the implanting of that instinct in our bodies. Do not tell them all these things, and many more; they will not understand you, and to silence you it will be enough for them to quote the names of men and women who, around them and before them, have appeared in the divorce court, and to whom you give without a blush the usurped names of husband and wife, bride and bridegroom. They also will be like the others. Their plan is well thought out, and at the best here are the main outlines of it: to establish a peaceable and well-ordered household in which the care of very few children—only one or two—makes possible, with a moderate amount of work, a substantial annual surplus. Thus the parents can have a good time while they live their life of pleasant ease, and their child rises by several steps in the social ladder so well studied by M. Arsène Dumont.

In the present state of our morals, our scientific knowledge, and our technical achievements, such a programme is not very hard to carry out, so long as it is truly desired. We shall see now that such desire is the very last thing that is lacking.

## I

The first condition of the realization of such a plan is a systematic interference with nature's work on the part of the married pair. Nature is very far from having granted spontaneously this desire for demi-sterility; on the contrary, indifferent to our calculations and solely intent on her own ends, she scatters the seed of life in profusion. Everyone should know, although people often pretend to be ignorant, that a marriage contracted at a normal age, *i.e.* between 20 and 30, should ordinarily result in the birth of 8, 10, 12, or even more children.

To the immense majority of households such fecundity would be a disaster, to be prevented at any cost, and since one must interfere, the simplest way is to interfere at once, and to limit the family to a strict minimum, one or two children, or even to avoid pregnancy altogether.

Also from the second or third year of the marriage, sometimes after the first coming together and even from the wedding night, the practices and methods of voluntary sterility are installed in the nuptial chamber. The recipes vary according to tastes, and the extent of neo-malthusian knowledge. What is required is efficacy and infallibility in the result, and one must believe that this is the last thing lacking when one considers the countless number of spouses who, with frequent conjugal relations during 10, 15, 20, even 25 years, nevertheless succeed in only having one or two children. God forbid that in writing thus we should throw suspicion upon homes involuntarily childless, where sterility sometimes resists all united efforts to overcome it, to the despair and unutterable sorrow of the unhappy spouses. But though we should wish to estimate the proportion of these as high as possible, we are bound to say that such cases of total or partial involuntary sterility are far from being 20 per cent. of the whole. On this point the evidence of physicians and well-informed sociologists is in absolute agreement, and the unreal arguments of pharisaism cannot shake it.

Usually this interference is the result of agreement between the spouses, whether through the real wish of both, or because one of them has pressed the other, more or less urgently, to at least a tacit consent.<sup>1</sup> Sometimes the resolution of systematic sterility is on one side

<sup>1</sup> The question is discussed among moralists whether the chief responsibility of conjugal frauds falls on the husbands rather than the wives, or whether, on the contrary, it is not chiefly the wives who refuse to have children. I am much inclined to think that the responsibility falls chiefly on the husbands. In the present state of our morals, the number is still considerable of wives who are ready to follow their husband's desires, whatever they may be, whether egotistic or generous. Even when the wife desires only a very small family, she would but rarely maintain her resolution in the face of the patient and persevering effort of a husband capable of conducting himself as a decent man.

only, and it is not uncommon for the other spouse, the wife especially, to suffer untold anguish in consequence, of this physicians and priests are often the shocked and helpless confidants. But with or without the assent of the other party, the result is the same : nature's work is hindered, sterility takes the place of fruitfulness, and the arrangement calls into being precisely the number of children that has been decided on.

This voluntary sterility can, it is true, take another form—that of complete abstinence from conjugal relations, and the social student far from condemning this without examination, should on the contrary, as we shall see later on, recognize under certain conditions its undoubted utility and high social value ; but if, in this connection, one is bound to banish unjust suspicions, one is none the less bound to acknowledge that this way of voluntary abstinence finds but very few adherents in our modern society. If we are to believe reliable testimony, resolutions of this kind, founded on profound religious conviction, were not so uncommon formerly ; and apart from any religious belief, with some peasants, determined not to divide their property, the force of interested sentiment is sufficient to ensure inflexible adherence to a resolution taken once for all. But in our present moral condition, this conjugal continence has become extremely rare, so rare that the sociologist need scarcely take any account of it when he draws up statistics of the countless households that reckon only one or two children. To abstain from a pleasure, especially that of sexual emotion, simply for the sake of respecting a moral law, without any advantage except that of doing service in a cause of social morality of which most people are not even conscious, seems so grotesque in our age that there barely exists an infinitesimal élite capable of conceiving such an ideal. And no married person will contradict me if I add that the realization is far from keeping pace with the resolution. The number of married people who resolve to observe continence is sufficiently trifling ; how much lower still is that of those who keep their resolution ?

But such an eccentricity attracts scarcely anyone, and



according to our moral standard it is agreed that every couple has the right to take any anti-conceptionist precautions that please them, and to begin them at any time. But, as one must not talk about a rope in the house of one who has been hanged, bourgeois society imposes silence, and pretends to believe that kindly nature is alone to thank for such a fortunate arrangement. This convention, which takes account of nothing but words, is the sole homage which in this case vice renders to virtue; it does not compromise the liberty of the practices of which it is indeed the safeguard; and thus everything makes for greater family tranquility.

To tell the truth, the use of these practices is nothing new in the history of mankind, and, not to mention the instance recorded in the Bible, when Onan practised fraud in order to deprive his brother's widow of posterity, it is certain that imperial Rome employed such measures extensively.<sup>1</sup> It is difficult to know to what extent they were employed by the middle class and the aristocracy of our ancient France, though we have good reasons to think they were very sparingly used. The sincerity of religious convictions tended to root out acts sternly condemned by Christian morality; and on the other hand characters were little fitted for that perseverance in the controlled trickery which the use of these preventive measures demands; finally, the frightful infant mortality automatically solved a problem which now-a-days terrifies so many couples. From the end of the sixteenth century their use appears to have spread among the most cultivated and most wary circles. St. Francis of Sales expressly takes notice of this grave sin in his *Introduction à la vie dévote*, published in 1609, and, later, Bossuet

<sup>1</sup> From the first days of the Empire to the time when married women reckoned their years by the number of their husbands, voluntary sterility, attained by abortion or anti-conceptionist means, became customary; it is with the thought of these married women as well as of harlots that Juvenal wrote (Sat. VI., 592-596):

"Sed jacet aurato sic ulla puerpera lecto  
Tantum artis hujus, tantum medicamina possunt  
Quæ steriles facit, atque homines in ventre necandos  
Conducit."

warned the faithful against it in his catechism in preparation for First Communion.

The licentiousness of the last third of the seventeenth century, and of the eighteenth, could not fail to welcome such helpful means.<sup>1</sup> Yet until about 1830 it appears that the aristocracy and the middle-class were the only people initiated in their use to any extent, and the manual workers in town and country, in simple obedience to the generative instinct, put no limit to their families. But it has needed scarcely three generations to modify profoundly the demographic situation, and the best informed have no doubt that there has been a transformation unquestionably more important than the scientific or mechanical inventions about which we talk so much.

The *bourgeoisie* is no longer the sole possessor of neo-malthusian knowledge, nor the habits of self-exploitation and persevering regularity which assure the

<sup>1</sup> In 1672 Madame de Sévigné advised her daughter to avoid a third pregnancy; advice to which the girl had the good sense not to listen.

In the Marquis de Montcalm's journal we read, under the date May 8th, 1756, at the time of his disembarkation in Canada: "Something that will seem remarkable in France, and especially to our nobles at Court, who are afraid to have more than one heir, is that one man, a soldier of the Carignan regiment, still living, has peopled four parishes and numbers 220 persons as his descendants." (Marquis de Montcalm, Journal, p. 57, quoted in *Les naissances en France*, by Raoul de Felice, p. 23. Paris, Hachette, 1910.)

In 1767 the Abbé Jaubert, in a little book entitled *Des causes de la dépopulation*, also calls attention to this decrease in births among the well-to-do classes. He bewails "the small number of the first-fruits of a fertility to which most fathers usually limit themselves, so as to have a rich heir who can hand on to posterity their name and power. Thus, in order to perpetuate an unbridled luxury, men are deaf to the calls of nature, and prefer to have scarcely any family rather than yield to that natural love which all possess of seeing themselves reborn in their children." (Abbé Jaubert, p. 39). Three years before the publication of this volume, the sub-delegate of Nerac, in a tabular report of the labouring population of his district, compares the fecundity of the poor families with the sterility of the middle class. Among the working-people, no unmarried people are to be seen, while among the *bourgeoisie* are to be found both these and married people who have few children, "so that it seems as if these still youthful couples, after having had one or two children, had taken a natural vow of continence; did they constrain themselves for fear lest if they had many, they might have poor, children?" (Quoted by Lavosseur, *Population française*, tome I.)

practical utilization of that knowledge. The spread of information on both points has taken away any disadvantage under which the working classes in town and country laboured, and if any trace of it remains, the vendors of anti-conceptionist preparations—not to mention abortion-practitioners of both sexes, of whom we shall speak later—are on the spot to correct its effects.

Thus the French birth-rate has dwindled progressively, and with a rapidity which should rouse every Frenchman capable of reflection.<sup>1</sup>

When we study the demographic statistics of contemporary France, the first thing that strikes us is the uninterrupted continuity of the downward movement, and then the strength of the widespread forces which effect it. Our official statistics cover more than 115 years, during which, without any appreciable check, the birth-rate continually decreases. For several decades this disquieting phenomenon has attracted the attention of sociologists and politicians: some measures, from which great benefit was expected, have been taken, and yet this all-powerful force, mocks at all these efforts, and calmly pursues its way, even more successfully than of old. That does not put the case strongly enough. Not only does this force succeed in maintaining and protecting its conquests, but every year it multiplies its means of action, and unceasingly accelerates the pace of our falling birth-rate. Read the statistics again, and you will find that the decline is not in proportion to the lapse of time, and that while at the end of the 19th century it took us twenty years to lose one hundred thousand births annually, at the beginning of the 20th we only need ten years to overpass this point.<sup>1</sup> *Vires acquirit eundo.*<sup>2</sup> At every quinquennial census one discovers that the districts, the serious contamination of which was revealed by the previous returns, are in still worse condition than five years before; that several departments which hitherto seemed almost immune are affected in their turn: some have still maintained a

<sup>1</sup> Aen. IX., 175.

<sup>2</sup> *Vide infra*, Ch. IV, for tabular statistics.

satisfactory birth-rate, but to believe that they are immune would be to deceive ourselves, and if the actual rate is almost normal it is because it was, but lately, exceptionally high. The evil grows both in extent and depth, so much so that the number of departments entered in the funeral list—that of the districts in which the deaths are in excess of the births—perpetually increases. To sum up for the whole country we find that the work of life does not keep pace with that of death: there are more coffins than cradles, and between 1890 and 1913 this was the case in no less than seven years.<sup>1</sup>

How could it be otherwise when we see with what ardour and perseverance the vast majority of French households set themselves to limit the birth-rate and to make the transmission of life an impossibility? Country people and town dwellers, bourgeois and manual workers, professional and business men, conservative and moderate electors, as in Orne, Calvados, Maine-et-Loire, etc., and those of radical or revolutionary opinions, as in Yonne, Lot, Vaucluse, etc., Catholics, Protestants, or agnostics, all alike choose to be largely represented among the adherents of the modern method of conducting family life.

To all these men and women these anti-conceptionist precautions recommend themselves both by their apparent simplicity and by the importance—one might be tempted to say the magnificence—of the results obtained. Besides, they are employed not only to aid those extreme—and very frequent, because normal—cases of over-abundant fecundity, which have always been a torment to the wisdom and the conscience of moralists and casuists, but also to satisfy interests much less commendable: the most vulgar desires of increasing one's fortune, of giving a big *dot* to an only daughter, of avoiding the breaking-up of a property, of securing for a child an education which will allow him to rise in the social scale, of sparing the health of a delicate wife, of avoiding the weariness of pregnancy or of rearing a

<sup>1</sup> These were the years 1890, 1891, 1892, 1895, 1900, 1907, and 1911, in the course of which 168,000 more death than births were registered.

baby, of retaining one's freedom to go about, or even of excitement, in order that nothing may interfere with plans of travel or motor excursions, or with the usual round of theatres, dances, and evening parties, to preserve the freshness of the complexion or the elegance of the figure, to keep for oneself alone the wife and the stock of pleasures she represents: all these desires, and many more besides, the silliest caprices, the merest whims, seem to be sufficient motives for the use of these "precautions." Since the moral standard has released the sexual act from the obligation of connection with the ends it ought to serve, we need no longer trouble ourselves with futile considerations, whose only value is for oratorical effect in official utterances—and experience proves that as a fact we *don't* trouble ourselves.

As M. Edouard Jordan, professor at the Sorbonne, justly says: "No one doubts his right to use neo-malthusian practices. They will be abused as long as they are believed to be permissible even in exceptional cases; for we at least shall persuade ourselves that our own case is always exceptional. What pregnancy does not affect the wife's health? What confinement does not make her run some measure of risk? What income does not feel the burden of a birth or an education? What unexpected arrival comes just at the right moment, and does not interfere with some plan, perhaps an important one?" It is true enough: the arrival of a baby is always for any household, whatever may be its means or its position, a very serious event, which interferes for long months with the couple's usual mode of life, and which often alters it even to the least details. No one is ignorant of this, and therefore it is but logical to follow motives which are supposed to no longer run counter to any deep moral principle.

Thus conjugal sterility, voluntary, involuntary, partial or total is, the meeting-place, the common rendezvous, one may say, of countless households which sometimes differ greatly in their antecedents and the general morality of husband and wife. Four chief supports sustain the huge army of

sterile or half-sterile couples : the first is composed of all the adults whom some physiological defect, usually inherited, makes incapable of generation ; the second consists of all those whom a venereal disease, contracted before, during, or after marriage, hinders from transmitting life ; the third includes all whose extreme lasciviousness or boundless self-indulgence has quickly reduced them to permanent sterility ; finally, the fourth, by far the most numerous, covers the vast multitude of married people whose cultured prudence, no less than their defects, urge them to reduce to a minimum the number of their offspring.

It is a positive fact that the inveterately immoral and utterly degraded are far from being the only people to use these precautions ; by their side we find many young men whose youth was quiet and almost blameless, and who now that they are married are exact as to all other duties of a sexual nature. Systematic sterility is nowhere more practiced than in the lower bourgeois circles whose neo-malthusian zeal rivals that of the wealthy peasants, the clever and steady artisans, and the officials of every description. These various classes are notable for their steady habits and honesty, their love of order and economy, their foresight and sense of discipline ; but precisely these qualities are associated with an inordinate seeking after an easy and comfortable life, and with a selfish anxiety as to their livelihood, and tend, in a word, to plunge them always deeper in their practice of voluntary sterility. From many points of view these people are exemplary spouses, but consider them attentively and you will see that the foundation of their moral life rests on the pointed rock of systematic infertility. Look at this tradesman, this workman, this official : for fifteen or twenty years, perhaps more, he has watched with an obstinate vigilance that has never weakened, that no other child shall come to the home except the one whom he consented to bring up. How often during this long time he has had to resist all the temptations which he has often felt to send these famous "precautions" packing, and to love his wife

simply, in the good way that morality demands, and like an honest man—as, after all, he is; but no, he has made his resolution, deliberate, tenacious, and obstinate, because he knows the importance—in his own eyes—of the results for which it is the necessary condition. One moment of inattention and forgetfulness, and the whole plan of his married life would be overturned, not only in its main features, but in the smallest and most insignificant details. If to this father, who easily brings up the one or two children whom he has consented to call into life,<sup>1</sup> only two, three, or four more should be added, at once his whole domestic and professional life, his food and clothes, his residence and his amusements, his financial arrangements and his property, his social relations and the company he keeps, all would be transformed. There would be a universal upheaval, something like fire, pillage, and flood in the material order. And the man knows it well, he feels it and dwells upon it, and because he knows and feels it he obstinately refuses to have another child. If you try to shake his resolution he will reply: “What use would it be? If I have another child, the motives which keep me from having more than two would become still more urgent if I had three, and then in a year I should renew my decision; therefore let it stand!”

In this case the practice of neo-malthusianism is as it were ingrained in the very virtues and gifts of the individual: it is part of his life, it enters into his very being. This has been fully recognized by the acute observer whose name I have before mentioned,<sup>2</sup> and who, with an intimate knowledge of Catholic circles, writes: “There emerge from our institutions and free schools generations of skilled workmen or ordinary employés, industrious, thrifty, sober, steady, of an excellent social type, and who, precisely because they hold fast to this outward respectability refuse to have children, the burden of

<sup>1</sup> When the two children are of opposite sexes, it is said that the exploit “realizes the wish of a king!”

<sup>2</sup> E Jordan, *ibid.* p. 26.

whom would make them sink in the social scale. Vice is for them the ransom of their real virtues." Ransom—a terrible word, on which we must insist in order to analyse all its fearful meaning, and which expresses the intimate connection, the interdependence, between the social crime which is killing our country, and the social virtue which is its life. There is in fact a kind of mutual relationship and mutual support established between these two tendencies. "Observation continually establishes the fact," lately wrote Eugène Fourmière, "that the work-people burdened with families are rightly those whom low wages and hard labour render their primitive carelessness most blameworthy,"<sup>1</sup> and Gabriel Tarde, a sociologist of equal ability and very different tendencies, echoes his words in stating that the most malthusian departments are those in which cheque-books and insurance policies are the most numerous.<sup>2</sup> Innumerable testimonies which it would be superfluous to cite in this place confirm these statements. On the other hand, if the household which has only one or two children, and whose exterior respectability, neatness, order and economy we admire, possessed six or eight children, are we satisfied that it would possess these valuable qualities in the

<sup>1</sup> *L'idéalisme social* p. 150.

<sup>2</sup> *Psychologie économique*, t. II, p. 437. "In teaching men and women to master their carnal impulses and to be self-controlled even in their amorous pleasures, Christian morality has by a sure stroke rendered immense service, in avoiding the excesses which lead to nervous exhaustion, and guiding love in the normal way which leads to its biological ends; at the same time it has created in us a strength of will, a mastery of self, which makes us capable, when our unstable morals waver, of practising malthusianism. At the same time the very shame with which Christian nations have overwhelmed unmarried mothers has caused a vast number of lovers to conceal all traces of their fault, whether by anti-conceptionist precautions, or deliberate abortion, or even by infanticide. The art of malthusian practice has thus been studied, contrived, perfected, in order to keep amorous girls and widows from the shame of an illegitimate pregnancy, and all the bitterness it entails in a cruelly intolerant society.

"From the chambers of persecuted lovers, malthusianism has passed to those of married people. By one of those strange reactions, of which the mechanism of our social life offers many examples, the efforts made to realize good have produced the possibility of evil." (Commandant Simon,



same measure? Would the husband be so anxious to come back to a fireside, less tidy and more noisy, to a house, less smiling and comfortable? and would the wife, wearied by pregnancies, busy during long years with the cares, that are so absorbing, of all her young children, take the same watchful care for the good order of the home? Would she not lose courage and more or less abandon her task?

These are troublesome questions, which oblige us to search into the inmost depths of the tragic problem of the birth-rate which our modern societies have, with unpardonable imprudence, allowed to arise.

Thus in all ways the will to practise voluntary sterility is woven into the texture of the individual psychology, each element of which unites with itself other close relations. These relations are so intimate and so many, that in the last years before the war the immense majority of Frenchmen had come to consider that the care not to burden oneself with the heavy weight of a numerous family was not only the first condition of success, but also the elementary characteristic of every individual possessed of an ordinary share of the reasoning faculty and of foresight. They no longer

who was killed in the war, thus writes in an unpublished MS. Cf. *Population et misère*, par de Metz Noblat, dans *le Correspondant*, année 1854).

It appears from the investigations made in Great Britain by the Fabian Society and the Royal Statistical Society, that the fertility of workers who belong to friendly societies and superannuation funds is notably less than that of other workers. It is the same in Italy: the lowest birth-rate is found in Piedmont and Liguria (279 and 270 per thousand in 1901-1905), and the highest in Apulia; while the sums deposited in the savings-banks were 119 lire for each of the population in Piedmont, 133 in Liguria, 33 in Apulia. The same coincidence has been observed in Germany by Mombert, who has examined 78 territories of the German Empire, and classed them in order of decreasing fecundity: while he shows at the same time how they increase proportionately in thrift and foresight.

Average fecundity of 1000 married women.	Savings-bank books per 1000 inhabitants.
386	140
333	206
297	264
262	324
230	331

comprehended how the renunciation of such manifest advantages could be the result of anything but folly, awkwardness, or inexperience. They covered with ridicule "innocents" who before marriage prepared themselves by chastity for a healthy conjugal life, or who, later, made of their wife a "maman gigogne;" the opinion was so strong that such decent people were almost forced to be ashamed of their conduct<sup>1</sup> and the father of a numerous family was considered almost an improper person.

Thus the supreme fallacy was achieved; disorder, officially established, passed judgment as of right on order, egotism made a mock of generosity, and those who did not recognise her law were ridiculed in novels, theatres, and fashionable circles.

And still this understates the case. Installed as sovereign director at the very centre of the individual psychology, systematic sterility became simultaneously recognized as legitimate and normal by the countless institutions of our social life. Everything is arranged and prepared with a view to the family of one or two children, for its advantage and convenience; with a view to its special needs and personal benefit are daily displayed the innumerable contrivances of economic and political institutions, of the worldly life, sometimes even of religious society; those with such a family also boast of its merits, because it gives them, at least in appearance, a guarantee of good order, regularity, and discipline. On the other hand, a numerous family is vexatious, inconvenient, encumbering, indecent: *non decet*: out of date!

<sup>1</sup> One of the most repugnant forms of this hypocrisy is the advice so often given by the mother-in-law to a young couple to be prudent and circumspect, and to remember that a couple is worth as much as a dozen. Such advice given to young spouses who enjoy good health and often have large means, is nothing less than a counsel of lasciviousness, with hypocrisy thrown in. I was told of a girl, whose mother-in-law is otherwise an excellent Christian, and who said to her husband after her second confinement: "You know that I am ready to have as many children as you wish, but I lay down one condition, that *you* undertake to announce each fresh pregnancy to your mother. I will have nothing more to do with it."

## THE CONDUCT OF MARRIED PEOPLE 71

Doubtless for some years past, especially since the war, this outlook has been profoundly modified, especially among the healthy and more reflecting middle-class people; nevertheless such opinions are still very widely spread among the populace both in town and country, and those who verbally repudiate them remain in reality deeply attached to them, and find in them the inspiration for every decision and every undertaking.

Thus closely bound up with all the fibres of individual thought, and all the institutions of our social life, voluntary infertility in some sense appears to the people like the central column of the whole social edifice.

It is this, much more than even their extent, which constitutes the seriousness of neo-malthusian practices, and which has been clearly seen by the few sociologists who have not been content merely to study the falling birth-rate and statistical figures, but have gone to the very heart of the problem and reached its psychological and moral roots. I do not know which of them it was who once wrote: "We shall come to a condition of society in which only imbeciles or saints will be capable of having large families." Thirty years ago, M. Guyau, one of the most forceful philosophers of that period, had wrote: "Except for those who are fruitful through thoughtlessness or mere abandonment to chance, there is scarcely anyone left in France except believers, whether Catholics, Protestants, or Jews, to keep up a fixed racial fertility."<sup>1</sup> And he foresaw that in the condition of our moral psychology the spread of neo-malthusian would receive an enthusiastic welcome and secure an immense success. It is true that both in town and country the manual workers and the peasants look on a man who has more than two children—three at the most—as an innocent and an imbecile.<sup>2</sup> It is only a few

<sup>1</sup> *L'irréligion de l'avenir*, p. 273. Several pages further on, he comes back to the same thought: "I have never seen a woman of the people that did not lament when she was pregnant . . . What preserves her fecundity, if she has no religion, is her ignorance." (p. 282.)

<sup>2</sup> In the spring of 1917, M. Roulleaux-Degage, deputy for the Orne, and the proposer of a bill for the "family vote," told at a breakfast of

years ago that the middle classes held the same feelings of pity and small esteem for those amongst them who were imprudent enough to burden themselves with a large family.

A poor outlook for society, to be reduced to depend, for the keeping up of the race, on the improvident, the ignorant, and the victims of alcohol, or on the heroes and the saints!

## II

When such grave practices as those which aim at the limitation of the birth-rate of legitimate children have grown, in a determined society, to the extent which is the case in our country, we may be sure that they correspond with moral tendencies so deep and so commonly

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*La plus grande famille* association this piquant story: A parish priest in his constituency had written to inform him of the sufficiently cool reception among his constituents of his bill, which gave to the father of a family an additional vote in proportion to the number of his children: "they (the electors) cannot understand," wrote the deputy's correspondent, "what use it would be to give additional votes to the very people whom they consider least intelligent and most simple." One could quote dozens of stories of the same kind. Many charitable societies, even of a religious character and founded expressly to help working men's families, make it quite clear to the mother of a large family that her children cannot, under the pretext of their number, receive the number of shoes or aprons which are sufficient to provide for several families. The action of the officials who preside over the distribution of public relief is even much worse. I could quote the Paris office, where in 1916—after the Marne, the Yser, and Verdun!—a mother of twelve, who had replied to the regular enquiry as to the number of her children, was thus questioned: "Your husband is a drunkard then, Madame?" "Why, no, Monsieur," timidly answered the poor woman, who had married an excellent workman whom the wares of the firm of Condom Baudruche and Co. disgusted. In the same way, the brave vice-president of the League "pour la Vie," who is editor-in-chief of the little monthly journal with the same title, M. Rossignol, school inspector at Troyes, has proved that the method followed in the awarding of scholarships is nothing but a clever system of bestowing premiums on neo-malthusian couples.

## THE CONDUCT OF MARRIED PEOPLE 73

accepted, that these tendencies will not even thus be satisfied, and will find expression in yet other signs and actions. The event justifies our anticipation, and we must now refer briefly to abortion among married people, and of the growing decline of love for children.

On the first point I shall happily be able to be extremely brief, for, after the information already given, it will be enough to state that the number of abortions performed upon married women, whether upon the husband's or wife's initiative, is very great and forms a most important proportion of the total annual number of abortions in France. One cannot be surprised at this, and the silly (if they are made ignorantly) or lying assertions of all the neo-malthusian propagandists will not alter the fact: the spread of anti-conceptionist practices is always accompanied by an increased number of abortions. Thus the propagandists urge, "When by negligence, inadvertence, or accident, the "precaution" has not arrested, as we counted upon it to do, as we had the certainty and the guarantee that it would do, the transmission of life, is it not logical to try to overtake and repair the blunder by another, very simple and now almost harmless, method? And on the other hand, if it is justifiable to separate, in the married state, the sexual emotion from the procreative ends to which it is directed, how can the right of the spouses over the foetus which the mother carries be contested, controlled, or be other than absolute?" We shall soon return to this academic question. In any case, a vast number of couples find no difficulty in solving it in the way that suits their selfishness.

The number of operations for abortion upon married women has greatly increased the last twenty years. Even without statistics, which in such a matter are unreliable, there is no doubt of the fact, since, whenever a woman who performs such operations is prosecuted, we invariably find a large proportion of married women and of husbands among those compromised. Often these husbands and wives previously bore an honourable (!) reputation in their district, and it is precisely the fear

of destroying this reputation, or their worldly or political influence, which stops the prosecution.

The increasing loss of affection for children is also a manifestation of the same psychological characteristics. While politicians on tour, and the fashionable scribblers, boast of the loving care with which we surround infancy—an audacious lie at a time when we murder by abortion 300,000 little ones in process of formation, or hinder the conception of more than 600,000 others, and when we cause to suffer in a thousand ways, in body and soul, several hundred thousand more—the social forces, careless of our “chatter,” pursue their work of disorganization, and even find in this “chatter” one of their most valuable coadjutors. From time to time the newspapers report the martyrdom of children whom their parents ill-treat, torture or cripple; but besides these cases there is the suffering, of which neighbours are aware, of those other unwanted little ones who are blamed for having come into the world, for having disturbed the pleasure and selfishness of the others. For lack of courage people shrink from abortion in order to stop a pregnancy which “ought not” to have occurred, but the innocent child will pay for the misadventure. It is significant of our times that we have been compelled to make laws for the repression of the ill-treatment of children or for their protection when morally abandoned, or still worse, corrupted, by their parents. Have we not also been obliged to establish children’s courts? Sentimental jurists who would attribute this recent legislation to the increase of affection and care for children’s welfare would be victims of a strange deception.

Whilst with wilful blindness we still nurse the illusion that instinct is indestructible, and that nature has put into the hearts of men and women an ineradicable sentiment of infinite tenderness towards their children, social evolution goes on its way and every year sees an increase in the number of couples, married or living in concubinage, who desire to have no child at all, or who care with a very mitigated affection for the one child

## THE CONDUCT OF MARRIED PEOPLE 75

which chance or mischance has given them. Twenty-five years ago it was correct to say that, in general, couples completely sterile were irresponsible for their infertility. This conclusion is no longer correct: in Paris and the great provincial towns there are already a great number of employés of both sexes holding big posts, of workpeople with big wages, who find it much more peaceful to have no child.<sup>1</sup> This opinion is simply the last step, and quite a logical step, in the general movement which for the last 160 years has been carrying forward our modern society. Nothing justifies us in thinking that the paternal and maternal instinct can, more than any others, resist the assaults made on them by the progress of culture and reflection, and the psychologists have warned us repeatedly that the characteristic note of civilization is to eliminate instinct, or to modify it profoundly, in submitting its motions and thoughts to the control of rational criticism and reflected will. It is certain, then, that in the scheme of domestic and economic life which secures now-a-days of ever-growing number of adherents, there is no place for the child. Literally a baby is *de trop*, and in the universal race after pleasure, honours, and wealth, in the midst of rushing hither and thither and of general excitement, it would be a vexation and a hindrance; the best thing is to keep one's perfect liberty of movement and advancement, and resolutely to go the length of complete sterility. To those who think that I exaggerate, and who persist in shutting their eyes to all evidence, I offer this one fact, culled from a thousand others to be found in the most recent returns: at Rouen, *before* the war, the salaries of the officials at the docks varied from 15 to 20 francs a day; of 38 couples of

<sup>1</sup> When lecturing eight years ago in a northern town, I was told of a working girl who, five days before my arrival, had lost her only child, aged six months. The wretched creature was singing joyously by her baby's corpse. "We certainly won't have another," she said to the lady visitor who told me the atrocious story. "My husband and I are greatly relieved by this one's death. Think what a little baby is; it cries all the time, it dirties its clothes, and one is never done with it."

whom inquiry was made, 19—exactly 50 per cent—had no child, 13 had 1, 3 had 2, 2 had 3, 1 had 4.<sup>1</sup>

### III

According to traditional morality, marriage did not involve only one obligation, that of fertility and loyalty in the marital relations, but also that of reciprocal fidelity until death; that is, the principle of indissolubility. Respect for this second duty has seemed to our contemporaries no more possible than respect for the first, and as in this case the moral evolution could not pursue its advance unless upheld and supported by a legal evolution, the legislator has consecrated this new departure: the law of July 27, 1884, re-established divorce in France, and numerous later enactments have enlarged the facilities for it to such a point that we have arrived undoubtedly, though we may not be willing to acknowledge it, (all the rights of Phariseeism being of course reserved!) at the very threshold of polygamy.

Everyone is aware of the very important position which the adulterer—at least to the husband's advantage—holds in our morals. Just as under absolute governments assassination is said to have tempered royal autocracy, so a man's adultery tempers the excessive demands of fidelity for a great number of our husbands, whose youth, often stormily passionate, and almost always capriciously and fantastically licentious, has been a bad preparation for perfect loyalty. The frequency of these masculine strokes of the penknife across the marriage contract has grown to such an extent that in many circles adultery is looked on as a mere peccadillo,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Âme française*, 4th October, 1919, in an article by M. Louis Deschamps, a working man of Rouen. In the long run the loss of affection may leave room for downright antipathy, even to the extent of homicidal hatred; and that infanticide has become much more frequent in our time is proved by the criminal statistics.



and the husband is held to have fulfilled his obligations if he retains exterior fidelity towards his wife, or saves appearances.<sup>1</sup> This advantageous distinction is not however practised to the wife's profit, and in consequence of our dual moral principle, which we are about to explain, it is allowed that the wife owes to her husband the double fidelity of both body and heart, and that the second of these does not dispense her from the first. Besides, the prudent wife ought not to seek to know the adventures of her spouse, and will do well to keep her eyes shut; if in spite of this advice, she comes to know of his "peccadilloes," she is still bound to have patience, to forgive, and to act as if she knew nothing. On the contrary, in conformity with the same principle of dual morality, it is considered far from a duty for the husband to be patient and forgive in case of the wife's adultery. As his misfortune arouses more disagreeable gossip than sympathy, he must, in order to escape ridicule, demand the immediate cessation of the illicit intercourse, deal severely with the offender, and if need be ask for a divorce; lately it was still thought that he should kill the seducer, and article 324 of the Penal Code, the famous "article rougue," granted legal justification to a husband guilty of murder, when his spouse and her accomplice had been surprised in the very act of adultery. In our days the softening of manners, and doubtless the tendency to recognize better the wife's responsibility, since the development of her personality has made her more capable of resisting the attempts of the "accomplice," as

<sup>1</sup> Among the peasantry, the manual workers of our great towns and industrial centres, in certain business circles, mercantile and financial, this new theory is widely put in practice. In many French towns, even those of less importance, it is commonly allowed that the husband has the right, after two or three years of married life, to maintain an immoral *ménage* side by side with his lawful one. To his circle the thing seems natural and does not give offence. The wife, who is reckoned to know nothing about it, must in everything act as if she were ignorant; it is also noticed that the combination is not without its advantages for her, since it diminishes the husband's ardour, and even enables her to avoid any fresh pregnancy without the employment of neo-malthusian methods, which some women, still unused to the new way of acting, submit to unwillingly or even definitely refuse.

we now prefer to style the seducer, tend to limit, and even abolish, this right of the husband to shed blood.

We must notice in this connection that the sentiment of conjugal fidelity has decayed greatly since the promulgation of the law of 1884; in the eyes of the majority, adultery is merely an anticipation of the divorce which the husband had always the right to ask, even if he had nothing with which to reproach his partner, and his position seems less interesting since he has regained the right to recover his freedom. Besides, the restraint of adultery by the correctional courts has almost totally disappeared; when the court does interfere, it is kindly and paternal, as becomes a penal prosecution which has often no other object than to supply proof for a divorce. The magistrates, too, could not decently take a severe line and pose as avengers provoked by the outrage on morality; in what county town is not the story hawked around of the conjugal adventures of our highest officials and our "most eminent" politicians?

Divorce comes to crown the edifice of our conjugal establishment, such as our contemporary morals conceive of it and can endure it. When, forty years ago, Alexandre Dumas  *fils*, Alfred Naquet, and their imitators, began their eager campaign for the abolition of the principle of the indissolubility of marriage, they declared that divorce would make marriage more moral and would have the most beneficial effects, to such a degree that after the liquidation of the accumulated stock of old conjugal quarrels we should see the annual number of divorces come down again to a very small rate which would be practically stationary.

The event has not justified these optimistic expectations: during the thirty years following the adoption of M. Alfred Naquet's divorce law voluntary sterility has greatly increased, adultery has become more frequent, and no one will venture to affirm that among the general run of couples peace and harmony are more prevalent than formerly. As to the number of divorces, the increase is so rapid that it is beginning to disquiet even

## THE CONDUCT OF MARRIED PEOPLE 79

the most convinced upholders of the dissolubility of marriage. We append the figures furnished by the official statistics :

Years.	Judicial Separations.	Divorces.	Total of Divorces and Judicial Separations.
Quinquennial Average. {	1851-55	—	—
	1856-60	—	—
	1861-65	—	—
	1866-70	—	—
	1871-75	—	—
	1876-80	—	—
	1884	1,127	—
1885	1,440	1,657	4,478
1886	1,811	4,123	6,245
1887	2,166	4,005	6,211
1888	2,004	5,797	7,693
1889	2,559	1,694	5,482
1890	2,821	1,653	6,249
1891	2,821	1,570	6,557
1892	2,821	1,536	6,431
1893	2,821	1,597	7,035
1894	2,821	1,620	6,937
1895	2,821	1,820	7,893
1896	2,821	1,823	7,700
1897	2,821	1,957	7,879
1898	2,821	1,982	7,999
1899	2,821	2,164	8,100
1900	2,821	2,254	8,042
1901	2,821	2,263	7,820
1902	2,821	2,260	8,841
1903	2,821	2,281	9,431
1904	2,821	2,320	10,186
1905	2,821	2,290	10,860
1906	2,821	2,238	10,860
1907	2,821	2,316	11,588
1908	2,821	2,249	11,712
1909	2,821	2,165	11,712
1910	2,821	2,301	12,506
1911	2,821	2,359	13,150
1912	2,821	2,400	13,098
1913	2,821	2,405	13,098
	2,466	2,316	11,588
	2,466	2,249	13,904
	2,466	2,165	14,824
	2,466	2,301	15,466
	2,466	2,359	16,231
	2,466	2,400	16,661
	2,466	2,405	17,665
	2,466	2,705	19,428
	2,466	16,723	18,801
	2,466	16,335	18,801

Yet these figures are far from expressing the real increase in the number of ruptures of the marriage bond. Not to speak of illicit unions, which become more and more numerous in the great towns, and of which no statistics could be formulated, working-class circles dispense with judicial proceedings: when the spouse has

ceased to please, he or she is left—"let go"—and the thing is done.<sup>1</sup>

Among the middle classes the procedure is not so summary: the habits of an orderly routine, care for worldly reputation and pecuniary interests, alike compel a more formal course of action, but the final result is the same.

There is therefore no question that the number of divorces has very greatly increased, and grows incessantly. This should cause no astonishment. As Auguste Comte declared: "The mere possibility of change urges men towards it"; an accidental meeting, a trifling occurrence, an absolutely unimportant thing that formerly people thought nothing of, now, on the contrary, takes in the eyes of married people exactly the importance which they please to assign to it. If anything is to be gained, any such trifle is dwelt upon and fills the thoughts, and by a very familiar psychological phenomenon, absurd in itself, becomes a centre, a crystal round which many other unfriendly sentiments crystallize themselves. At last a day comes when the crisis becomes acute, a crisis which appears to be the only cause of the conjugal rupture.

The legislation of 1884 aimed, in establishing divorce, merely to help really desperate situations, and the intention, very strongly asserted and very explicitly formulated in Articles 229ff. of the Civil Code, was that the rupture of the conjugal bond could not be pronounced except by judicial authority, and that only in the three cases where the defendant had been guilty of adultery, ill-usage or serious injury, or had been condemned for a criminal offence. It was taken as certain that the number of divorces would never be very high.

<sup>1</sup> It is fairly often the case, we may add, that the multiplication of children is the cause of the husband's desertion. When the wife, wearied by pregnancies and household cares, can no longer afford her husband the pleasures he demands, or when the burden of bringing up the children becomes or is imagined to be too heavy, the husband deserts the home, and seeks elsewhere a life exempt from such privation and expense. Sometimes his departure is a relief to the abandoned wife, who at least will have the consolation of escaping the blows and lascivious brutalities of a drunken husband.

We know what has become of this double guarantee. On the one hand the magistrates, sharing themselves, as was inevitable, in the general spirit, used with great freedom the wide latitude left them by the second motive allowed by the law<sup>1</sup>; on the other hand, especially, couples who invented one or other of the wrongs included in the provisions of the law had no difficulty in obtaining a divorce by mutual consent—which the statute expressly forbade. Justice certainly intervened again, but solely to ratify the agreement of the spouses, and in order that—supreme absurdity!—the very act which broke the law might obtain legal sanction, and also the concurrence of the magistrates whose business it is to make the law respected. Little by little the gross trick became so common and notorious that magistrates and counsel no longer thought themselves obliged to waste their time, the one to set up the mechanism of the comedy, the other to assist at the procedure which showed it off; both became accomplices in twisting the law, and for the last fifteen years there has scarcely been a court in which any difficulty has been made about ratifying divorce-by-mutual-consent.

This was only a halting-place, and no barrister or solicitor will contradict me if I say that before the war, for several years, we had come to granting divorce at the wish of only one of the parties concerned. The other may oppose a demand which had no adequate cause to justify it; but such resistance merely suggests to clever lawyers arguments to the detriment of the objector's case, and one must be very ignorant of the psychological conditions of the married state to be surprised at the result. One of the spouses can always succeed in exasperating the other to the very limit, and the two lives are too closely knit for the magistrate to unravel the rights and wrongs of the case. As a Paris solicitor said to me once: "Every time that the Court is convinced that the joint life cannot be taken up again, it

<sup>1</sup> At one sitting the Civil Tribunal of the Seine pronounced 294 sentences of divorce in a single day.

pronounces divorce. And indeed what use is there in keeping a pair of horses who kick over the shafts harnessed to the same cart?" Thus the great halting-place is crossed. What do the ghosts of Alexandre Dumas *fils* and M. Naquet think of it all? Our social life takes no heed of it, any more than of the intention of those who made the law, but follows with inevitable logic its direct onward march, upsetting our feeble barriers without an effort.

At the close of this long analysis of the conditions of the formation and practical working of married life, I am able to add a brief comment on a remark I made at the outset. With all social authorities we have noted the increased rate of marriages in the France of to-day, and this fact usually causes some surprise and lively satisfaction. I confess that I share in neither. Since, as things are now, marriage is excused both by custom and law from the obligations which formerly gave it both moral and social worth, one does not see why people should have any fear of getting married. The marriage bond, which it seems was a heavy chain, is become so slight to-day that we may wonder if it is not rather a spider's thread which the least breath of wind can break. The Courts have long ago given up punishing adultery, and the unfaithful husband runs no risk but that of his wife demanding a divorce. The law has suppressed indissolubility, and our moral standards have developed this reform to the point of admitting (still with the concurrence of the Courts) the principle of divorce at the will of only one of the spouses. Finally, public opinion sees nothing unfitting in married people practising systematic sterility according to their fancy. Really, what more can they want? And how can we wonder that everyone is brave enough to face such a marriage as that? We understand how Frenchmen, on arriving at marriageable years, scarcely hesitate to shoulder so trifling a load; and we ought to wonder much more at our persisting to give the name of marriage to countless unions which are scarcely

legalised concubinage and mere arrangements of Pharisaic licentiousness.<sup>1</sup>

Far from rejoicing, then, in the great number of marriages, let us understand, on the contrary, that the first step in the reform of our conjugal system, a step which we must desire with all our patriotic ardour, would result in diminishing the number of registered marriages, and this decrease would not in itself be the least alarming, but quite otherwise. It may be—it is, indeed, certain—that the kind of marriage which we practise is the only one fitted for our present moral standard, and it is only too clear how the two are in closest correspondence; but unless we change our ways, no increase in the rate of marriages can be reckoned as a reassuring symptom.<sup>2</sup>

#### IV

Such is, in brief, the balance sheet of our practical attitude and of our actions with respect to the most profound and mysterious of our natural instincts. If we now take a comprehensive view of the whole panorama,

<sup>1</sup> One of our influential politicians, who had several times held ministerial rank, was married for exactly five hours. It is not uncommon to see marriages last only some weeks or months, and this happens so often that a publicist has suggested a new kind of marriage: the spouses would take each other on lease for a short period, and if after trial they found it desirable to live together, either the lease could be renewed by tacit consent, or they could be married in the old way. I need not add that the publicist is immensely proud of his invention, and looks on himself as at once a learned sociologist and a profound moralist.

<sup>2</sup> It is truly strange that so rudimentary a social law, and so easy of many applications, should be ignored on this point. A wife's adultery, which in ancient societies was extremely rare, met with the severest punishment. In our days it no longer, in practice, involves a prosecution. On the strength of legal statistics, are we to conclude that there are now no adulteresses? Similarly, in proportion as alcoholism has increased, we have gradually abandoned the law of 1873 for the repression of drunkenness. So, in any country, the time might come when all grown-up people got drunk and no one dreamed of punishing the offence, while on the other hand the advance of temperance would result in the multiplication of prosecutions for drunkenness.

it appears to me that one special characteristic strikes our notice, the social importance of which is so great that it is impossible not to lay stress upon it; that is, the perfect union and strict connection between all the parties concerned and their mutual support of each other. Uncontrolled freedom for unmarried men, and to-morrow for the other sex as well, prostitution, neo-malthusian practices, and abortion, all co-operating; marriage regarded from a solely individualistic standpoint, strongly established on the principle of systematic sterility, and finding in the co-operation of abortion, adultery, or divorce, the means either to maintain the union or to dissolve it at will; all these practices and institutions are nothing but the connected parts of a perfectly coherent system, the essential timbers of a strong building, with sockets and mortises cleverly contrived and firmly pinned. Every part shares the strength of all the others, and gives back with interest the help it receives from them. Do not attempt to isolate any part of the powerful machine, to treat one of the sections of this formidable problem by itself; it cannot be done.

If you have any doubt, look around on this peasant, this small tradesman, this petty official, this big financier or member of the Administration. You know their perseverance in neo-malthusianism, and perhaps their habits of methodical adultery. When they were young they did like the rest and laughed at chastity: and to-day, when the excesses of pornography are condemned in their presence, they merely show indifference, and confine themselves to observing that you cannot, all the same, "turn a city into a Monastery." Thus all these practices, actions, mental attitudes, opinions, are closely bound up in the very being of these men, who are counted respectable. According to their age and their surroundings they pass from one act to another, but the ruling thought is always the same. "Enjoy as much as possible, and with as little cost as possible, sexual indulgence, and yesterday's act is in perfect conformity with to-day's and to-morrow's."



This is the first characteristic to which attention must always be directed if it is desired to study methodically any single act whatever of the errors of sexual activity. Side by side with this characteristic which concerns the psychological dispositions of the individual, there is another not less important, which concerns the outward institutions, the mechanism, of our social life.

When so coherent and so stable a psychological condition, which affects the most important departments of individual activity, has established itself in the great majority of a nation, it is inevitable that such psychism, as M. Paul Bourget said, should fashion to its own image the whole of our social institutions, and each one of them in particular. That is precisely what we find to be the case. Our economic organization and the sale or transmission of land, railway transport and house-building, cultivation of the fields and re-arrangement of the hours of work, administrative methods and rules for the recruiting and promotion of officials, our system of taxation and military service, our scholastic régime and our system of examination and competition, the right of suffrage, our parliamentary elections and ministerial appointments, our literature and our amusements, our worldly relations and our talk—everything, even to the decorations of the Legion of Honour, to the Academy elections, to the teaching and reticence of many Catholic priests and many Protestant pastors, submits to the influence of our sexual practice, and sometimes even allows itself to be dominated thereby. I have already alluded to this intimate relation when writing of voluntary sterility. How timely it would be to extend what I wrote to all and each of the shapes which sexual indiscipline assumes, and to insist on them at length.

It is known and remarked upon, as it could not fail to be, that in the Chamber we have more than 200 unmarried deputies. that almost all the rest have only one or two children, and some, even, none at all ; that during the war itself, a frightful war which we accepted and prosecuted in order to hand on to our posterity the right to live in honour and freedom, the head of the state and two

of the most famous ministers, before M. Georges Clémenceau came into power, were either unmarried or had no child;<sup>1</sup> that the officials who reach the summit of the ministerial ladder and the most advantageous posts are invariably unmarried men or those with a minimum of children; that among the members of the Institute, there are very few, as M. René Millet has courageously said, who have a large family: that in our great towns a numerous middle-class family finds it very difficult to get a house, and a similar working-class family cannot get one at all, in spite of the humiliating subterfuges to which it sometimes resorts in order to hide the offspring; that in our country the Railway Companies allow the least reduction on children's tickets;<sup>2</sup> that the competitive examinations at our great schools almost invariably load the dice in favour of the children of limited families; that our economic life and our wage system, wholly indifferent as it is to the family life of the employé, give large premiums to celibate selfishness and a neo-malthusian union. When we reflect on these facts, on others already related, and on many others which I cannot bring forward in this place, we always come to the same conclusion: between the facts and the individual attitude adopted with regard to the precepts of sexual morality there exists a close relation, not only of concomitance, but also of actual connection, and sometimes

<sup>1</sup> And the fact seemed so natural that no one thought of remarking on the strangeness of the situation. When General Riciotti Garibaldi replied to President Poincaré, who had written to him on the occasion of the death of his son Bruno, the General wrote: "One of my children has fallen: I have still five!" Which of our republican ministers could have said the same? Yet the Garibaldi family is also republican.

<sup>2</sup> The following list shows the ages up to which children are carried free, or at half-fare, on the railways of various countries:

	Free	Half-fare		Free	Half-fare
United States	7	12	Sweden	4	10
Russia	5	10	Norway	4	10
Switzerland	4	12	Belgium	3	8½
Great Britain	3	12	France	3	7
Prussia	4	10			

of causality.<sup>1</sup> The exterior organization both solicited and rewarded the selfishness of the individual, who, at times, in his thirst for success or fortune, has made further instigations, and at times, on the contrary, tried to compound with his conscience by a comfortable compromise between its claims and his anxiety for advancement.

Lastly, who can tell the formidable repercussions of our domestic morals on even our religious life? To those who question their existence it will be enough for one to quote this beautiful page, which I borrow again from M. Edouard Jordan, and to which the author's personality, the solemn circumstances under which it was read, and the official patronage of Mgr. Amette, Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, give so great authority :

“ Nothing can excuse us from facing the question, no matter how thorny it may be. The great Bishops of the seventeenth century knew this, in presence of the first manifestations of the evil from which we are suffering ; St. Francis of Sales, whose *Introduction to the Devout Life*, too often expurgated, contains such clear and strong pages on marriage duties ; or Bossuet who, in his catechism for his diocese of Meaux, did not hesitate to insert this question and answer : What evil must be avoided in the use of marriage?—Unjust refusal of the

<sup>1</sup> Sometimes a small official owes his advancement to his conjugal complacency, whilst another would have kept pace with him if he had not made such a marriage, or, above all, had not had the folly to burden himself with a large family. This famous dramatic author, this member of the Institute, would he have composed so many works, brought his style to such polished perfection, had so peaceful a study to work in or possessed so complete a library, could he have maintained so distinguished a social position, if he had had six or eight children? Would this member of parliament have been able to form such profitable relations with the party in power if his youth had been chaste, and if he had been married could he have devoted so easily to his beloved constituents the attentions which, to their profit and his own, he lavishes upon them?

It would be very interesting to prepare a statement of the domestic condition of the officials who have obtained the chief posts in our various administrative services during the last fifty years : ministers, prefects, judges of the Court of Cassation and the Courts of Appeal, major-generals and brigadiers, rectors and school inspectors, commissioners of police, financial directors, postal officials, etc. For lack of such a list, the *Intransigent*, which in 1908 sympathised heartily with the neo-malthusians, who

conjugal duty ; such refusal is to avoid having children, which is an abominable offence.

“ Would such language be possible to-day ? I doubt if any catechism contains it. Is it progress, that we can no longer listen to it ? And why cannot we endure it ? Is it the result of a more susceptible modesty ? Or rather because we have lost the habit of modesty ? But why do we no longer use such words in a book which naturally leads to the subject ; even in forms of examination of conscience and manuals for confession ? Have we not confined it to the confessional under the pretence that it is too delicate to approach in public ? And do we not even avoid approaching it in confession, on the pretext of not extinguishing the smoking flax, and of leaving to faults which we cannot hope to hinder, at least the benefit and excuse of ignorance ? Are we afraid of emptying the churches, and of abruptly displaying, behind the crumbling Catholic facade, discouraging realities ? These are interesting and delicate questions, of which it would be premature and presumptuous to treat. If the outside history of malthusianism is written in statistics, its moral history is still to write.”

As we shall return to this subject later on, this quotation will suffice. In a series of articles published in the autumn of 1918 M. Edouard Jordan has carried still further his study of the attitude of Catholics towards the

were then being somewhat abused by the “ repopulators,” conceived the idea of an inquiry as to what extent the best-known members of Society, the people who guide public opinion or compel its attention, share effectively towards repopulation. The inquiry dealt with about 450 people belonging to the political, literary, commercial, financial, and artistic worlds. The first results were such that the paper, for fear of making influential enemies, hesitated for a little while to publish the figures, and at all events stopped its researches. Out of the 450 dealt with, 177 had no child at all ; 106 only one ; 88, two ; 39, three ; 19, four ; 7, five ; 4, six ; 3, seven ; while two had been imprudent enough to have respectively 9 and 11 children.

Thus this picked crowd, which enjoyed the most abundant intellectual and pecuniary resources, had slightly over 550 children for 450 homes.

The *Intransigeant's* inquiry could of course only deal with an easily ascertained fact, the number of the children ; if it had been able to deal with the youthful exploits and conjugal adventures of the same *élite*, what a revelation there would have been !

birth-rate question, and his inquiry has led him to results which are exactly in accordance with those I have reached myself.

What sincere Catholic would dare to say that during the last three or four generations, the denominational schools, the catechisms and institutions, have given our young people who attend them, the robust moral character which has armed them against the temptations of the flesh? And with regard to married people, what strange reticences, what bizarre reserves, sometimes what compromise! Was there not a Bishop in the south, thirty-five years ago, who advised his priests not to lift the veil that hides the marriage chamber? And yet, the experience of marriage which, owing to circumstances, this bishop had gone through before his ordination, should have made him better informed. Is it not true that the great precept of the loyalty of conjugal relations is too often passed over in silence; during many years few priests and bishops have ventured to disturb the selfish peace of thousands of households reckoned of right opinions, and who at least vote straight . . .

Thus, not only are the psychological and moral dispositions of the individual concerned with the attitude he takes up with regard to the precepts of moral discipline; this attitude is still more closely bound up with exterior machinery and social institutions. Outside the individual, within him, and at the very centre of his being, we discover a formidable combination of all the parts of the machine and we cannot contemplate modifying one of these parts without, at the same time, taking account of the direction and the value of all the others. These two considerations are of sovereign importance for the sociologist, and we shall proceed to deduce the consequences that follow from them.

## V

In the course of this chapter, already so lengthy, we have designedly made one omission, which the reader will doubtless have noticed; the time has now come to supply it, to analyse by itself in a few pages a new element in our contemporary manners—Feminism, and the principle of moral equality. It is a new element, but everything assures us that its interior force is so great that it could, in a rapid maturity, reduce our moral disorganization to the worst extremes, and so to extend its former activities that the mind refuses to gauge these remote and frightful repercussions.

Until the last years of the nineteenth century our modern societies have existed on the principle of the quality of sexual moral obligation. No doubt this has never been admitted theoretically by moralists, and the Christian churches especially have always maintained that the duty of chastity and purity is the same for men and women, but as a fact this equal obligation has not been recognized in practice, and the great majority of decent people, even those whose moral delicacy could be the least impugned, have always refused to recognize it. All through life, from infancy to old age, certain rights have been conceded to the sex reputed to be strong which have been obstinately refused to that known as "weaker." How many mothers who treat the follies of their sons as mere peccadilloes, or at most as youthful sins of no serious import, would be utterly overwhelmed by the least stain on their daughters' purity, and how many fathers would dream of giving the young bridegroom, even on his marriage-day, the first initiation which some mothers think it well to impart to the bride after the wedding ceremony? When married, the wife's rights are far from being reckoned equal to those of her husband, or the same excuse made for her infidelity as for his adultery; and if the marriage of an old gentleman with a young girl seems scarcely desirable, that of an old lady with a youth excites our disgust. /Nothing shows

the distinction more clearly than the judgment we pass on prostitution; with what contempt we talk of these "filles perdues," of the shameful traffic of these merchants of passion, while we fail to include in the common shame the name of the customer—the purchaser who is always on the scent for human flesh with which to satisfy his lust. Taking all together, does it not seem that the responsibility lies more heavily on the man? "For it is almost always he whose aroused desire seeks the woman, instigates, seduces, and abandons her; if we blame the harlot for the indifference with which she yields her body to the embraces of a casual passer-by, how are we to excuse the fickleness of the man who seeks a woman, no matter who she may be, what face or soul she may possess? The harlot does not change her lover more than the lover changes his bed."

Our society, then, lived on the principle of this dual morality until in the last years of the nineteenth century, the feminist movement began to formulate its claims, among which speedily figured, along with intellectual, civil, political, and economic emancipation, freedom from all sexual tutelage on the man's part—"the heaviest, the most intolerable, the most degrading of all." "In fact, as woman became conscious of her own worth in intelligence and technical qualifications, so she realized that her body also represents a 'value' of the highest and most attractive kind; an aesthetic value, since her beauty is the chief inspiration of the plastic arts; a social value, since she bears within her the future of the race: a moral value, since this body, the object of so much desire, can also become, by an act of sovereign autonomy, a possession which one will fight hard to defend; finally—all must be said—it has a mercantile value, since by her body and the pleasures it affords, she can make money as by means of an intoxicating draught. This value man has exploited without restraint, to his damage. But see how the woman comes to her own.

<sup>1</sup> Th. Ruysen, pamphlet quoted on p. 9. The minute analysis of this distinction would be interesting to follow out: it would show all the distance that divides a "respectable man" from a "respectable woman."

She no longer consents to be the dupe of her ignorance or the victim of her weakness. If she gives herself, she wills the gift to be free; she claims the right to accept only with full knowledge the risks of maternity, and eventually to share the responsibilities with him who has shared the pleasure." (Th. Ruyssen).

This feminist claim has extended to the assertion of the identity of sexual morality: one standard for both sexes was the motto of all the various groups that were out for women's rights. But it soon appeared that this formula was capable of two directly opposite interpretations: the man could be required to accept the same duty and discipline which have hitherto been so freely required of the woman, or she might be promoted to the enjoyment of the liberties and rights until then reserved to the "chief." We do not exaggerate; the first interpretation has received wide and influential support, and it is to be wished that "the majority of decent people," who too often do not know how to forget anything, would forget certain excesses which marked the beginning of feminism, and cease to hold in suspicion a movement which is capable of becoming in our post-war France one of the best auxiliaries in her regeneration. When will people be willing to recognize that among the women who now direct the feminist movement are those whose moral convictions are the highest of all their eminent qualities; for the benefit of their sisters, too often victims of men's brutality and selfishness, they claim rights indeed, but they know that the conquest of a new right is never made but with the acceptance of a corresponding duty, and especially they firmly intend that woman, conscious henceforth of the wonderful rôle bestowed on her by nature in the task of the transmission of life, shall know how to force men to respect the sources of life in himself as well as in her: and how could that constraint be possible, if the woman did not respect herself? Already this high moral teaching has produced results by no means negligible, and we should probably now attribute to it in part 1, the effort being made by various young people to restore,



in their workshop or school, respect for chastity. If a minister could affirm, during the war, that only fools laughed at chastity, it may well be that the leaders of the feminist movement have borne their part in creating an attitude of mind which has made it possible to enunciate and listen to a truth so simple, but none the less sufficiently new

The trouble is that this first interpretation of the formula : "The same moral standard for the two sexes," rallies around it only an élite, comparatively few in number, and it is inevitable, in our present moral condition, that the other interpretation should gain the eager adherence of a countless number of young girls—some of them little more than children—and of young wives, who think little, know little, and are possessed of little virtue, but are always eager to claim liberties and emancipation. The principle of moral equality cannot but entice them, since to them it means access to the enjoyment which has from time immemorial been the man's delectation, to those liberties before and after marriage which the stronger sex has hitherto reserved to itself, and which its slave of yesterday is at last to share with it. Nature, it is true, seemed to be against the experiment ; we were not consulted, and she had made the mistake of not associating unity of bodies with unity of principles : if the transmission of life involves the collaboration of both sexes, it must still more involve similarity in every way of the rôle of each. The barrier seemed impassible : yet it was mere child's play to pass it. Anti-conceptual practices and abortion sufficed to accomplish this, and in proportion as science perfected the mechanism, the efficacy, and the supposed harmlessness of the means employed, the assimilation of the two sexes became a reality before nature as well as before society. To-day the perfection of these methods leaves scarcely anything further to desire, and the "emancipated," in full possession of the means, can translate into acts the principle of moral equality.

To be fair, we must add that the male sex also adheres to and developes this second interpretation of the

principle of sexual unity Many young men in the working-class circles of our great towns do not consider they have the right to demand from their fiancée a chastity which they do not possess themselves, and the licence of which both avail themselves appears too precious for them to object to it. These new manners begin to penetrate even to our country districts. In the Yonne, in certain parts of Burgundy, and elsewhere, it often happens that the girl has contracted several "friendships" before contracting marriage, and no trouble is even taken to hide them. As there is no fear of the complications of pregnancy, still less of the birth of a child, the relations shut their eyes, and on the wedding day the bride-groom, who knows to what he is committing himself, takes care not to find fault with a freedom of which the lads of the village take plentiful advantage during the ten or twelve years before their marriage. More than ever, in our modern life, we must be logical and know what we want.

Let us not dwell on these horrors, and rather conclude the subject by describing a different mode of applying the same principle, which while more refined and less compromising, perhaps threatens the country's prosperity yet more seriously.

Those who attentively follow the modern evolution of our manners know that, during the last fifteen years, one meets more and more frequently, in Paris, the great towns and the industrial centres, such a case as this. A girl—modiste, dress-maker, typist, shop-assistant, bank-clerk, or student,—fairly educated, of good character, used to a good social environment, usually known among her companions for her professional cleverness and capacity, enjoying through her profession or small private means a certain independence, resolves one day to set up housekeeping with a young man. No marriage, not because it is understood there will be no children—that condition need not deter them, since many legal unions accommodate themselves to it very easily—but because it is understood that each preserves complete liberty to end the union any moment that the friend ceases to please—

and one does not want to expose oneself to the trouble and expense of a divorce; an establishment that merely means living together, and does not imply at each moment any engagement for the next. On the other hand, there is no element of fraud or seduction: both are equally aware of the nature and scope of their mutual relation, and the advantages which each will derive from it. It is no longer a question of prostitution, because the woman brings as much as the man and receives no more than he does. The two young people may care for each other, but that is not a *sine quâ non*, it is enough that they feel a certain amount of sympathy and agreement, for them to live together. Besides the sensual gratification, they will benefit also by the economies of a common *ménage*; also, certain special advantages will accrue to each; to the young man that of the companionship of a girl expert in small domestic cares, and to the girl that of going with comfort to places of entertainment. In fact, though woman's emancipation is so far advanced, "The outer life is still closed to her. Places of entertainment do not admit a woman alone, or, if they do, the reception she experiences makes her wish to get out again as quickly as possible. Yet one cannot always be at work, or stay at home sewing, or reading in one's room; and so work-girls of all kinds and students take lovers in order to be able to go out."<sup>1</sup>

This *ménage* together lasts a shorter or longer time according to circumstances. Sometimes it develops into a legitimate union, especially if the lovers wish at any given time to have one or two children: in our social life it is always an advantage for a child to be legitimate. Most frequently it comes to an end after a few years, without fuss or discussion; they part good friends, according to the primitive agreement which excluded any deception or sexual association with another. Now and then such a union violates the convention, and one party claims to have rights over the other which the contract does not allow. In such a case the situation is compli-

<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Pelletier, *L'Emancipation sexuelle de la femme*. Paris: Giard et Brière, 1912. p. 40.

cated, but the offender is reckoned to lack taste and polish ; to be of the old school and to have acted inelegantly.

Such is the new style of sexual association. It is very frequent in the United States, where it sometimes assumes the name of marriage, because marriage in that country is a mere material contract, and divorce proceedings are rapid and simple. In our own country it was inaugurated by the industrial workers ; at first it caused surprise and some scandal, then it made way in higher social grades, and has extended continually. If our manners continue to follow the curve of the last forty years one can predict a great future for it, for it is precisely adapted to the false moral standard of an increasing number of both sexes. This extra-legal union is similar in every way to those which every day, and in great number, receive the official seal of the registrar or the minister of religion ; but with more scandal, shall we say ? With less hypocrisy, reply its defenders, who declare that the real scandal consists in usurping the name and social advantages attaching to a true marriage, while the couple know that neither the one nor the other has any intention of contracting such a union.

Apart from some bourgeois circles, in which is felt, and not without reason, the irresistible necessity of continuing a conventional and artificial life, this régime of free association tends to become general. It would at least possess the advantage of sincerity and clarity : those only would contract marriage and take the titles of husband and wife who, in the sincerity of their heart and the loyalty of their soul will to contract a true union that implies the triple obligation of sexual relation fidelity, and indissolubility ; on the other side would range themselves the "friends"—*i.e.* those who do not agree to establish so serious a relationship, which involves such grave duties. No one would be ignorant of their programme and their scheme of life, and public opinion would be satisfied of their sincerity. Thus would disappear the hateful necessity of bestowing the sacred name of marriage on unions of lust and selfishness which are really legalised concubinage.

It is impossible to foretell the future development. Yet one can assert three things: the first, that society would perish shortly, in the midst of unutterable sufferings of every description, if the number of these "friendships" should increase to the detriment of real marriages; the second, that in the present state of our manners and of the doctrines generally accepted, our society has no rational objection, which has any practical efficacy, to make against these "friendships"; the third, that it will be certainly impossible for us to remain under the equivocal and untruthful conditions which at present delight us, naively believing in their stability and their continuance. More powerful forces than all our united wills are drawing us to new conditions, and logic pushes us forwards constantly and mercilessly. Travellers wearied in spite of—or because of—the amusements on the way, we would fain come to a stop, but destiny forbids us any rest but that of a brief halt now and then . . .

The road having been made, our manners, our jurisprudence and our laws set themselves most industriously and with ever increasing success to secure to these free unions the advantage of legal sanction so far as that is to their profit. "Little by little," writes Mons. H. Berthélemy, professor of law at Paris, "the companion takes the place of the wife. She secures the interest of Parliament. She is protected by the administration. Have we not seen proprietors compelled to allow the same maintenance to the 'companion' of a soldier as is allowed to lawful wives?"<sup>1</sup> And the learned professor could have added that the companion gets the same pension as the lawful wife in case of the death of her mobilised "friend," just as since August 1914 she received the same military allowances.

<sup>1</sup> *Pour la Vie*, March-April, 1918. The author relates this story: "Some months ago a school-mistress was about to be confined. She was not married, and the educational authority demanded her dismissal. It was at least becoming to avoid what some old fashioned people would consider a scandal. Then a deputation interfered! Her 'friend' had influence. He did not wish his 'companion' humiliated by a disciplinary action. 'Private life concerns nobody,' declared her protector . . . 'and besides, what has she done wrong? Is not illegitimate maternity more democratic?'"

And how many other legal decisions previous to 1914 could be quoted! Our Civil Code of 1804 knew nothing of free union, but only recognized *wives*; how completely this is a thing of the past! Side by side with a marriage duly registered at the "Mairie"—and that is accommodating enough—we are on the way to establish another sort still more acceptable to changeable hearts and to appetites which no longer recognize moral responsibility.

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At the end of this chapter, it is perhaps as well, after so painful a survey, to bring to our minds those who by their purity and chastity, their devotion and self-sacrifice, their fidelity to all sexual discipline, have saved France in the day of her great trial, and who will be the best workers for her restoration now that she is at peace again. Young men and women, who recognize that youth should pass in purity and respect for both self and others; fathers of large families, who know full well what others know but who with full sense of your responsibilities and your perils accept with courage the heavy task of the upbringing and education of many children; and you, mothers who willingly place your fecundity at the service of your country which is enfeebled by so much evasion of duty, mothers whom pregnancies and painful childbirths, long suckling with their imperious demands, cares of the home-nest by day and night, have neither discouraged nor wearied, who know always how to keep smiling lips and a stout, valiant heart;—do not fear that I forget you; the thought of you is, on the contrary, with me all through this book. How can I forget you, when the careful analysis of others' misdeeds with their fearful social consequences reminds me all the more of the vast services you are rendering to the world? You are literally saving the world, you save it in peace as you saved it in war, and, by the inevitable operation of the great social law of solidarity, those others whom the recklessness of their acts would soon precipitate into irremediable ruin if they did not share in the benefit of

yours. Alas that they cannot but make you share in the sufferings brought about by their evil deeds. You also form a vast army, and because we know this we do not despair of our country. In the balance-sheet your persons and your deeds fill a small space indeed, but this exterior effacement is due to the necessities of the case. The physician who specializes in the study of a disease describes carefully its symptoms and its evolution, but says nothing about the multitude who do not suffer from it.

One word more. The balance-sheet drawn up in this chapter ends at the spring of 1914. It was not possible to include the period of the war. Because in the first place, that was an essentially abnormal period, also and chiefly because we are unwilling to take cognizance of evil deeds which could dim our eyes to the beauty of this glorious epoch. When a tenderly loved mother is exposed to the worst and most brutal assaults, and when, gathering together all her powers, she redoubles her brave resistance to the aggressor's attack, it is her children's duty to rush to help her, and their hearts go out utterly with admiring wonder at the deeds of courage, self-sacrifice, and heroism of which they are the witnesses.

I am aware that the war has aroused in a certain number of "poilus" the resolution to practice systematic sterility in the future even more perseveringly than before: "What is the good of having children to send them to be butchered?" Nor do I forget what M. Cazeneuve, senator, could write in his recent report to the Senate, and that without any contradiction, that "criminal abortions increase terribly since the war." Adultery has also multiplied greatly, and several thousand divorce cases are waiting, or being prepared in our solicitors' chambers. Added to all this, the license of young people of both sexes has been materially encouraged by

"At no time of my career," a pharmacist of Puy-de-Dôme writes to me, "which has been a long one, have I received such numerous requests for abortion as since the war, and this from married women with child by their 'poilus.' The wives absolutely refuse to become mothers again."

## 100 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

the late happenings, with the result of a wide extension of prostitution and debauch. Too often the military authority has done nothing to protect the soldiers against these provocations to vice, and some lectures given by certain majors to the recruits of the 1917 and 1918 classes formed a veritable instruction on prostitution; venereal diseases were discussed and precautions against them recommended, as if chastity and self-control were not the most effective protection, and the only one which a real teacher ought to give to boys of eighteen. Also, how are we to understand that prospectuses were allowed to be distributed by thousands at the front, announcing a series of works meant to teach "the sure, infallible, convenient, easy, practical, innocuous means and ways to engage in sexual relations at will, without any risk, or any danger of the woman falling pregnant?" And this complacency in act contrasts miserably with the words (always words!) which are for ever reminding us that "the only peace which the Republic can accept is that which will permit the country to breathe, to *live*, and to work . . . The present generation is responsible to France for its posterity. It will not suffer the trust which our ancestors have confided to its transient guardianship to be profaned or lessened." Moreover, I am aware of both the notorious "circulaire Mordacq" as to the opening of national houses of ill-fame, and the general order addressed to the soldiers of the 127th Division!

Yes, these things are notorious, and many more. But we pass them by, and deliberately end our enquiry at

\* Message of the President to the Chambers, August 5, 1915.

† 3rd May, 1919. "*Monopoly of public brothels by tirailleurs.* The General has received various anonymous letters from chasseurs, infantry, and cavalry, complaining that they cannot find accommodation in the 'maisons de tolerance,' which are monopolized by the tirailleurs in great crowds, who remain too long and have caused frequent disturbances. The High Court of the Sarre and the municipal authorities are taking measures to increase considerably the effective force of the prostitutes. But, until this can be done, the tirailleurs must be more expeditious over their pleasures. They will be communicated with as to the matter.

The General commanding the 127th Division,  
(Signed) Brissaud-Desmillet."



## THE CONDUCT OF MARRIED PEOPLE 101

the spring of 1914. During the war we desire to know no other France but the France which, by the sublime heroism of her children on the Marne, on the Yser, and at Verdun, saved herself and at the same time saved the world and civilisation.

## CHAPTER III

### II. THE THEORIES

“It is ideas that rule the world.”

AFTER setting forth the balance-sheet of the acts, let us try to analyse the theories. Two acts, identical externally, are far from possessing the same social significance; how great a distance separates the deed of him who, while doing ill, cries with the Apostle: “Unhappy man that I am, the good that I will I do not, and the evil that I will not I do,” from the attitude of the other whose intelligence, making terms with his weakness, invents theories to justify his conduct. Besides, we may be sure that all conduct, when it is widespread and generally adopted, is always the expression of a theory which it tends to elaborate, and which reacts by helping to recruit its followers. Soon the theory has gained full possession of its arguments and its resources, and a huge social service, widely diffused and with due propaganda, is established. From that moment we may say that a great wave from below is overwhelming society and that for the time the inundation must be accepted.

This state of things is our own with regard to the evergrowing solicitations of the sexual appetite. Doubtless the vast majority of people profess no explicit theory, knowing by instinct that their weakness profits by their ignorance, not only do they feel no desire to frame a coherent and logical theory, but one would say that such a theory would not suit them at all: it would upset the comfortable arrangement of their life, and compel them to face troublesome questions with

which they would prefer to have nothing to do. But along with this immense crowd, whose increasingly degraded morals provide recruits to the propagandists of the worst and most anti-social doctrines, serried ranks of publicists and theorists of all antecedents and every profession work without relaxation and argue unceasingly. For these last twenty years the theory has been complete, and it is indispensable to know, at least briefly, its essential parts.

## I

Without entering into the details of a history, very interesting, but quite beyond the limits of this study, we must nevertheless refer to the large part which the philosophers and encyclopaedists of the eighteenth century played in the elaboration of the new doctrine. Their individualistic and anarchic conception of freedom was bound to clash with an institution which more than any other involves the definite renunciation of numerous precious liberties—the institution of monogamic and indissoluble marriage. In the name of nature and reason the “philosophers” attacked the indissolubility of the conjugal bond. Diderot writes in a celebrated passage: “The first oath which two human beings took was at the foot of a rock that crumbled into dust; they called as witness to their constancy a sky that is never the same for an instant: all was transient, within them and around them, and yet they believed their hearts to be exempt from change. O children! always children!”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>*Jacques le Fataliste*, Œuvres, éd. Brière Paris, 1821. T. vi., p. 179. This passage has been reproduced, almost word for word, by Musset in the beautiful verses of the *Souvenir*:

Oui, les premiers baisers, oui, les premiers serments  
Que deux êtres mortals échangeèrent sur terre,  
Ce fut au pied d'un arbre effeuillé par les vents  
Sur un roc en poussière.

The French Revolution lost no time in translating into actual legislation the opinion of the philosophers. The first reform in this way was the passing of article 7 of the second section of the Constitution or 3-14 September 1791, which reads: "The law only regards marriage as a civil contract. The legislative authority will fix for all citizens without distinction the manner in which births, marriages, or deaths, will be registered, and will appoint the public officials who will receive and preserve registers." The formula is short, and it took almost a century to discover its far-reaching effects. Since marriage is merely a civil contract, it must be capable of being treated in the same way as other civil contracts as to sales, or rent, or partnership; and from this principle came forthwith two important consequences: the first, that this contract, which binds both parties by reciprocal obligations, should, like all other contracts of the kind,<sup>1</sup> be dissoluble on the demand of one of the contracting parties, when the other does not fulfil the obligations undertaken; the second, that the joint will of both parties can, at any moment, suspend or suppress an agreement which has been entered into by their joint consent. Indeed, several later laws of the revolutionary epoch were eagerly directed to the acceptance of these two consequences; we shall see further on how the inherent nature of things *nevertheless broke down this reckless legislation*, and forbade the enforcement of the whole principle of divorce by mutual consent, and even

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Ils prirent pour témoin de leur joie éphémère  
 Un ciel toujours voilé qui change à tout moment  
 Et des astres sans nom què leur propre lumière  
 Dévore incessamment.

Tout mourait autour d'eux . . .  
 Insensés ! dit le sage.—Heureux ! dit le poète.

<sup>1</sup> Jurists term contracts which impose reciprocal obligations *synallagmatic*. When one of the contracting parties violates the engagement, Article 1184 of the Civil Code, the principle of which is also enforced by contemporary legislation, gives the option of either instituting proceedings in order to compel the transgressor to respect his partner's rights, or of requesting from the Courts the retroactive dissolution of the contract.

made inevitable the humiliation of the repeal of the law which most nearly approached that extreme.

In the same spirit other laws abrogated religious vows, and refused to recognise their civil obligation.

Thus the revolutionary legislation set upon our land the mark of its will to emancipate and set free ; but let us not omit to note that, at least so far as official acts went, (for in practice there were many enthusiastic "comrades" who, knowing that "virtue was subject to the order of the day," had no scruple in claiming many other liberties) the only object was to free the individual from bonds which he might have imprudently forged by his own hands, whether by contracting an indissoluble marriage or vowing himself to perpetual celibacy. There was no theoretic assault on the other obligations of sexual morality.

Yet a time was sure to come when obstacles other than those which the human will (which was reckoned imprudent) could raise, would be met with ; society and social morality also lay down their rules and impose their restrictions ; who guarantees us that these rules and restrictions, these expressions of the collective will, are more commendable than those which arise from the individual will ? How many social regulations that were reckoned sacred have disappeared, and their disappearance has been a means of progress ; why should it not be the same with moral regulations which prescribe chastity to the unmarried, conjugal loyalty to the wedded ?

The "romantic school" was the untiring labourer in this work of demolition and emancipation, and among all the famous writers attached to that school none has shown more ardour or more talent than Georges Sand. No doubt the friend of Alfred de Musset appeared to attack the indissoluble tie of marriage, and was especially anxious for the re-establishment of divorce, which had been suppressed in 1816 by the government of the Restoration, but the arguments she employed so zealously went far beyond the question of the indissolubility of marriage. One gathers this by the letter which Lélia

wrote to Stenio, and to which our modern advocates of free love and free maternity would so willingly put their signatures :

“ The longer I live the more I recognise that the notions adopted by our young people, with regard to the exclusiveness of love’s ardour, the absolute possession which it demands, and the eternal rights which it claims, are false, or at least fatal. All opinions should be allowed, and I would grant that of conjugal fidelity to exceptional souls. The majority have other needs and other capabilities ; they need reciprocal freedom, mutual tolerance, exclusion of all jealous egotism. Others possess mystic ardours, fires that smoulder long in silence, a sustained and voluptuous reserve. To yet others are granted angelic calm, fraternal charity, perpetual virginity. Are all souls alike ? Have all men the same faculties ? Are not some born for austerity and religious faith, others for languorous enjoyment, others for the pain and strife of passion, others again for the vague reveries of poesy ? Nothing is more arbitrary than the feeling of true love. All loves are true, whether impetuous or peaceful, sensual or ascetic, lasting or transient : whether they lead men to suicide or to pleasure. Intellectual affections lead to actions as great as affections of the heart can accomplish. They are as violent, as imperious, if not so lasting. Sensual love can be ennobled and sanctified by struggle and sacrifice. How many veiled virgins have, unknown to themselves, followed the impulse of nature in kissing the feet of Christ, in shedding warm tears on the marble hands of their heavenly Spouse ! Believe me, Stenio, this deification of selfishness which maintains this moral law of marriage in connection with love is as senseless, as powerless to constrain the will, as absurd before God, as the social institution of marriage is now in the eyes of men.”<sup>1</sup>

Again, the author of *Indiana* and of *Valentine* is not content with showing us the misfortunes of ill-matched couples ; with what charm she describes the happiness

<sup>1</sup> *Lélia*, IIIe partie, chap. xxxix.

that lovers can enjoy, with all peace of soul, in unions which marriage has not consecrated.

Conformity to nature is, besides, not the only ground on which, in the opinion of the romantic school, freedom of love is founded; there is another, drawn from the inherent nature of love. We are familiar with the conception of love, at once individualistic and mystic, which the "romantiques" have framed for themselves. Love bears the Divine signature; as soon as it is experienced every union is permitted; it is not enough to say that union is obligatory for those who do experience it, and that it would be a fault to let it be checked because of the bond of a previous marriage, and not to respond to its appeal. Much more than this; on the abandoned husband lies the duty of befriending the new union, since when love ceases marriage exists no more. Do not plead obligations undertaken, loyalty betrayed, divine and human laws; you will be told that "love like religion reveals and illumines many secret ways which reason does not suspect."<sup>1</sup>

This is to suppress marriage altogether, and to recognize the inalienable rights which free love bestows on itself: and in fact, at the time when he is thinking of marrying, Jacques writes to Sylvia: "I have not changed my opinion, I have not made my peace with society, and marriage is always according to my judgment one of the most barbarous institutions ever imagined. I have no doubt that it will be abolished, if the human race makes any progress towards justice and reason; a bond more human and not less sacred, will replace it, and will

<sup>1</sup> *Lélia*, VIe partie, chap. xxxviii. Compare the extraordinary pages in which Jacques (chap. lxxxix) explains the reasons why he does not in the least hate his wife Fernande, who has just thrown herself into another man's arms. ". . . I gathered you with the hope of keeping for myself the sweet perfume which you exhaled in shade and solitude; but the breeze brought it me in passing, and has not your bosom been able to hold it back? Is this any reason why I should hate you and trample you underfoot? No, I will lay you back gently in the dew whence I took you, and I will bid you good-bye, since my breath can no more make you live, and it is another who, bathed in your sweetness, must lift you up again and reanimate you. Flower again, then, my beautiful lily, I will touch you no more."

secure the existence of offspring who will be born of a man and a woman, without ever fettering the liberty of either. But men are too gross and women too cowardly to demand a nobler law than that which rules them: heavy chains must bind beings who lack conscience and virtue."<sup>1</sup>

Here we see free love understood, it is true, in a romantic sense. Georges Sand did not go further, because the evolution of ideas and morals had not advanced sufficiently for all the consequences that result from her premisses to be apparent. Thirty-five years later, after the foundation of the Second Empire and the brief reign of the Moral Order, the thesis was taken up again by a whole constellation of romantic and dramatic writers, publicists and moralists, at the head of which it is only fair to name Alexandre Dumas *fils* and Alfred Naquet. It is no longer in the name of love that the claim is made of deliverance of the individual from the ancient discipline which oppresses him; the right to freedom and happiness is invoked as inalienable in itself.

Since this study refers especially to the first fifteen years of the 20th century, it is enough to allude here to the vigorous campaign inaugurated in 1876 by the two men I have just named; their success is notorious. In spite of the resistance, more stubborn than well managed, the law of 1884 was passed, and the principle of the indissolubility of the marriage bond eliminated from our Civil Code.

But that was a mere outline and beginning. Since the law of 1884 many other laws have developed the principle then laid down by a frightened legislature. Yet it seems we are still a long way from perfect freedom. Everyone knows, also, how MM. Paul and Victor Margueritte have specialized in the great work of the extension of divorce, and side by side with them a whole constellation of well-known dramatic authors, such as Henry Bernstein, Bataille, Paul Herveiu, Abel Hermant, have carried on the fight. To obtain the complete

<sup>1</sup> *Jacques*, I, IV.



abolition of the "pincers" in which an inhuman law persists in crushing the life of two spouses who hate each other, to secure the open admission by the legislature of the principle of divorce by mutual consent, and even at the will of only one of the parties concerned—such is the plan vigorously pursued by a veritable cohort of such authors, of novelists, journalists, lecturers, of whom a large number, we must acknowledge, are notable both for their untiring activity and their talent.<sup>1</sup>

"On the great road of life," writes Mm. Margueritte, "man and woman should walk hand in hand, bravely, with trust and affection, supporting each other with an equal devotion. We desire that they should go on, pilgrims until old age, to the end of the journey to those mysterious countries from which none return; but if unhappily they cease to love and understand each other, if they deceive and wound and outrage each other, let us not condemn them to drag, like convicts, the irons of their mutual hate. Let us break their fetters. Their consciences, their hearts, their flesh, cannot be enslaved; the road is wide, let it be also free! When there is only a ditch of hatred and mire, beyond repair, what is the use of keeping along it endlessly? What benefit can the impoverished individual and the degraded union gain by doing so? The forced marriage state, the chain

<sup>1</sup> *L'élargissement du divorce*, p. 7. We know that MM. Paul and Victor Margueritte have devoted ten years of their life, many romances, and innumerable articles in the Press, to showing the necessity and the benefit of their reform, which is alone able to rescue marriage which, under our present régime, can be nothing but "legal adultery founded on the meanest interests." Readers who are interested in this particular question will find all useful information in a work published by MM. Henri Coulon and René de Chavagnes (Paris: Ernest Flammarion, 1909), under the title: *Le mariage et le divorce demain*. They will find there, especially, the report of the operations of a "Comité de réforme du mariage," of which the members, chosen at random, bear names well known in the contemporary world of letters: Paul Adam, Henry Bataille, Jules Bois, Armand Charpentier, Lucien Descaves, Jean Finot, Léopold Lacour, Maurice Leblanc, Sébastien Charles Leconte, Lucien le Foyer, Pierre Louys, Maurice Maeterlinck, Magnaud, Paul and Victor Margueritte, Octave Mirabeau, Charles Morice, Marcel Prévost, Jules Renard, Joseph Renard, J. H. Rosny, Mme. Avril de Saint-Croix, Oddo-Defloue, Séverine. The book informs us as to the work and opinions of each member of the committee, while it describes them as incomparable persons.

at the end of which two foes struggle and agonize is a humiliating conception of which the children are the first victims, an ideal below that of free love. The law lays down that there is no marriage without consent. Consent springs from the heart new-born of itself every day of life, a renewed and lasting manifestation of the will to be united."

After these extensions of divorce, what will remain of marriage itself? One does not see; and it is likely that divorce would be extended, in its supreme triumph, to such a point that it would become useless. There would be free love everywhere: an essential condition would reserve, by law, to each associate the right to end the common life at any moment and without warning. At the most a semi-satisfaction might be granted to couples who might still have old-fashioned prejudices hanging about them, by giving them the chance, as the president Magnaud proposed, of "legalizing" their free union, so far only, as M. Lucien Le Foyer suggested, as instituting a system of leasehold, with tacit re-acceptance or conventional renewal, if the two "friends" decide that they find advantage and pleasure in continuing to cohabit.

But what use is it to linger on this tedious subject of the extension of divorce? If it still serves as the theme of successful plays which delight a frivolous "out of the fashion" middle class, was not the matter settled long ago in the opinion of the *elite*? It is time to pass on to other practices. It is already nearly fifty years since M. Alfred Naquet, "the father of the divorce law," wrote:

"I hold that maternity should be conscious and willing, and that it is contrary to the whole idea of a healthy civilization for the most important of all actions, namely that which renews the race, to be left to chance, while quite secondary actions are the result of reflection.

"On the other hand, I do not believe in chastity, which I judge to be even hurtful to the health, and as I cannot tolerate the religious folly which condemns voluptuousness when its end is not the reproduction of the race, I consider that men and women can, without moral

offence, abstain from production without being bound on that account to abstain from sexual relations . . . It would be contrary to all scientific thought to condemn to isolation, to solitude, to chastity, the man or woman who, having serious reasons against bringing children into the world, has not the less right to live—not less right, that is, to the intimacies of love.

“In other words, to reproduce one’s kind should be the result of deliberate reflection. It is only under these conditions that reproduction ceases to be a brute instinct and becomes an act of high morality.”

Since M. Alfred Naquet wrote these lines many prejudices have vanished, and at length one can explain in its fulness the true sexual morality of a society produced by “evolution”; here are some representative passages :

“To walk together in the moonlight by the woodland path, repeating to each other banal and unchanging trifles, to swear emphatic and empty lies, to promise each other a life less capable of separation than they believe other people’s to be, to exchange empty promises and lyric hypocrisies, then to reproach each other for the fragility of these deceits, to betray, to revenge and injure, to abandon brutally, sometimes to hate to the extent of employing vitriol, revolver, and knife; this is what is destroying, alas! the best of our French youth.

“All this to conceal, under empty verbiage, the healthy longing for simple bodily union at the will of a natural and innocent appetite.

“It is a great evil among the Latin races that lovers refuse to admit plainly and candidly their relish for voluptuousness, and for the joyous companionship of the sexes.

“The masks of all this abominable comedy, inspired by the vagaries of old-fashioned literature, conceal too hideously our beautiful instincts.”<sup>1</sup>

“For the sake of false and trifling love, this deadly

<sup>1</sup> Paul Adam, *La morale de l’amour*, p. 6.

love 'which is the great teacher of infamy,' men full of courage and with excellent prospects suddenly leave off pursuing their lofty aims and hopes: they languish by the side of a silly or a cat-like creature. They are satisfied with flabby embraces, with animal caresses, with imbecile words and babyish epithets. They hinder their flight with the disastrous weight of a tearful and incapable mistress.

"Our Latin races are wasting the treasure of their wills on an imbecile and commonplace love." Therefore Paul Adam gives young people this advice, which MM. Henri Coulon and René de Chavagnes declare "gently audacious": "Then be refined and sensuous *savants*, not building a temple to the servants of your pleasures, nor lazily falling asleep at their feet, but choosing a new guest for each moment of pleasure."<sup>1</sup>

In a different form M. Henry Bataille gives the same advice. In his *Femme nue* one of the principal characters declares: "The duty of the artist is to restore to life all its reality, for that is the one foundation of everything, the source of our inspiration as of our love. To love woman in this way, and to respect in her everything that is true, simple, instinctive, and unconcealed, is to paint a wonderful picture. We must reach the very woman of nature and attain free love, not in the received sense of the words, but as signifying love set free from all prejudice and weakness, an example to those who are incapable of a robust and independent joy."<sup>2</sup>

M. Maurice Maeterlinck did not agree with the brutal recommendations of a Paul Adam or a Henry Bataille, but it is to be feared that his counsels, expressed in obscure phrases, come to much the same practical result,

<sup>1</sup> *Ibidem*, p. 11.

<sup>2</sup> The day after the first representations of *La femme nue*, the author of *Maman Colibri* and *La Marche Nuptiale* wrote: "My play could therefore be dedicated to the honour of those who follow their instincts, who possess in the unconscious depths of their souls the greatest moral beauty. It is they who are the most beautiful influence on life and the most persuasive example." (*Le Matin*, 27, February, 1908).

as is proved, besides, by the many crises of mental aberration caused by the reading of his book. One thing alone matters to the author of *Le Trésor des humbles*, as he says by the mouth of one of his heroes, "the pursuit of our transcendental ego." Each man's duty is to discover and develop within himself, by an unceasing effort of his faculties, "his own spiritual essence, his own divinity, the source of wisdom in his own soul." But for attaining to this discovery our present world is ill-adapted. Therefore "our moral standard must some day certainly conform itself to the probable mission of our species, and replace the greater part of the arbitrary and often absurd restrictions of which it is the result by logical and indispensable restrictions. For the sole morality of any being or species is subordination to its mode of life, and the accomplishment of the general mission which appears to be entrusted to it,"<sup>1</sup> Subtle phrases these, which may undoubtedly be dangerous in their practical application, especially under the guidance of a moralist who assigns such a place to love as does M. Maeterlinck in his teaching. Very few will hesitate to admit that "the general mission which appears to be entrusted to it" fits in well with the most boundless satisfaction of the sexual appetite; in drawing this conclusion they will often be not otherwise than sincere with themselves. Then, by sincerity one enters rightly "into the privileged region of confidence and love, a delicious spot where, all unclothed, we bathe together in the rays of a beneficent sun."<sup>2</sup>

Finally, with M. Pierre Louys, we uplift ourselves to the enthusiastic glorification of pagan licentiousness and the complete repudiation of all those moral sanctions which for eighteen centuries have claimed control of the sexual appetites. "Sensuality," writes the author of *Aphrodite*, "is the mysterious but necessary and creative condition of intellectual development. Those who have

<sup>1</sup> *Le temple enseveli*, p. 183.

<sup>2</sup> *Le double jardin*.

not experienced the demands of the flesh to their extreme limit, whether to love or to curse them, are for that very reason incapable of understanding the whole extent of the demands of the spirit. As the beauty of the soul illuminates all the face, so corporal virility alone fertilizes the brain.

“Yet more: it appears that national, as well as individual, genius, is above all sensual. All the cities that have ruled the world—Babylon, Alexandria, Athens, Rome, Venice, Paris—have been, generally speaking, as licentious as they have been powerful, as though their licence was a necessary condition of their splendour. Cities where the legislature has attempted to plant an artificial, narrow, and unproductive virtue, are obviously from the very first condemned to absolute death.

“It is thus that Sparta, though placed in the midst of the mightiest intellectual circle that has ever uplifted the mind of man—between Corinth and Alexandria, between Syracuse and Miletus—has left us neither poet, nor painter, nor philosopher, nor historian, nor *savant*, scarcely a popular hero of the style of Bobillot, who let himself be killed with 300 men in a mountain pass, without even scoring a victory. And it is on this account that, two thousand years afterwards, taking the measure of Spartan virtue, we can, according to Renan’s exhortation ‘curse the soil on which stood the mother of such gloomy errors, and insult her because she is no more’.”

The poet who sings the praises of Astarte is also most pessimistic as to our destiny :

“Shall we ever return to the days of Ephesus and Cyrene? Alas! the modern world is succumbing to the encroachment of ugliness. Civilization tends towards the north, entering into the frost, the cold and the mud. What a gloomy night! A people clad in black wanders about plague-stricken streets. What is it thinking about? We no longer can tell, but our young men of twenty-five shiver in their exile among the grey-beards . . .

“May it at least be permitted to those who will regret

that they have never known that inebriation of the earth's youth which we call her ancient life, to live again, in fancy, the time when naked humanity, the most perfect form that we can know or even conceive, since we believe it to be made to God's image, can unveil itself under the lineaments of a consecrated courtesan before the twenty thousand pilgrims who throng the shores of Eleusis; where the most sensual love, the divine love from which we were born, was without defilement, without shame, without sin; may it be permitted them to forget eighteen barbarous, hypocritical and hideous centuries, to ascend the stream to its source, to return dutifully to the original loveliness, to rebuild the "Great Temple" to the music of enchanted flutes, and to consecrate enthusiastically to the sanctuaries of the real life their hearts which have ever been enticed by the spell of the immortal Aphrodite."

This is plain speaking, at least. And we should be quite mistaken if we imagined that such a profession of faith did not correspond with the intimate thought of the author of *Aventures du roi Pausole* and of *Aphrodite*; M. Pierre Louys, an eminent man of letters, a master of style, a chevalier of the Legion of Honour, is the chief of a recognised and licensed school; by his side and in his train, numerous writers of romance, moralists, story-tellers, publicists of all kinds, give us no rest in extolling the splendours of the ancient civilization and deploring "the dense Christian night." "All we wish," wrote lately M. Sébastien Charles Lecomte—he would write it all the more to-day, no doubt—"is that men may become better by becoming less unhappy. This ideal is inferior to none, and it is worthy of tempting the poets, *because it is not Christian.*" And the poet of *Le Sang de Méduse*, who is, besides, one of our most conscientious men of letters and a powerful thinker, sadly writes in the preface to that work: "What is to happen to us to-morrow? Will our struggles only end in a reaction to barbarism, in a savage revolution? Is human folly preparing with sudden starts, a fearful awakening from our dreams?"

Let us remember how one great civilization, that of the ancient world, has already sunk into ruin. What remains of it to-day? Nothing, but some hymns of its poets, some creations of its artists, some works of its thinkers."

Is it necessary to add that for these liberated minds, born anew of this new spirit, such words as chastity, prostitution, marriage, adultery, conjugal fidelity, fertility, sterility, maternity, abortion, and many others borrowed from the discarded language of a worn-out age, no longer bear their traditional meaning? Since, from the time of adolescence, every individual of either sex has a right to the full expansion of sexual activity, and to the enrichment of nature which this expansion cannot fail to guarantee, it is lawful to use all means to secure the enjoyment of a right which society, a cruel step-mother, still persists in denying. It is permitted to everyone to contract such a union, to use such practical means, as may best serve his or her plans; the end is all that matters, and for the sake of not scaring the bourgeois our men of letters refrain from insisting on the repulsive intimate details, and the means employed in brothels, which the practical application of their teaching presupposes. Besides, society would not welcome *that* teaching, if the methods and associations were displeasing to it. Is it not its false morality which renders them necessary? So long ago as 1900 M. Pierre Louys proposed "to combat by the most energetic moral teaching the abominable opinion that motherhood can be under any circumstances dishonourable, illegitimate, or disgraceful."

The author of *Femme et le Pantin* is, certainly, in the advance guard, and for some years it seems that the privileged moral position of our French girlhood has made its assailants hesitate. However advanced people may be, they are conscious in spite of all, of a certain uneasiness in maintaining, in France, that a girl also has the right, outside marriage, to free love, with or without motherhood; and it needs some boldness to tamper with this being of purity, of sweetness, of goodness and courage, who no doubt has some imperfections, but who, none



the less, must possess sublime virtues, since for so many ages she has given France this wonderful type of the mother whose many children have never tired out her courage and her strength, her sweetness and her devotedness.

Nevertheless a day came when it was considered that the "preparations" and flank attacks had been sufficiently multiplied to justify a frontal assault; the task fell to MM. Pierre Wolff and Gaston Leroux, whose play *Le Lys*, running at the Théâtre de la Renaissance during the winter of 1908-9, obtained a notable success. The theme is set out in it with no less force than ability, as we shall see from the following quotation. In Scene V. of the third Act, the two daughters of the Comte de Maigny explain to their father, in the presence of their brother Gérard, the horrors of their position and their right to love:

*Christiane.* Well, yes! It is true! I have hidden much from you I have deceived you long enough! But since you have left me no peace but in telling the truth—yes, it is true, I think of him alone! I love him! I have done everything that you might know nothing! . . . I have lied! . . . What could you have wished me to do? . . . I could not, all the same, tell you that I loved him—nor that he loved me—nor that we had sworn, since everything divided us, never to be anything to each other. I could not tell you that we have been weaker than children—that our love has been stronger than everything—stronger than anything I could express. . . Yet I could not make you understand, because you have never understood that one has not always the right to ask a girl, though she may be your sister or your daughter, to become an old woman without having loved . . . Well, yes—I love him—and you have willed that I should kill this love of mine, my first love and my last . . . But it was not possible . . . I have a heart like your own—a heart that only asks to love. . . And I am twenty-five . . . to-morrow I shall be thirty . . . the day after to-morrow I shall be the age of Odette! . . .

*De Maigny.* Odette is a saint and you are nothing but a . . .

*Christiane.* I am what I am. (*Looking at Odette*) I know also what I could be . . . I could only love when lying—I have lied. Who does not lie, here? Odette lies to you when she says she is happy, with that tranquil mien in which none of you have been able to read her regret for her lost youth. I have no wish to grow old like her.

*Gérard.* And you have dishonoured us!

*Christiane.* It is for your honour that I have lied, that I have humiliated and disgraced myself, that I have dragged my beautiful love through deceit! . . . But now, that is ended! . . . I am his wife! He belongs to me and I to him! He is my husband! Our marriage has been as honourable, as beautiful, as Gérard's, which needed a dowry, a lawyer, and a priest!

*Gérard (coming forward a little).* Be silent.

*Christiane.* I had nothing but my love. It was enough for me, and I gave myself for nothing.

*Gérard.* For pleasure!

*Christiane.* And you--was it not for pleasure that you married Simone—tell me? For before deciding who has a right to talk about honour, we must know which of us two is right: I who gave myself, or you who sell yourself.

*De Maigny.* Enough! You have chosen to dishonour us; I am about to teach you what honour is, and I swear you shall remember it. As for him . . .

*Gérard.* I will look after that. (*He rises to go out.*)

*Odette.* Stay . . . she is right.

*De Maigny.* What?

*Odette.* She is right! She is right!

*De Maigny.* Have you lost your senses, too?

*Odette.* No! . . . But I have the right . . .

*De Maigny.* Be silent, then. For you would make me believe that in remaining virtuous you have been miserable.

*Odette.* I have been miserable enough! . . . and I have had the courage to hide it from you long enough to

have the right to-day to tell you that there cannot be a greater unhappiness, for a girl of Christiane's age, than that of growing old as I have-grown old.

*De Maigny.* Yet . . . there is a still greater.

*Odette.* No! You men don't know what it is. And you, papa, you will never know it. You have always been so young, so gay, so careless—and carelessness is the very mark of youth! Besides, you have scarcely had time to notice what we do. Oh! I know sometimes as you went about the house, you heard us laugh and that satisfied you! . . . a lying echo of the laughter of all the girls who brought to our home a little of their own happiness. And you thought: "They are happy." No, Papa, no . . . It is the others who were happy. I do not speak of my own sufferings, but imagine how by the side of my own unhappiness I have had the terrible grief of seeing our little Christiane grow up for the same miserable fate—the most horrible of all: solitude. She saw all her little friends around her getting married, and there remained nothing for her but a hope . . .

*De Maigny.* She was bound to wait . . .

*Odette.* In the hope of growing old! It is indeed as I say. Look at me, papa, for if you have remained young, it is a long time since I ceased to be so. Look at me! Look at my poor face and bethink yourself. I, too, was once young and pretty, and yet I shall never know the end for which woman and beauty are sent into the world. All is withered and burnt up within me! I am destroyed! How can you expect that I should not fear for her? That is what awaits her.

*Odette.* I speak as a virtuous girl who has been obliged to give up everything for your sake, papa, since I have renounced love—the only thing that counts in life. And you hoped that Christiane would also consent to make this sacrifice! It seemed as natural to you as mine seemed simple . . . For you it seemed quite simple that we should know none of the joys of this world while you deprived yourself of none. You cannot imagine that we can think even of not considering your

## 120 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

honour, because it is yours—it is always *yours* that matters. Your honour—it kills us. And fathers and brothers will never know what virtuous girls, fighting silently with themselves, have suffered on their account. For we have too much pride to complain; and if I had not been bound to defend Christiane to-day you would never have heard me speak. But see, papa—pride is not everything in our life. If it has helped me to keep silence, it has not consoled me. It has not appeased my craving for affection. It has only succeeded in making me what I am: a chaste woman who will despair for ever. See with what terrible tears I have paid for the right for one of us to be happy; and all women, the best and most virtuous, all who have grown old, all who have suffered, all who have wept with me and who have not loved so that your good name might be untarnished, will be against you and on Christiane's side. Go, then, Christiane! you are right—you are right! Go to life, go to love! I have delivered you. You owe nothing more . . . I have paid your ransom!"

If a girl has the right to love freely without a ceremony at the *mairie*, she would have still greater right to take the same short cut to maternity. It is true that the first step is more popular than the other, and until the terrible slaughter of these last years it seemed as if there would never lack a crowd of applicants for its enjoyment. But the war has made husbands scarce, and increased the need of a high birth-rate; if the generative powers, therefore, can be used scientifically, one kills two birds with one stone.

To accomplish this, several people in 1917 organised a propaganda for the restoration of polygamy, and *Le Bonnet Rouge*, always in the vanguard, was conspicuous for its apostolic ardour in supporting it. But the propaganda had little success, not because we have still the same repugnance to a plurality of spouses as our fathers professed—since, as I show elsewhere, we are on the way to restore a sly and hypocritical semi-polygamy—but because we desire to safeguard at the same time conventional appearances and the rights of feminism: if we

should ever restore polygamy, at least we must at the same time restore polyandry.

Therefore the campaign took another direction: the advice was openly given to girls and widows to bear children without any previous legal ceremony, and books and articles showered praises on the women who had the patriotic courage to become "mères sans être épouses."<sup>1</sup> Thus free maternity would complete free love, and we should acknowledge the right of every woman who wished it, to have a child without subjecting herself to marriage.

Audacious as these suggestions were, they are feeble when compared with those of a great provincial newspaper, *Le Lyon Républicain*, the editor of which asked, à propos of a crime that resulted from sexual passion, if society was not bound to prevent rape by permitting those hungry for love to satisfy their need, as it exerts itself to prevent violence on the part of an individual whose famished body cries out for relief, by giving him supplies of bread and soup.<sup>2</sup>

It seems as if we have surveyed the complete cycle of the new teaching: yet we have by no means done so, and we are assured that two final rights are still lacking

<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1917 the publisher of a work thus entitled distributed his prospectuses in the very halls of the Sorbonne to the girls who were attending the classes. The author of this little book seemed, besides, rather to recommend artificial means of securing fertility.

<sup>2</sup> "But this solicitude for the crying needs of the poor," the journalist remarks, "does not extend itself to one of the most irresistible appetites, and one of the most natural: Love!

"Science and philosophy, in dealing with the natural will, prove the universal imperiousness of a need, less frequent but not less imperious than hunger and thirst, and of which rape, too often followed by murder, is the enraged expression, as theft is the usual result of enraged distress. The attraction of the sexes forms part of the system of the universe, no less than gravitation. A healthy man, who is young and vigorous, can no more help his desires than he can make his empty stomach listen to reason by a promise of food next week. The man dying of love in our cities where everything is abundant, ought to be as much of an anomaly as a man dying of hunger. As supplies of bread are distributed gratuitously, so we should seek the means to appease other hungry ones, like Anthony of Auxerre. The solution of the problem is difficult." (Quoted in *Le Retournement Social*, 1st August, 1912).

to make our liberty complete: the right of abortion, and that of unnatural sexual relations. We shall soon meet the first again, a subject on which our celebrated novelists and dramatists have not yet dared to face public opinion. On the other hand, the theme of homosexuality, if it is not yet explained in books or on the stage, was for several years before the war the subject of oral instruction, which every day, in certain cafés, attracted a faithful audience of pale-visaged, long-haired young men. The most popular of the teachers was a well-known man of letters, a chevalier of the Legion of Honour. In addition I beg the reader who may revolt at the claim of these two "rights" to remember that the powerful forces which fashion our modern society make a mock of our repugnances and our revolts; the only question of interest is to know if these two rights conform logically to the development of these forces, logically to those other rights which are commonly acknowledged, and I am not afraid to say that if our intellectual vigour is equal to our straightforward frankness, we shall be overwhelmed by the evidence which provides the answer

Thus eminent literary men, thought, spoke, and taught, before the war, when they were surrounded by public esteem, and ostensibly enjoyed large incomes from the success of their works. One was looked on as a reactionary, if one ventured to dispute the assumption that they were the advance-guard, whose dependence on nothing but the witness of science and reason assured them the enviable privilege of a marked superiority over their contemporaries. To know what would be the moral condition of our great grandchildren it seemed to be enough to listen to, and gaze at, these prophets of the morality of the future. To express any doubt of their perspicacity and penetration was a certain sign of obstinate-obscurantism, probably clerical in its origin, or certainly due to a faulty education.

Thus thousands of voices exerted themselves daily to extend the teaching of the masters, and the tone and accents were modified according to circumstances and audience. From 1875 a close alliance was established

between the "doctrine libératrice" and the group of free-thinkers and rationalists. Did there not go on in the two camps a parallel effort for emancipation, with a declaration of war against the Roman Church in order to show how with her austere discipline she attacked individual liberty and personal dignity, by means of which she oppressed humanity? Auguste Comte had already, forty years previously, described how reinforcing was the patronage with which the Catholic Church had extended the various disciplinary laws. "It must likewise be recognised," he wrote, "in order to appreciate fully the nature and extent of the evil, that the growing aversion to the Catholic constitution, because its theological principles have become deeply hostile to mental progress, has often been a support to moral aberrations, for the very reason that they were forbidden by the Catholic Religion, against which our malicious nature was thus pleased to embark on a kind of childish insurrection."<sup>1</sup> The political events which, beginning in 1877, eliminated conservatives from the government of the Republic, knitted still more closely this "puerile" alliance, and if a small number of more educated and less passion-obsessed politicians observed some moderation in expressing their protests, the politicians who played to the gallery let no

<sup>1</sup> August Comte, *Cours de philosophie positive*, I-V, p. 550. In a note, to which I call the reader's special attention, Comte adds: "In carefully considering the deplorable enactments of our century as to divorce, it is easy to see, once more, that for a great number of contemporary minds, the great social principle of the indissolubility of marriage presents, in the main, no essential harm but that of having been worthily consecrated by Catholicism, whose morality is thus blindly involved in the just antipathy which her theology has inspired for so long. But for this kind of instinctive repugnance, in fact, most men would easily understand that divorce can only really be established as a first step towards the entire abolition of marriage, if its genuine development were to be sanctioned by our moral standard; the invincible opposition of that standard, on this point, happily holds fast to the fundamental conditions of our modern civilization, which no one can change. Nor is this the only decisive question as to which we can plainly assert, either in public or private, the serious practical prejudice attached to various moral enactments in consequence of their apparent and irrational solidarity with theological beliefs, which have been so useful to them, but of which the inevitable final discredit tends henceforth to compromise them utterly with all natures that possess a little energy."

opportunity slip of joining together in one common condemnation of the doctrine and the discipline of the Church. Thus licentiousness, coupled with drunkenness, became a means of political propaganda, and the party who committed this inexpressible crime would never have found pardon but for the action of the other side, who also had often employed tactics scarcely less representable, in making religion an engine of government.

As the writer of these pages is profoundly convinced that the union and cordial collaboration of the best elements are an essential condition of our national reconstruction after the war, it is unnecessary to insist here on this deplorable aspect of our political morals; yet it was impossible not to allude to it discreetly.<sup>1</sup>

## II

In spite of the collaboration of the stage, the novel, and the press, and sedulously supported as it is by our political strife, the "liberator" propaganda has undoubtedly, and for a long time, encountered the opposition of the working classes in both town and country. Those who sixty years ago used to be called the *proletariat* knew that the most beautiful tirades about love do not dispose of the baby who is always a heavy burden except when it is the fruit of lawful embraces: thus the fear of the one aroused distrust of the other.

<sup>1</sup> How many proofs, at once sad and comic, could be brought of this strange alliance. M. le commandant Simon, in the unpublished work already quoted, writes: "It would be easy to show how all the encouragements given to moral indiscipline, under its various forms, are nourished by the very tendencies which have originated and developed the anti-religious and anti-clerical strife." Then he quotes the following: "Several years ago a famous novelist protested in an article in the *Journal* against the police prohibition of exhibiting naked women on the stage. Is there any reason, he said in effect, because a Hebrew shepherd called Moses was pleased to forbid his tribesmen to gaze on unclothed women, that we should deprive ourselves of that pleasure?" The story is piquant, and gives a fine idea of the sociological acquirements of some of our eminent



This was the *merit* of the neo-malthusian doctrine, that it solved this problem of the baby, which the bourgeois authors of it pretended to ignore; here there is more equivocation; what is said and done is well enough known, and as in addition an increase of salary is promised, the doctrine possesses every temptation for an innumerable army of both sexes who work for payment.

I shall show further on how in 1803 a very famous economist, Thomas Robert Malthus, on analysing the correspondence between the increase of the means of subsistence and the increase of population, came to the conclusion that the first is much less rapid than the second, and consequently that if mankind wished to avoid the worst disasters of misery, of famine, war, and vice, it must be prepared to moderate its exaggerated fecundity; to attain this, it must practise moral restraint, under the twofold form of celibacy and deliberate postponement of marriage. It was no doubt the voice of nature which urged young men to an early marriage and married people to procreation, and one had readily to believe that in loyally obeying this summons not only was there no violation of the moral law, but simply respect for its injunctions. But once again science has demonstrated that the shape duty must take is other than we thought, and that the procreative instinct should be otherwise controlled, even in those manifestations which we have hitherto held to be legitimate.

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"men of letters." I recall also the adventure of which M. Ferdinand Buisson, at Bordeaux, was the hero and the victim. During a public meeting he was handling accurately this subject of moral discipline and chastity with that strength and delicacy which are his wont in these matters. Scarcely had he begun to speak when significant cries of "Couac, couac" were heard, accompanied by epithets which certain anticlericals love to scatter lavishly. There was a fine uproar. Who can say how many rationalists and serious free-thinkers were led to reflect as a result of incidents of this kind, which do so much honour to the Catholic Church that they deserve the consideration of sincere and well-informed rationalists. It gives me pleasure to add that such occurrences as that at Bordeaux would be scarcely possible to-day; people's eyes are beginning to open, and they would now hesitate to say in a serious public meeting that a chaste young man is necessarily either an idiot or a humbug.

The "Essay on the Principle of Population" appeared in the midst of the wildest enthusiasm of the exuberant optimism which possessed Europe at the close of the 18th century. It made an immense sensation; the demonstrations were so solid, the proofs so abundant, the deductions so methodical, that economic science was as it were altogether transformed by it, and for seventy-five years there was no social work of any value which did not manifest the lasting impression it had made.

In this sense it is true to say that all the economists of the period 1800-1875 were malthusians. Unhappily there is one part of the master's teaching which, far from developing, they altogether rejected, that namely which relates to *moral restraint*, to the practical means of restraining a superabundant birth-rate. They insisted on a rate which should be ideal, neither excessive nor inadequate, but they carefully refrained from saying by what precise means this desirable rate might be secured. No doubt the question embarrassed them; their liberal opinions were in opposition to the puritan solution of the virtuous English parson, and on the other hand, their habits of external decency, even among a number of them their religious beliefs, forbade them to counsel other means, more agreeable to human weakness. They found it much simpler to leave to the middle class the initiation of the proletariat into their own methods.

But questions cannot be solved by shirking them. As to silence with regard to the means, that was an advantageous policy for Dunoyer, prefect of the Somme, who, in a circular of 11th November, 1833, addressed to the mayors, invited them to exhort those within their administration to show prudence in the married state and "not to make their marriage more fruitful than their industry," as well as to confine relief of the poor to unfortunate people who had not more than one child, "in order not to encourage undesirable examples"; it was advantageous for those two other prefects, of the Allier and the Somme, who in 1838 and 1842 drew up savoury circulars in the same vein; for the energetic moralists

of the Academie Française who decreed a Monthyon prize in 1851 to a book which developed the following thesis: "Happy are the countries where public and private wisdom unite to prevent a too rapid increase of population"; advantageous, again, for that municipal council of Versailles which in 1852 established a prize for temperance, worth 2,000 francs, stipulating that account must be taken of the moderate number of children belonging to the prize-winners; for Léonce de Lavergne, who in 1860, with Thiers' approbation, congratulated the Normans for having reduced their birth-rate; in fine, and especially, for the innumerable economists of every philosophic and religious opinion,<sup>1</sup> who, satisfied with having stated the law, wished above all not to make trouble by untimely curiosity as to the conditions of its application. One easily believes that silence, once again, seemed desirable to all these men, since we know the stubborn sympathy of the middle class in general, and of the administration in particular, for equivocal and shifty formulas. But equivocation cannot last long, and could still less hold its ground in the face of the conclusions of the genial parson of Ayles-

<sup>1</sup>At this date, and until 1870, the middle-class economists and liberals were invariably malthusians (*vide infra*, ch. VIII), and the revolutionaries, who opposed Malthus' conclusions, took the other side. Proudhon, who declared them immoral, was a specially bitter enemy. (*Contradictions économiques*, ed. 1846, t. II, p. 447).

Here is a curious specimen of these convenient equivocations, which I borrow (one of a thousand others) from the Introduction prepared by Pellegrino Rossi for the French translation of Malthus' Essay, published in the collected works of the great economists:

"You, whose families have not climbed the heights of Society, instead of looking up to the summit with envy and making ineffectual vows, look round about you, and listen. We do not bring you theories, generalities, statistics which, to say the least, you would find quite useless. We only ask you for careful attention and a little common-sense, applied, not to the whole world, but to each of you. If prudence could but find an entrance into all households and preside over every family, there would be no more anxiety as to the lot of mankind.

"Are you small proprietors or farmers, planters, owners of your implements and cattle? I am sure you will care for, not the respectability merely, but the dignity of yourselves and your family. Your marriages will not be early or imprudent; often only the eldest son will marry, the

bury, which, incomplete as they were, led to nothing less than placing on the shoulders of the most numerous and suffering part of the human race a new burden heavier than all the rest. To the inequalities and injustices of every kind which are the result of the unequal distribution of wealth, Malthus added another, more intolerable and more humiliating: these hundreds of millions of human beings, with no other possession than their own bodies, found themselves robbed even of this in the name of an "impassible science"; and the society which never ceased to use their physiological energies to impose on them the hardships—and what hardships!—of labour, and to make them turn the looms, now interfered to forbid them the use of those energies for the accomplishment of the sweetest, the fairest and most fruitful work, that of the body purified by love, marriage, and the transmission of life. A rich man is justified in creating a family, as the learned economist would tell us, and it never occurred to the amiable parson that the whole economy of our social institutions, could be ameliorated, and that a little less luxury and extravagance would be enough to diminish the misery which destroys the poor. And then, if it is true that "no one has the power to make two ears of corn shoot where the ground only produces one," one should equally

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others—and there will be but few—will remain in the family, at once co-proprietors and servants, or will seek to enter the ecclesiastical state, or the army, or will invest their labour in great agricultural enterprises. If scarcity or disaster happens to surprise you, you will be able to substitute potatoes for bread on your table, to sell your pig, your poultry, your wine, so as to buy corn, you will buy no new clothes that year, and incur no unusual expense, and, in short, you will be able to face the storm by redoubling your courage and energy. I see you happy and deserving, like the intelligent and hard-working peasants of more than one canton in France, Switzerland, and Italy. The bad years will themselves be useful for instruction and warning. You will then say: What should we become if our family were twice or three times as large as it is? What would you become? You need not look far to learn, and if these sad examples were not at your very door, open Malthus' book, that vast storehouse of facts, and you will see what happens to those improvident populations, in time of scarcity, who even in ordinary times are reduced to strict necessities." (Introd. to Malthus, pp. xlv, xlvii). It would truly be difficult to prepare the way for neo-malthusianism more effectually.

maintain that the duty of abstinence binds the rich no less than the poor.

No doubt it was in their interest that this sacrifice was demanded of the manual workers, of the "small people"; yet if it is true that man does not live by bread alone and has not only a stomach, if it is also true that he has a heart which loves and desires to bestow its affection, have we the right thus to bid the multitude choose between want of love and want of bread? Malthus, who reckoned six as the average number of children to a marriage, had quite calmly said: "For a man to marry without reproach, the least he ought to have, the least he should be able to count upon, in a state of health, is such a wage as is sufficient to support, at the average price of wheat, the number of children produced by a couple." Such a precept, taken literally, vowed to chastity and perpetual celibacy the huge army of manual workers, since the miserable wages earned at that time by the British workpeople—as Malthus knew perfectly well—permitted scarcely one among them to fulfil the condition demanded.

Less than fifteen years after the publication of the "Essay," some men who were not troubled by moral principles offered another alternative to the disinherited millions, and, taking advantage of certain dangerous concessions made by the master, astutely detached from their context, recommended a solution which the virtuous pastor would undoubtedly have opposed with all his strength. And it was not only, as Malthus had foreseen, unmarried chastity that was affected; the spirit of license took yet another form by defiling and dishonouring the marriage bed of thousands of couples.

This propaganda which the Aylesbury parson had not foreseen was, nevertheless, extremely active in 1820. While some desperate theorists<sup>1</sup> advanced the most

<sup>1</sup> A German physician, one Weinhold, counsellor of the regency in Saxony, suggested the castration of a part—which part?—of the male population, while a celebrated English writer, of whose name Rossi leaves us ignorant, required the suffocation of every third or fourth new-born child in suitable boxes filled with carbonic acid.

Another Englishman, one Loudon, M.D. and inspector of children

extravagant suggestions, other more practical disciples simply advised the employment of means calculated to hinder conception.<sup>1</sup> Their propaganda seems to disappear after 1834, without leaving any trace, why, we cannot exactly understand, perhaps because the moral state of the working-class people and the strength of religious conviction did not provide a favourable *milieu*. But a pause of twenty years was enough, and in 1854 there appeared in London an anonymous work which bore an extravagantly long title: "Elements of Social Science or Physical Religion, social and natural; explained with reference to the true cause, and the remedy of the three chief social evils: Poverty, Prostitution, and Celibacy. By a Medical Student." At one stroke the neo-malthusian doctrine was established: the author, who was soon known to be Dr. G. Drysdale—spoke of the contradiction asserted by Malthus to exist between the increase of the means of subsistence and the increase of population, and being behind the times with the austere remedy of "moral restraint" openly extolled that which so many of the middle class in France and

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employed in the English factories, discussing the antipathy between the functions of the breast and those of the uterus, set forth in a compendious work of two volumes the necessity of extending the nursing period to three years; while M. Doubleday, presenting under a scientific form Fournier's suggested treatment for fattening, desired adults to be subjected to an agreeable regime of over-nourishment and, no doubt, of less work, for "stoutness, repletion, and richness of blood, the results of abundant nourishment, diminish the generative faculty and lessen the number of births."

<sup>1</sup>Details as to this propaganda, which at first spread in England and the United States, will be found in M. Paul Leroy-Beaulieu's book *La Question de la Population*.

\*Dr. Drysdale's work is even now-days looked on as the hand-book of neo-malthusianism, and of all the doctrines which are its corollary and its extension. What has just been said is enough to show with how much reason M. Charles Gide claims that the prefix *neo* should never be omitted whenever it is desired to express the current teaching which finds both its starting-point and its complete expression in Dr. Drysdale's book, and which nevertheless retains the name of the pious and virtuous pastor of Aylesbury. The claim is important, and I beg the reader to bear it in mind while reading the present pages.

elsewhere have so long adopted without connecting it with any particular theory. ante-conceptionist practices, the methods aim at hindering fertility after co-habitation.

In 1857 the moral standard was not sufficiently "developed" for such a publication to gain a dazzling success; the book received, however, the heartiest welcome from a large number of readers, who did not exactly boast of having read it, and the ardent sympathy of some neophytes, who, rejoicing in their own initiation and filled with zeal to communicate such a valuable discovery to their brothers in a common misery, secured it a large circulation. The book went through thirty-two editions and was translated into several languages. In 1877 Dr. C. R. Drysdale, brother of the reformer, founded in London the first neo-malthusian league, the model of other such leagues which were soon established in Holland, Switzerland, France, Germany, and elsewhere. A huge national and international movement was launched.

As the neo-malthusian doctrine is widely known, it will be sufficient for me here to give a brief resumé of it.

Every human being, say the neo-malthusians, invariably experiences three imperious needs: nourishment, rest, and love. Nature has implanted them within us, and has had the foresight to attach enjoyment to their satisfaction. Logic would have man hasten to respond to this natural desire, and such is in fact his conduct with regard to the first two needs. But on the contrary it is astonishing to find that with regard to the third he has adopted a completely different attitude; society has invented the strange institution of monogamic and indissoluble marriage. Social morality forbids in fact every satisfaction of the sexual appetite outside of the marriage bond, and in the married state, which it declares indissoluble, it imposes the duties of fidelity and of non-intervention in the reproductive work of nature.

But, continue the neo-malthusians, this sexual morality, which we see hangs together, is really absurd;

it defies both nature and reason, and, being false in its very principle, produces the worst consequences for humanity.

In the first place it is opposed to nature, in depriving for many years a vital organ of those opportunities of regular functioning which are necessary for the maintenance and development of the health of the whole organism. "A physiological law of supreme importance and universal application," writes Dr. Drysdale, "ordains that every member of our body, in order to be healthy and vigorous, must be exercised in a normal manner. The eye needs light, the leg and arm require movement, the intelligence reflection, our appetites and our passions normal enjoyment; otherwise they all grow weak, and inevitably become sick. Excess and insufficiency of exercise are equally hurtful."

Hitherto, it is true, at least among the working-class, we have not seen how it was possible to supply the reproductive organs with the satisfaction they demand without incurring the heavy burden of an unlimited offspring. Poverty and social difficulties are the *tertium quid* between two terrible needs, the need of bread and the need of love—which human nature has experienced during past ages, and now in our own. Rather than renounce love, rather than practice continence and thus limit the population, men have subjected themselves to the least supply of nourishment and rest that can support the bodily frame. The loss of love is so wretched a restraint, so hurtful to the health of both body and spirit, that those who have the choice would endure everything rather than submit to such compulsion.

Humanity, then, was right to reject the horrible remedy proposed by Malthus, a remedy so dreadful "that all have recoiled with horror and flung curses at the man—the only man—who has shown them the true difficulties of their existence . . . It is not less love, but infinitely more, that we need." Besides, far from seeking for "an increase of continence, which is one of the most terrible causes of disease and suffering in modern times," we should, on the contrary, respond to



the calls of nature, for "it is scarcely wise to suppose that our duty with regard to our desires and our passions is to practise abnegation." This abnegation, which produces such serious physiological disorders, also changes the moral temperament; in the adolescent it produces timidity, indolence, and hypochondria; and in the young man, misogyny, when it does not lead to vicious aberrations of every kind. "Whenever we see that a line of conduct leads to disease, we may be assured that it is erroneous and bad."

The question before us is, then, no longer as Malthus believed, to know how we can get bread by depriving ourselves of love, but on the contrary: How can we get love and bread at the same time?

Science is now in a position to answer the question in the only way consistent with the well-being and progress of humanity. We now know how the process of fertility is developed, and how our intervention can hinder an untimely fecundity. And how can this interference be immoral, when its only effect is to restore to man, in regard to one of the most important acts of his life, the control of his reason and foresight? Is it not the very mission of culture and civilization, gradually and in every department, to replace brutal instinct by reflecting will, the chaotic determinations of mere thoughtlessness by the wary calculations of foresight? Intelligent and civilized man is distinguished from the brute in knowing how to bridle his instincts when he judges them to be hurtful to his own development or to the interest of society; on the other hand, what is immoral is to inflict on a woman such numerous pregnancies that she cannot endure the burden, to call into life beings whom we can neither care for nor bring up as we ought—sometimes, whom we cannot even feed; what is immoral is to cram into one mean room of a dog-hole in Paris, six, eight or ten children living with their parents in a repellent promiscuity and a habitual state of filth so revolting that it alone is enough to destroy every sentiment of dignity and respectability in them. These are the immoralities which we would suppress, and we are really the true

representatives of morality as against immorality, of reflecting reason as against mere instinct.

In short, we have only to open our eyes to know to what a state of premature exhaustion many poor women are reduced as the victims of the brutal sensuality of their husbands. We see them in the suburbs of our great towns, in the industrial centres, in our country villages, wretched bundles of rags who trail behind them ragged brats whose cries of hunger and repelling filth give a perfect notion of what a workman's family, with bourgeois morality, can come to. It has been demonstrated since Malthus that the means of subsistence cannot increase with the same rapidity as the number of human beings, especially as the greater part of the wealth produced is drained by the idle and pleasure-loving middle-class. "Therefore," writes Dr. Drysdale, "the worst sexual sin one can commit is to have a large family. The procreation of many children is more culpable than prostitution."

On the triple foundation of these arguments, all three drawn, we are told, from careful observation of nature, rests the whole neo-malthusian doctrine. Before quoting one of the "leaflets" so familiar to its followers, it is well to note, in order to understand these formulas, that from the first an alliance has been more or less established between neo-malthusianism, socialism, (whether revolutionary or not), and free thought. The deplorable political divisions which rage in our country are only too helpful to this new triple *entente*; I have already shown how a natural affinity must draw together the enemies of the Catholic Church in the support of any doctrine hostile to the moral discipline of which she has ever been the solid bulwark; and, on the other hand, if M. Jules Guesde has said himself that the socialist party is "the stomach party," why should it not be associated, and that most heartily, with the claims of another party, whom one might well call "the abdomen party?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Jules Guesde also wrote: "The socialist ideal will reduce the family in size to a mother and child during the time of suckling." The neo-malthusians could not but associate themselves with such a programme,

Thus each of these three systems, these three parties, became the auxiliary and support of the two others, and the immense success of this three-fold campaign is notorious. I do not attempt to describe the indefatigable enthusiasm of these propagandists: some of them, it is true, appeared to be closely connected with purely commercial ventures, and disinterestedness seemed their least fault. But, by the side of these, others—one is bound in honesty to say this, for it is the fashion to deny it in certain circles where a neo-malthusian theorist is never to be met with—were as it were possessed by the enthusiasm of a quasi-religious mysticism; hawkers of a new gospel, they thought they could never sufficiently multiply lectures and pamphlets, in order to bring the good news to the ears of the millions of wretched beings who “were groaning beneath the barbarous enactments of bye-gone times,” and these men, who boasted of having freed their understanding from all dogmatic belief, gave the honours of a religious cult to the divinity of the day—the Science of which Malthus and his duly qualified disciples were the infallible interpreters. A strange aberration, it will be said. Doubtless; but before qualifying or opposing it we must know what it is; and because I have known some upright and disinterested neo-malthusians, it is my duty to bear this witness to them, and to declare that their honesty and good faith were equal to their sociological ignorance and their phenomenal rashness.

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which also gained the adherence of the German Bebel. In his eyes “man and woman are merely animals; can there be any question of marriage, of an indissoluble bond, between animals?” It seems nevertheless that the alliance between the two groups was only made after some hesitation, because certain socialists considered that the best way of hurrying on the revolution was to increase the crowd of the wretched and disinherited. The more misery grew, the more revolt would increase. Cf. Sébastien Faure’s lecture *Le Problème de la Population*. But soon, it was believed, the loss would be fully compensated. The agreement took place, and the *entente* became most cordial. The book catalogue of the *Bataille Syndicaliste*, published in November, 1913, devotes no less than four pages to neo-malthusianism and anti-conceptionist methods; and there are only 62 pages altogether. On the other hand, anti-alcoholism is represented by one page only!

## 136 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

Let us now listen to some echoes of the neo-malthusian propaganda. Here is, first, a leaflet addressed

### TO WORKERS AND THEIR COMPANIONS.

All workers have to contend with insurmountable difficulties in the struggle to live, to develop normally, and to improve themselves. They live wretchedly with too many children, since a wage, usually insufficient for two persons, must almost always provide for the needs of five or six, if not more. Thus the home is always miserable. Why this misery? Because society is at present badly organized.

The efforts of the working people should therefore be directed towards the creation of a better society. Among the means suitable for developing these efforts, the *limitation of births* is one of the chief immediate results.

In addressing working-men, **ESPECIALLY THEIR COMPANIONS**: Do you believe you can properly bring up too many children, often not wanted, that is, can you give them the attentive care which their health requires, education, and the vigorous well-being to which they have a right? The bad organization of society and the amount of your wages do not permit of it.

Why do you not consider that to increase your family burdens is hurtful? Because you do not know, **COMPANIONS OF THE WORKING-MEN, THAT WITHOUT RESTRAINING YOUR RIGHT TO LOVE, YOU NEED NOT BE MOTHERS UNLESS YOU WISH**, thanks to the scientific methods of sexual protection.

The **NEO-MALTHUSIAN WORKERS' ASSOCIATIONS** have for their object the teaching of these methods to women who are ignorant of them, to all adults whom this important question should not leave indifferent.

In the associations will be found all the articles needed for sexual protection as well as pamphlets explaining their use.

Confederation of Neo-Malthusian Worker's Associations. *Fédération de la Région Parisienne, Maison Commune, 49 Rue de Bretagne, Paris (3)*. Apply as above for all information, orders, and formation of "Groupes."

The manifesto is addressed to working-men and their "companions"; there is no word of marriage. There is no doubt that marriage is bidden to disappear, as the most qualified of the neo-malthusian theorists assert, Drysdale in England and Paul Robin, of famous memory, in France. "Love," writes the former, "is, like all our appetites, subject to change. To seek to fix it in one channel is to try to modify the laws of nature. Youth is especially given to this changeableness, in conformity

with the magnificent logical order of nature which ordains that our experiences should be multiplied." To the former principal of Cempuis, free union represents a higher morality than any other, because it is more conformable to natural laws, and at the same time because it proceeds more directly from feeling, passion, and disinterested love, for "the inclination which determines it has a moral value which is lacking in those mercantile transactions which make of marriage a veritable prostitution." It is true one does not see how the maintenance of children is to be provided, but this objection will only deter the cowardly, since "the true guarantee for the becoming maintenance of the children is to be found, not in the empty name of marriage, but in the independence of the parents, especially that of the mother."

Besides, one must look forward to a considerable lightening of the burden :

"Girls of the people!" cries the author of a neo-malthusian pamphlet, "my heart shudders when I think of you! The avarice of those who exploit you, the number of children which your parents have brought into the world without care as to their future, are the immediate causes of the miserable conditions under which you have always lived. And these conditions are so dreadful that you have not even sufficient knowledge to recognize their full extent . . . Everyone of you fancies herself the heroine of a romance : she will love and be loved by a handsome and amiable boy, her life will flow on among the charms of love! A beautiful dream! Alas, for most of you the reality will be nothing but a nightmare. Your future companion in slavery will be, more or less, unconscious as yourself. Slaves, descendants of slaves, you two will establish a factory of yet other slaves, and your first transports of love, your first and perhaps your most legitimate embraces will already be increasing the weight and the strength of your chains. You will be mothers, not knowing what a mother should be, not reckoning, and therefore improvident, of the future ; a mother without thinking, twice, three times, and more, and each time you will be less free and more

wretched, and the more wretched the more criminal you will be, since to every increase of your miseries will correspond an increase in the number of beings condemned to misery. Do not shudder at the harshness of my words, for I do not despise, I pity you. I pity you, because you are yourselves the first victims of the evil you have done.

“Would you escape some of the miseries that threaten you, and enjoy the scraps of happiness possible in a capitalist world? Would you be benefactors both of yourselves and your class, instead of criminals? Then do not dream! Study, think, reason, and impregnate yourselves with the most elementary knowledge that all women ought to know: the knowledge of the means to prevent pregnancy. But you must not linger on this beautiful path, you must become conscientious in the full sense of the word. And for that, you must ask yourselves, you must demand why there can still exist beings who enjoy the strange privilege of thinking, deciding, and eating enough for everybody, who only see in you those who will bear children whom they will turn to account. Henceforth, my sisters, you will be really beautiful, you can be really happy, your wombs will not be like your mothers', a huge laboratory of human flesh to be exploited, to be food for cannon, for prostitution, for the microbes of disease. Instead of that your wombs will be the laboratory of strong generations who will make our planet the abode of beauty, goodness, and happiness.

“Girls of the people, my friends, think over this a little and you will reflect to good purpose. You know well enough that your wages do not increase with the number of your children: quite the contrary, since your multiplied obligations often compel you to work for a price that, if you were more free, you would indignantly refuse.

“In the second place—and this concerns your children—it is obvious that from a given wage they obtain so much less nourishing food as their number round your table is greater. Consequently, they are less physically

capable of gaining their livelihood; also less capable intellectually, because when the stomach is badly supplied the brain is ill-developed; lastly, your children must work the sooner the more numerous they are: misery pursues them from the school to the workshop. . . .

“The working-man must be blind indeed not to limit, and that most strictly, the number of his children, for no matter how few they are, his wages are almost always insufficient to live even poorly: often the mother works as well as himself. A lucky thing for the employer! the wife is compelled by misery to become her husband's competitor. The employer will not have him except on a low wage, and if he can get women cheap, why should he employ men who cost more? So the men come to accept less. Soon the misery has become intense, and circumstances make the children their own parent's competitors! Then competition arises among the children. And if prudence as to increase of families does not come, little by little, to put an end to this state of matters, nothing but death by hunger can set free the sufferers, since they will be too enfeebled and stupefied to set themselves free by revolt! . . .

“Now, women of the people, do you understand that you commit a crime by having many children? Do you understand that, unhappily, they make things worse for the proletariat by offering exploiters of labour workers he does not want?

“Have few children, and you can, more easily, produce those who are strong in brain as well as in muscle, and instead of being the unconscious supports of universal slavery, they will be leaven to raise humanity to a revolt that will lead to freedom!<sup>1</sup>

Thus this doctrine ever supposed to resolve the most difficult problems of economic, no less than of social life. It was to relieve us of two plagues which so hideously defile our modern society, prostitution and abortion. As to the first, the chief motive that leads married men to seek prostitutes and set up illegitimate establishments is the desire to

<sup>1</sup> Emile Chapelin, *Ayez peu d'enfants! Comment? Pourquoi?* A pamphlet in its 41st thousand, pp. 18 ff.

avoid the heavy expenses which the exaggerated multiplication of their offspring would entail. With the use of anti-conceptionist practices there is no longer any fear of that danger, conjugal fidelity is maintained, and this cause of prostitution has disappeared. The arrangement will be still better for the unmarried. As soon as it is acknowledged that "Young people of both sexes, of an age to come together, can do so frankly respectably, and healthily," unmarried men will no longer have any motive to seek for prostitutes; they can satisfy their sexual appetites "without creating suffering and shame, without running the risks of venal and corrupt *amours*, which so often produce disease."<sup>1</sup>

In the degree that abortion disappears, the general employment of preventive methods would make it unnecessary to resort to others, often to be regretted, which one is "obliged" to employ in order to arrest a pregnancy already begun. Ordinarily neo-malthusian lecturers insist at length on this moral advantage, of which they extol the benefit. As a matter of fact, we have already noticed that such a claim is quite erroneous, and that the number of abortions increases greatly, as is natural, in all circles in which neo-malthusian practices are widely spread. Therefore the best educated among the neo-malthusians are now beginning to adopt other tactics, more logical and simpler, they openly assert that the right of abortion is a natural attribute of the emancipated woman and the corollary of the right of free maternity.<sup>2</sup>

"Abortion," writes Mme. Madeleine Pelletier, "need not plead extenuating circumstances; woman can confess it openly, for it is her right. On a lonely road a woman

<sup>1</sup>"One can only look on prostitution as a valuable and temporary substitute, while awaiting a better state of things. Instead of contempt it is gratitude that the human race owes to the unhappy ones who suffer for the cause of our sexual nature. They are of extreme use to humanity. We must look on them as sexual martyrs." Drysdale, *passim*.

<sup>2</sup>But would it not be, in fact, an attack on the liberty of free love to oblige lovers to take preventive measures, which they have no wish to take, against possible pregnancies? Since there exist two means of securing free maternity, one preventive, the other curative, what right have we to hinder the one to the advantage of the exclusive use of the other?



meets a tramp ; he springs on her, violates her, and she becomes pregnant. Would we dare to say that she is bound to let the pregnancy proceed to its end? This would be to degrade woman to the level of a thing which man, however vile, would have the right to use and to abuse ; as man's equal, woman is a personality.

“When woman accepts sexual relations, the proof of her right to refuse maternity is less crying, but it exists none the less. The infant who is born is an individual ; but the foetus in the uterus is not, it is part of the mother's body.

“I said that in strict justice a mother should not be compelled to take care of her child ; in the same way one cannot force a woman to shelter and cherish the germ in her uterus ; therefore the moment she does not wish to do so, she has no other course but to expel it. One cannot put a germ and an individual having a right to live on the same level without absurdity. The man as well as the woman possesses germs ; is he therefore bound to waste none of them, to use them all for propagation ?

“If only the fertilized ovum is identified with the individual, the arbitrary distinction is patent, for in that case the arresting of the development of the fertilized ovum would be reckoned a crime, but not the action which made its fertilization impossible ; and yet in each case the result is the same : to hinder a human being's existence. In good logic as in real justice, it is birth that is the criterion of individuality. All who are born have a right to the protection of society ; those who are not born do not exist, the law takes no account of them. The pregnant woman is not two persons, she is but one, and she has as much right to destroy her offspring as to cut her hair or her nails, to make herself thin or stout. Over our bodies our right is absolute, since it extends even to suicide.”<sup>1</sup>

We have now come to the end of the claims, and the services rendered to society, and to morality itself ; for,

<sup>1</sup> Madeleine Pelletier, *L'Emancipation sexuelle de la femme*, Paris, 1912, pp. 55 ff.

let us not deceive ourselves, it is the cause of morality itself which the neo-malthusian teaching expressly *professes* to defend. In placing within the law acts and proceedings which are for ever multiplying in spite of the protests of the "virtuistes" and "procréatomanes" it is putting an end to a scandal which seriously injures the authority of the moral precepts, and even those who refuse to take this point of view should recognise that the neo-malthusian methods are protecting us from a still greater evil!

"If it was immoral," says M. Eugène Brioux, of the French Academy, to limit the number of one's children. I believe that there would be very few moral couples in France, especially among the middle class"<sup>1</sup>

Will it be said that the multiplication of these "highly moral" acts will at any rate result in universal misery—since the hands to produce wealth will no longer be there—in the ruin of the country and, at last, the annexation of her territory by a more prolific State? This middle-class objection will only hold back the timid; here is the answer of Sébastien Faure, the indefatigable lecturer at so many public meetings:

"The middle-class has its reasons for asking us to provide a large number of children. Its reasons! what are they, comrades? They must have soldiers, politicians and spies, policemen and warders; they must have all this to maintain the servitude of the workers who quarrel about their wages as dogs quarrel over a bone on which there is a scrap of meat.

"There are reasons enough for the crowd of the 'disinherited' to decrease. Listen, bourgeois! if you wish for prostitutes, understand that our daughters are not made to serve your lust; if you want police, do the work yourselves—we are having no more of that kind of thing.

<sup>1</sup> *Le problème sexual*, par Victor Méric (a pamphlet), p. 27. "What is immoral," adds the socialist deputy, Victor Dégeante, "is the bourgeois hypocrisy." Mme. Nelly Roussel says, too, in *La Chronique Médicale*: "There is nothing less moral than to throw haphazard on the world a crowd of beings neither desired nor desirable, and who do not fulfil the conditions necessary to live usefully and happily."

"Listen, bourgeois! If you want soldiers, be a soldier yourself and risk your own skin on the battle-field.

"Listen, bourgeois! if you want strong and clever hands to work, which know how to handle tools, pay them, or else work. Your own hands are sickly and thin, if you want ours, pay them, or you will not get them. Lazy one! how well *you* will work!

"France! we will no longer supply you with soldiers. We are workmen of life, not death. In our hearts are the needs of peace and not the instincts of ferocity."<sup>1</sup>

Thus the strike against large families will be the cause, in its onward march, of the diminution of the threefold flesh in which the bourgeois traffics: flesh for cannon, for work, for pleasure; and the reign of the great exploiter will be ended.

These extracts are enough to show us the nature and the methods of neo-malthusianism,<sup>2</sup> and we are now informed as to the two great teaching organizations which have assumed as their mission the delivery of the assault on the various rules of sexual discipline which tradition has delivered to us from of old. Each of these organizations maintains its special character, and

<sup>1</sup> *Sebastien Faure, Le problème de la population* (a pamphlet), p. 23. We might suggest to the lecturer that if the working-class had as few children as the middle-class—which he asserts himself are too few—the disappearance of society is at hand, and we cannot see how it will produce that famous "selection" so extolled by neo-malthusians. They tell us that henceforth society will be relieved of the offspring of idiots, inebriates, victims of hysteria, sickly people, criminals—in a word, of all abnormal persons; but as on the other hand the normal people will also be extremely sparing as to the number of their children, it will not be long before the world becomes a vast desert.

<sup>2</sup> The *Ligue de la régénération humaine* was founded in France in 1896 by Paul Robin, whose attempts at mixed education at the Cempuis orphanage are not forgotten; of it M. Solomon Reinach, member of the Institute, wrote that one might condemn it, but that "its condemnation will be inscribed on the statue which the future keeps for it." Since that time several monthly journals have been established to spread the doctrine. They have had various fates. The *Ligue* is affiliated to the *Bureau international néo-malthusien* founded at the Hague in 1910, the object of which is the diffusion of the doctrine throughout the world, and we are carefully informed that "the neo-malthusian propaganda is organised in Indo-China and China, where it appears to secure important results with great rapidity."

operates in the circles most suitable for it : the first, more philosophic and with literary attraction, takes chiefly as its means of action the novel, the theatre, and the daily journal ; it seeks to reach the middle-class ; the second, more scientific and closer to nature, aims rather at the proletariat, the manual workers in the factory, the mine, and the fields , it prefers to make use of public meetings, chats in cafés, penny pamphlets, and the small monthly journal. In both these ways what we may call the investment of our modern society goes on, and every year communication with the entrenchments of the sexual morality of civilized nations which were believed to be safe from attack becomes more difficult.

### III

While digging their trenches of approach, the two investing columns have, in addition, received the reinforcement of numerous recruits already enrolled under the banners of feminism. It would certainly be unjust to confound the whole feminist movement with either of the organizations which we have just been considering, and we are anxious, on the contrary, to repeat that such confusion seems to us as dangerous as it is unjust. But we should also be strangely deluded if we did not see, by the side of the feminism directed by the best of women, who grasp truly the rôle of the modern woman in a prosperous and organized society, another feminism, at once bourgeois and of the people, which seeks chiefly to free women from man-made law, without considering that certain precepts of that law are simply laws of humanity itself, of which the woman is as much an integral part as her associate. To some extent this feminism has been for a long time allied with the other movement, while the neo-malthusians, as we have seen, appeal forcibly to the tendencies, and the wish for emancipation, of the sex which nature seemed to have placed definitely under the yoke of maternity.

These feminist cohorts are resolutely set towards rebellion against sexual discipline, often without understanding the tactics of the women who lead them. The spirit of insubordination which animates them, the poor esteem, not to say the contempt, which they profess for domestic work and the calm life of home, the scarcely veiled contempt which they show to wives who are satisfied with the husband's professional income for their household needs—everything about them tends to detach the woman from the virtues which until now we have held to be the best privilege of her sex; and is it not often the very qualities of strength, robust vigour, personal dignity, economic capacity, and perfect sincerity, which they strive to develop in themselves, that—by a slight deviation from the straight road—turn to the detriment of moral discipline? This discipline claims sweetness, humility, generosity, joyous acceptance of modest duties; who will dare to say that these virtues obtain, even with the best educated feminists, the sympathy to which they are entitled?

The number grows continually of women whose moral temperament is such that it is impossible, when we look at them, to imagine them as true wives and mothers, and nothing tells us that it will be easy, as some people seem to say, to reconstitute the assemblage of qualities and virtues necessary to the upkeep of the race and the maintenance of family life. The profound forces of nature, and the innate or instinctive feminine tendencies are indeed alleged. "If one feared," writes Mlle. Zanta, "to see the disappearance of those sentiments which are the beauty of a woman's soul, to find no longer on the face of the earth those qualities of charm and feeling which are women's dower, we must ask from Stendhal an assurance and a hope. Has he not said on this very subject: It is as if one feared to learn that the nightingales would no longer sing in spring."<sup>1</sup>

The formula is a pleasant one, and Mlle. Zanta, in her twofold capacity of a woman and a doctor of

<sup>1</sup> Réponse à l'enquête de la Renaissance.

philosophy, is fully competent to discuss the question. Shall I say nevertheless that the answer, it seems to me, ought not to give social students the desired satisfaction? The eagerness which all schools show in invoking nature ought to make us suspicious of arguments which rely on it; and I have already expressed the opinion of philosophers on the modification, or even elimination, of instinct on contact with civilisation. On the other hand, when one has been present, as has happened to myself, at a riotous procession of women on strike, in 1917, or at neo-malthusian lectures specially addressed to women, one remains more convinced of the fidelity of the nightingale to his song than of women to the maternal vocation. Stendhal was a clever writer; but one does not go to him to learn sociology.

The support of these recruits cannot but increase the ardour and confidence of the assailants and yet the defenders of the besieged fort too often remain inert, and the weapons they use are inadequate to the exigencies of modern warfare. Either they fail to see clearly the tragic nature of the matter in debate, or, rather, they find themselves hindered by anxiety to maintain, at least with apparent loyalty, associates already engaged in equivocal business and whom the genuine teaching of moral integrity terrifies. Or, what is a still more deplorable supposition, but which we must have the courage to confess, they already submit to the influence of the forces which they are supposed to attack, and dare no longer approach certain delicate subjects, which a convention, silent but most definite, forbids them to handle; on any one of these suppositions which we believe must hinder them, the fact remains that the chiefs, leaders, and guides of the great army which declares itself loyal to the discipline of traditional morality, have not been willing, or have not known how, or have not been able, to organize the opposition, and to lead on their troops with the vigour and strength which could alone have ensured the victory.

As long ago as 1904, Georges Fonsegrive in his

forcible study, *Marriage et l'Union libre*, proved the insufficiency and mediocrity of the arguments which the defenders of the indissolubility of the marriage bond had opposed to the propaganda of Alfred Naquet and Alexandre Dumas *fils*, in the campaign of 1876-1884. It is not certain that their methods of controversy are any better to-day, and the question of indissoluble marriage requires a very different mode of defence. Thirty-five years, by which the terrible dynamic force of continual logic has profited, have rolled by, and several lines of defence are now in the enemy's hands.

Who would venture to say, for instance, that Catholics have given to young people, in their colleges and institutions, the robust instruction that was needed? Why was silence kept so obstinately on a subject of which, it seemed, one must never speak, although it was impossible not to be aware that it is the subject eternally discussed in the great schools, in the army, in the workshop, and behind the counter? Was it not Mgr. d'Hulst who, with his customary frankness, which is so little to the taste of many Catholics, cried one day, in speaking of the educational methods too often followed by the devoted masters of our colleges: "We ask for men, and they send us choir-boys!"

If the training of our young people is defective, what shall we say of the complaisance with which conjugal irregularities, which are known to be such, are allowed to continue? In M. Edouard Jordan's pamphlet, which I quote with assurance for the reasons already given, I note this passage: "I know, an excellent onlooker writes to me, parishes which are reckoned good, which have kept their parochial schools, which have conservative municipalities, and which calmly follow malthusian practices, while the Curé does not venture to raise the terrible question in the pulpit." Honest scrutiny does not permit us to doubt that the number of such parishes is considerable. Sometimes when a mission is preached it has happened that the villagers have pelted the saintly missionary with stones, and prevented him from finishing the mission, if he refused to

omit a sermon on conjugal morality.<sup>1</sup> If adults had received instruction more suited to the needs of the Faithful, we would not expect many among them to experience surprise, or even scandal, at hearing "a question treated by the priest in the pulpit or elsewhere which people do not seem in the least to suspect that the Church, the guardian of morality, regards as of supreme importance."<sup>2</sup>

God forbid that I should judge the moral responsibility of persons whose conduct has in some sense helped to create such a situation; but I may be allowed to say that the situation exists to the great prejudice of the interests of both the Church and the Country.

If we now pass on from the definitely Catholic group, to a much larger section of conservatives, "moderates," and "progressionists"—in a word to what was once

<sup>1</sup>What deplorable stories I could tell in this connection! In a Paris suburban parish, a Redemptorist Father was to preach a mission; he submitted in advance the list of subjects which he proposed to treat during the ten days of the mission, among them being that of chastity and anti-conceptionist practices in the married state. "Oh! Father," the Curé said to him, "you must omit that sermon; it is impossible for you to treat such a subject in a parish like this. Here the homes have no longer children, and the husbands would forbid their wives to come to Church if they thought that we concerned ourselves with their intimate conjugal relations." The good religious endeavoured, as we should expect, with arguments to make the Curé to reconsider his decision. He did not succeed, and as he looked on the sermon as absolutely necessary, the mission did not take place. The Protestant pastors, who, besides, have not the resource of sacramental confession, usually take the same line, and when in 1907 in my *Crise moral des temps nouveaux*, I brought the serious question of anti-conceptionist practices among married people before the attention of moralists, several were pleased to tell me, after reading the book, that I had been the first to draw their attention to a matter too much neglected hitherto.

<sup>2</sup>Must it be said, from information most strictly tested, that a certain number of priests entangle themselves, in spite of express replies from Rome, in a labyrinth of compromising casuistry, and thus swerve in the tribunal of penance, from strict teaching and Catholic morality? Moreover, a French Bishop lately told me how he had lately been obliged to find fault with the teaching on this point in his diocesan seminary. His professor of Moral Theology was in fact teaching that the opposition of Rome to practices tending to reduce the number of births was merely a question of form, for these practices had entered so deeply into the habits even of the Faithful, that it was not possible to maintain absolute prohibition much longer, and that within a few years Rome, better informed, would adopt another attitude.



called the great respectable party—one is obliged to acknowledge that the position taken up is much weaker still, and it is easy to understand the repeated and important successes of the enemy. The only difficulty is to choose which novels or plays to quote, the plot of which rests on adultery, divorce, the exploits of courtesans and their lovers; where is the novel or play which can teach our democracy moral discipline, or to love a well-established, robust, and prolific family? Such a subject seems only fit for young girls, and everybody, including the girls, knows how such literature has been neglected.

One can, certainly, recall the fact that Zola wrote *Fécondité*, and that M. Paul Bourget is the author of *Un Divorce*. But no one, even among the most fervent admirers of the former will maintain that the author of *Nana* and of *Germinal* was particularly careful, during his long literary career, to help in the maintenance of very strict sexual morality; and, as to M. Bourget, critics have noticed, before me, that the arguments which he advances against re-marriage after divorce tell equally against the re-marriage of a widower or a widow, so that his thesis partly gives an actual advantage to the enemies with whom we have to fight.<sup>1</sup>

We are then almost reduced to present a blank sheet in this respect, and it is impossible to be surprised when we remember the state of manners which we have tried to describe in the last chapter. If it is true that the French middle-class is throughout ravaged by the three-fold scourge of sexual intemperance on the part of its young men, by marriages contracted simply for money or out of vanity, and above all by systematic infertility, how can the men who are looked upon as the representatives of that middle-class, and those who are their

<sup>1</sup> I would add that the undoubted talent as a novel-writer that M. Bourget devotes to the service of the noblest moral ideas is always in danger of being misunderstood by a great part of the French public, whose unrestrained infatuation for the new spirit is as extreme as the strange affection of M. Bourget for certain traditional forms. The author of *Un Divorce* is also the author of *L'Étape*; and thus we fall again into the terrible misunderstanding which has been the bane of French society since the middle of the 18th century,

spokesmen and who give us pictures of them, conveniently defend the great moral principles of sexual morality?<sup>1</sup> Would it even be possible to recruit such champions?

The saying goes that we must not talk about ropes in the house of a man who has been hanged; would the *bourgeoisie* endure our talking of the duty to hand on life at the door of so many marriage chambers defiled by anti-conceptionist practices?

Besides, their novelists and men of letters have rather encouraged the neo-malthusian propaganda. It was a Sorbonne Professor who lately wrote that the principle of neo-malthusianism appeared to him "altogether praiseworthy, conformable no less to democratic justice than to true human charity." A member of the Academy refused to admit that it could be immoral to restrain deliberately the number of children by preventive means, and a member of the Institute did not even restrain his admiration: "The neo-malthusian propaganda," he says, "aims at substituting reflection for instinct, forethought for carelessness, *homo sapiens* for the brute . . . One may condemn Paul Robin, but his condemnation will be inscribed on the statue which the future is keeping for him."

Thus the opinion is confirmed and propagated that a highly civilized people is necessarily face to face with the sexual instinct of individual rights, and becomes inevitably less prolific, and there are still pedagogues who write in the *Revue de l'Enseignement primaire* of 17th May 1908: "We economists lament and regard as impotent the means taken to arrest what is called a scourge.

<sup>1</sup> It is however right to mention here a pleiad of young writers of talent, Ernest Psichari, the Péguy's, Claudels, Baumanns, and many others whose names cannot be given here, whose works have already attracted the attention of those anxious to follow the literary movement and the evolution of modern thought. But it is no injustice to these young writers to say that they do not yet exercise a decisive influence upon the course of contemporary moral teaching, and, besides, it does not seem that they are particularly interested in the great problems of family life and moral discipline. In this connection, to mention only one example, "L'Appel des Armes" by Ernest Psichari, is interesting to analyse.

Such efforts will not prevail against a natural law, for it is a law that a nation has less children in proportion as civilization becomes more advanced. The most backward countries are always the most prolific, the most cultured nations become less and less so." When the masters speak thus, the pupils can but follow; this is what the *Association Général des Etudiants de Paris* has done; its official bulletin reproduces with approval this shameful declaration, formulated into a thesis accepted by the Paris Faculty of Medicine: "We hope the day will come when without cynical boasting or false modesty we shall say: 'I had syphilis at twenty years old,' just as we say now-a-days, 'I have been sent to the hills for spitting blood.' Is not the first alternative preferable to the second? . . . Whoever has passed his youth without contracting those troubles which are as it were the price of pleasure, is but an incomplete being who through cowardice, a cold nature, or religious scruple, has missed the accomplishment of what is perhaps the least degraded of his natural functions."<sup>1</sup>

## IV

When an investing army finds that it has such allies in the very citadel which it is trying to take, it can count on complete success and has merely to prepare the final assault. With what enthusiasm and what certainty of victory the double column of assailants march to the fray!

A licentious moral standard and evil acts prepare the way only too well for the acceptance of licentious and undisciplined doctrines, and these in turn help on the extension of an evil standard and perverted actions; and this reciprocal service is continually accelerating the pace of the movement which is carrying us away.

Under the influence of a licentious literature and an immoral stage, divorce and adultery, anti-conceptionist practices and abortion, are acclimatised in our plan of

<sup>1</sup>Quoted by M. Guide in *l'Emancipation*, 1 June, 1913

life. Five-and-twenty years ago the very words aroused in the immense majority of people violent feelings of revulsion, even of profound horror and disgust. To-day, the whole system is accepted quite calmly, and even those who still protest—and happily they are many yet—do so with an indignation that the previous generation would have wished to be more vehement. The automatic reflexes have lost their vigour because the moral atmosphere has changed.

As to the neo-malthusian propaganda, we are sure enough of its perilous efficiency, and sometimes precise statistics enable us to measure the swiftness of the movements of the enemy who invests a place all of a sudden, and in a few months carries fortresses which we believed were impregnable. I will cite as examples five industrial towns which one after another became a field for his manœuvres and for the operations of the best soldiers of the neo-malthusian army. In the five districts the plan of campaign was identical.

A time of strikes and more or less general tumult is chosen. The town walls are covered with bills announcing public meetings; in the principal streets and at the cross-ways where there is much traffic, colporteurs distribute, in great numbers, prospectuses and “appeals to the working-people” like those which we have quoted. A band of enthusiastic lecturers arrives at the town, and gives many lectures in the public halls and talks in the cafés and breweries. The campaign lasts a longer or shorter time according to the importance of the town—sometimes for several months. Usually the dealers in special appliances help and develop it; when the band goes back, it will be accompanied by several comrades, good speakers to whom will be entrusted the task of caring for districts where the seed is not yet sown, and of cultivating it methodically.

Here are the results: Roubaix had 3,837 births registered in 1897; nine years later, in 1908, though the population had slightly increased, the number of births was only 2,568. At Tourcoing 2,445 were registered in 1898, while the number only reached 1,675 in 1906.

The birth-rate which, during the period 1889-1893, was 32 at Roubaix and at Tourcoing 34 per 1,000 inhabitants, fell to 27 for the period 1899-1903, and fell to the deplorable figures of 21 and 19 respectively during the years 1907-1908.

At Fougères, according to the official census, the population was 20,952 (of whom 280 were troops) in 1893, and 25,537 (including 610 soldiers) in 1906. The birth-rate was as follows :

In 1903	.	.	.	.	.	650 births.
" 1904	.	.	.	.	.	624 "
" 1905	.	.	.	.	.	554 "
" 1906	.	.	.	.	.	528 "
" 1907	.	.	.	.	.	505 "
" 1908	.	.	.	.	.	476 "
" 1909	.	.	.	.	.	409 "

The fall in the birth-rate thus reached 37 per cent. in seven years. It is a record.

In 1903 the civil "officier de l'état" of the commune of Creusot had registered 855 births for a population of 28,229 (30 per 1,000.) In 1904 only 592 births were registered for 30,000 inhabitants—a decrease of 34 per cent.

Finally, at Montceau les Mines, the information is not less instructive, as the following table of returns shows.

Years	No. of			Divorces : annual average for period	Population	% per 1,000 inhabitants	
	Births	Deaths	Marriages			Births	Deaths
1896	733	276	203	4	22,271	32.9	12.3
1897	750	313	182			33.6	14
1898	721	370	216			32.3	16.6
1899	812	405	197			36.5	18.2
1900	709	363	193	5	28,779	31.8	16.3
1901	727	348	171			25.3	12.1
1902	617	352	195			21.4	12.2
1903	568	321	181			19.7	11.1
1904	580	273	197	8	26,305	20.1	9.5
1905	500	319	193			17.4	11.1
1906	515	328	182			19.6	12.5
1907	404	340	208			15.3	12.9
1908	482	259	218	5	26,830	18.3	9.8
1909	452	289	213			17.1	10.9
1910	449	302	192			17	11.4
1911	400	278	195			14.9	10.3
1912	386	293	173			14.3	10.9

I beg the reader to bear in mind these facts, and to think at leisure over the lesson they convey, and to which we shall have to return. In what bold relief the social law of these phenomena stands out before us! These five industrial towns are situated in three districts of France which differ in the kind of industry followed and in the character of the inhabitants: yet they are all alike in their moral attitude towards the supreme act of the transmission of life. Under the pressure of uncontrolled instinct, of ignorance, custom, superficial feelings of shame, religious training, married people still accepted the duty of that transmission generously, but this submission to nature's intention did not correspond to deep moral dispositions of the heart and will. It only needed, at a time of strikes and popular restlessness, a propaganda, at once theoretical and commercial, to be cleverly organized, for the conscious and reflecting will at once to turn round and choose the way of sterility. Ten years before, in the course of a sociological survey, a superficial observer would have willingly praised the strong and prolific families of the working-people of Roubaix, Tourcoing, Fougères, Montceau-les-Mines, and Creusot. Yet the fertility of these families only hung on a hair more fragile than a spider's thread; to dry up the source of it there were needed only some lectures, the distribution of several thousands of pamphlets, and the offer of various preparations. A tragic and terrible lesson which deserves the attention of all good citizens.

Who would dare to deny that it is possible, even easy, to repeat with equal success elsewhere the experience which has answered so well for the neo-malthusian propagandists?

Unquestionably the campaign will be renewed with greater frequency and over a wider area. In the departments which still maintain a higher birth-rate everything, if one may say so, implores and solicits it; the ignorance of the population who must be taught the neo-malthusian doctrine: the increasing difficulty with which large families support the heavy burdens which their very fecundity lays on them: the growing

desire for enjoyment: the decay of religious feeling, which is often only a superficial observance incapable of resisting an "appeal to reason and reflection."

It is certain that such campaigns of intensive propaganda will be renewed, and even if the public authorities, whose inertness one cannot understand, interfere to prohibit them, it would be a mistake to think that the evil had been exorcised. Nothing would have changed in the psychological tendencies of our people; the "regenerators" would merely have been obliged to modify their propagandist methods, and to substitute secret action for their well-advertised public meetings. It would need rather more patience to wait for the harvest, but it is certain to be gathered, and patience is easy for one who has absolute certainty of the result.

How deceitful is the security that only depends on the people's ignorance or their habit of merely following instinct! If it is true (to use again a phrase already quoted) that conjugal fertility can henceforth be the lot of only imbeciles and saints, we affirm unhesitatingly that if our society is not prepared to increase the number of its saints, it is at least sure to procure the swift diminution of its imbeciles. Imbecility, in the peculiar sense which the word denotes in this connection, is an article which modern society scarcely possesses, because the conditions of its manufacture no longer exist.

Thus manners and theories, acts and teaching, help mutually to the acceleration and extension of this movement of moral indiscipline which is sweeping away our French democracy: statistics attest it, and methodical analysis of the phenomenon fully confirms the evidence.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE RESULTS :

#### THE GREAT SUFFERING OF THE FRENCH PEOPLE

“When you have to suffer, look your pain in the face. It will teach you something.” *Alexander Dumas, fils.*

“Those who believe that man’s happiness is in the body, and his misery in whatever hinders sensual pleasure—how they become satiated with it, and die of it !” *Pascal.*

WE are, then, being carried away by the movement of moral indiscipline towards new destinies. What are they? Is the future that opens before us one of progress and light, of beauty and growing spirituality, or of retrogression and darkness, of deformity and animalism that is ever demanding more? Is the indiscipline which has been established one of those fruitful revolts against antiquated rules, one of those beneficent rebellions which posterity remembers with gratitude because they were, at certain epochs, the necessary preliminary to its progress and its rise,<sup>1</sup> or is it not rather the old Adam which rises up within us against the rules whose very strictness is indispensable if we are to withstand the thrust of its bestial appeal? Are we face to face with an evil revolt against the discipline of safety and life?

<sup>1</sup>Why must this elementary truth be so often ignored by a great number of honest people who, because they do not recognize it, see their most disinterested apostolic and educational efforts smitten with sterility and impotence? After the example of their Master, Who had taught them “to obey God rather than men” the first Christians resisted the State authorities; what would have become of us if they had submitted to the social regulations of their time? Montalembert, in 1832, did an illegal act when he opened his primary school, and the brave men who initiated the numerous strikes under the Monarchy of July and the Second Empire, and whom Berryer defended so eloquently before the tribunal in 1862, on the very eve of the law of 1864, were also rebels. I cite these



Serious questions these, to which the reader has no doubt already given an answer, but which all the same can only, in a sociological study, be effectually answered by methodical observation of the facts and detailed tabulation of the results. <sup>1</sup>

## I

The reproduction of one single document would be a sufficient answer to our questions. Since for every society the first need is the recruiting of the units which compose it, is it not clear that France has entered on a path of ruin and destruction, if she does not succeed in securing an abundant increase of her people? There is not a Frenchman who is unaware of our deplorable situation: the tables already reproduced in this book reveal it, and the map here printed brings the lamentable statements still more into relief.

Undoubtedly this map, which teaches so much, and which ought to be hung in every one of our schools, is already well known; yet I beg the reader to ponder long over its painful lesson, adding to his meditation the study of the figures printed on the following pages. If he does not do this, the map, black as it is, will in fact run the risk of giving too optimistic

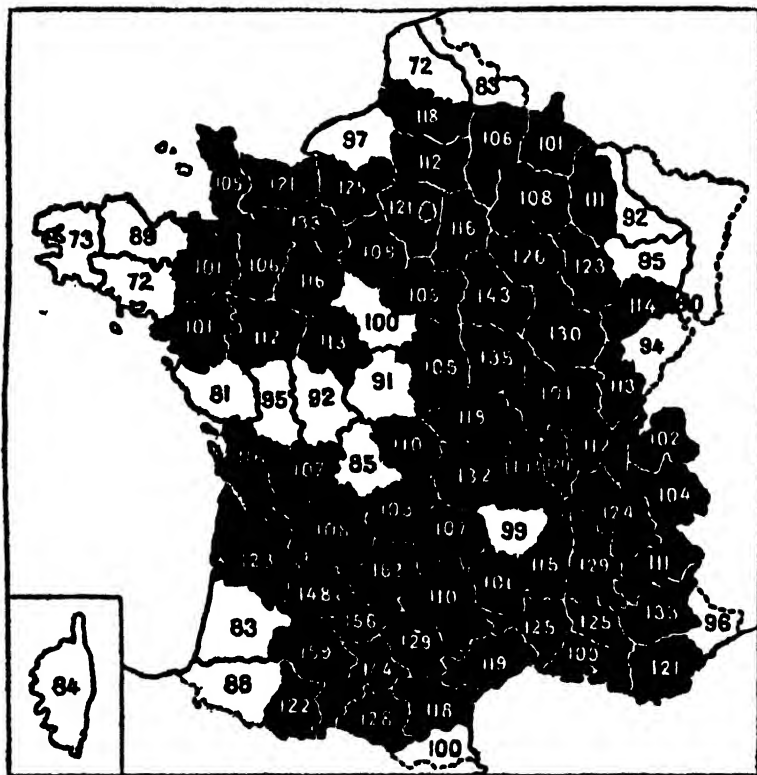
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examples because their moral and beneficial value can be disputed by nobody—would that we could add other names! It is taken for granted that people of our time are only too much inclined to rebellion and independence, and that therefore they must above all be trained to respect and submission; but, really, do we not see that the first condition of success consists precisely in loyally recognizing the truth as it is, and in not persisting, through cowardice or ignorance, in notions which, while not held to be dangerous are exceedingly so, since they lead astray the most vigorous and best informed spirits from the admirable teaching which has been handed down to us?

<sup>1</sup> We shall consider most particularly the results which affect society as a whole, omitting nearly always those which affect the individual, as we shall return to these in our concluding chapters..

## 158 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

an impression, and of helping to maintain this half-willing blindness, and the fundamental egotism which is certainly the worst scourge of our French democracy. The departments in which the deaths outnumber the births are marked in black, while those are left white, *not in which the birth-rate is sufficient*, but in which the births outnumber the deaths, if only by one. And moreover, of these departments, which have so far escaped the funeral tint, several are nevertheless at the very gates of death!



# THE RESULTS

159

## NUMBER OF DEATHS IN EACH DÉPARTMENT FOR 100 BIRTHS.

Ain . . . . .	112	Loire-Inférieure . . . . .	101
Aisne . . . . .	106	Loiret . . . . .	105
Allier . . . . .	119	Lot . . . . .	162
Alpes (Basses) . . . . .	133	Lot-et-Garonne . . . . .	148
Alpes (Hautes) . . . . .	111	Lozère . . . . .	101
Alpes-Maritimes . . . . .	96	Maine-et-Loire . . . . .	112
Ardèche . . . . .	115	Manche . . . . .	105
Ardennes . . . . .	101	Marne . . . . .	106
Ariège . . . . .	128	Haute-Marne . . . . .	123
Aube . . . . .	126	Mayenne . . . . .	106
Aude . . . . .	118	Meurthe-et-Moselle . . . . .	92
Aveyron . . . . .	110	Meuse . . . . .	111
Belfort . . . . .	80	Morbihan . . . . .	72
Bouches-du-Rhône . . . . .	109	Nièvre . . . . .	135
Calvados . . . . .	121	Nord . . . . .	83
Cantal . . . . .	107	Oise . . . . .	112
Charente . . . . .	107	Orne . . . . .	133
Charente-Inférieure . . . . .	116	Pas-de-Calais . . . . .	72
Cher . . . . .	105	Puy-de-d me . . . . .	132
Corrèze . . . . .	103	Basses-Pyrénées . . . . .	86
Corse (Corsica) . . . . .	84	Haute-Pyrénées . . . . .	122
Côte-d'Or . . . . .	130	Pyrénées-Orientales . . . . .	100
Côtes-du-Nord . . . . .	89	Rhône . . . . .	120
Creuse . . . . .	110	Haute-Saône . . . . .	114
Dordogne . . . . .	108	Saône-et-Loire . . . . .	101
Doubs . . . . .	94	Sarthe . . . . .	116
Drôme . . . . .	129	Savoie . . . . .	104
Eure . . . . .	125	Haute-Savoie . . . . .	102
Eure-et-Loire . . . . .	108	Seine . . . . .	104
Finistère . . . . .	73	Seine-Inférieure . . . . .	97
Gard . . . . .	125	Seine-et-Marne . . . . .	116
Gers . . . . .	159	Seine-et-Oise . . . . .	121
Gironde . . . . .	123	Deux-Sèvres . . . . .	95
Haute-Garonne . . . . .	144	Somme . . . . .	118
Hérault . . . . .	119	Tarn . . . . .	123
Ille-et-Vilaine . . . . .	101	Tarn-et-Garonne . . . . .	156
Indre . . . . .	91	Var . . . . .	121
Indre-et-Loire . . . . .	113	Vaucluse . . . . .	125
Isère . . . . .	124	Vendée . . . . .	81
Jura . . . . .	113	Vienne . . . . .	92
Landes . . . . .	83	Haute-Vienne . . . . .	85
Loir-et-Cher . . . . .	100	Vosges . . . . .	95
Loire . . . . .	103	Yonne . . . . .	143
Haute-Loire . . . . .	99		

# 160 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

Years	Population (Census or estimated) in millions	Marriages in thousands	Births in thousands	Deaths in thousands	Excess of Births over Deaths or vice versa (D)	RETURNS PER 1000 INHABITANTS			
						Marriages	Births	Deaths	Excess of Births over Deaths or vice versa (D)
An. ix. (1801)	27.4	198	903	761	142	7.3	32.9	27.8	5.1
1806	29.1	209	916	781	135	7.2	31.5	26.9	4.6
1810	29.6	232	931	730	201	7.9	31.4	24.6	6.8
1815	29.5	246	953	762	190	8.3	32.2	25.8	6.4
1821	30.4	222	965	741	224	7.3	31.7	24.3	7.4
1826	31.8	247	992	837	154	7.8	31.1	26.3	4.8
1831	32.5	245	986	800	186	7.5	30.3	24.6	5.7
1836	33.5	274	979	747	232	8.2	29.2	22.3	6.9
1841	34.2	282	976	794	181	8.2	28.5	23.2	5.3
1846	35.4	268	965	820	144	7.6	27.3	23.2	4.1
1851	35.7	286	971	799	172	8.0	27.1	22.3	4.8
1856	36.1	284	952	837	115	7.9	26.3	23.1	3.2
1861	37.3	305	1005	866	138	8.2	26.9	23.2	3.7
1866	38.0	303	1006	884	121	8.0	26.4	23.0	3.4
1870	36.9	223	943	1046	D 103	6.0	25.5	28.3	D 2.8
1871	36.5	262	826	1272	D 446	7.2	22.6	34.8	D 2.2
1872	36.1	352	966	793	172	9.8	26.8	21.9	4.9
1873	36.2	321	946	844	101	8.9	26.1	23.3	2.8
1876	36.9	291	966	834	132	7.9	26.2	22.6	3.6
1881	37.6	282	937	828	108	7.5	24.9	22.0	2.9
1886	38.2	283	913	860	52	7.4	23.9	22.5	1.4
1889	38.3	273	881	795	85	7.2	23.0	20.8	2.2
1890	38.3	269	838	876	D 38	7.1	21.9	22.8	D 0.9
1891	38.3	285	866	877	D 11	7.5	22.6	22.8	D 0.2
1892	38.3	290	855	876	D 20	7.8	22.4	22.8	D 0.4
1893	38.3	287	875	868	7	7.6	22.7	22.7	0.1
1894	38.4	287	855	815	40	7.5	22.5	21.3	1.2
1895	38.4	283	834	852	D 18	7.4	21.7	22.3	D 0.5
1896	38.5	290	866	772	94	7.6	22.5	20.2	2.3
1897	38.6	291	859	751	108	7.6	22.4	19.6	2.8
1898	38.7	287	844	810	34	7.5	22.1	21.2	1.0
1899	—	295	847	816	31	7.6	22.2	21.2	0.8
1900	—	299	827	853	D 26	7.7	21.8	22.4	D 0.6
1901	38.9	303	857	784	72	7.8	22.0	20.1	1.9
1902	—	295	845	761	83	7.6	21.7	19.5	2.1
1903	—	296	826	753	73	7.6	21.2	19.3	1.9
1904	—	299	818	761	57	7.6	21.0	19.5	1.5
1905	—	303	807	770	37	7.6	20.7	19.7	1.0
1906	39.2	306	806	780	26	7.8	20.6	19.9	0.7
1907	—	314	773	793	D 20	8.0	19.7	20.2	D 0.5
1908	—	316	791	745	46	8.1	20.2	19.0	1.1
1909	—	308	769	756	13	7.8	19.5	19.4	0.1
1910	—	308	774	703	71	7.9	19.5	17.9	1.6
1911	39.6	308	742	776	D 34	7.8	18.7	19.6	D 0.9
1912	—	312	750	692	51	7.9	18.9	17.5	1.4
1913	—	299	746	702	44	7.5	18.8	17.5	1.3

## ABSTRACT OF BIRTHS IN THE CITY OF PARIS, 1820-1913.

Years	Population	Births (living)	Deaths	Per 1,000 inhabitants	
				Births	Deaths
1820	729,371	24,858	22,464	34.0	30.8
1830	780,726	28,587	27,464	36.6	35.2
1840	928,071	30,213	28,294	32.5	30.5
1850	1,053,389	31,716	25,852	30.1	24.5
1860	1,571,924	51,056	41,261	32.4	26.2
1870	1,842,952	57,586	73,563	31.2	39.9
1880	2,189,703	56,052	55,706	25.6	25.4
1890	2,391,953	55,927	54,566	23.3	22.8
1900	2,630,773	55,923	51,725	21.2	19.6
1901	2,660,559	56,569	49,770	21.2	18.7
1902	2,672,993	55,365	49,070	20.5	18.3
1903	2,685,427	54,155	46,790	20.0	17.4
1904	2,697,861	53,459	47,954	19.5	17.7
1905	2,710,295	51,096	47,843	19.0	17.6
1906	2,722,731	51,171	47,969	18.8	17.6
1907	2,747,631	50,811	50,540	18.5	18.4
1908	2,772,530	50,826	48,168	18.3	17.4
1909	2,797,430	48,908	48,104	17.5	17.2
1910	2,822,329	49,275	45,814	17.5	16.2
1911	2,847,229	48,962	48,942	17.2	17.2
1912	2,872,128	48,277	47,059	16.8	16.4
1913	2,880,000	48,746	44,624	17.1	15.7

May those who are willing to understand, listen, and those capable of remembering, remember! All comment is superfluous. One can but shudder on reading that among 87 departments, 68—the huge majority, are on the road to voluntary death, and that less than 20 register more births than deaths. And the excess in several is so trifling that it cannot claim to be reckoned seriously, as is the case in Haute-Loire where the births exceed the deaths by 13, in Pyrénées Orientales by 6, in Loire-et-Cher by 15!

The truth is that ten departments alone sustain the heavy burden of preserving the French nation in existence; their families, still vigorous or almost sound, make up by their generosity for the selfishness which rages through all the rest. But as must be expected, the small army of prolific departments is not succeeding in keeping its ranks filled, and large families are becoming scarcer every year; one sees them, wearied out by their

gallant struggle that seems so useless, betrayed as it were by the national spirit, losing heart and powerless to promise themselves that security which every normal family ought to be able to claim in its own country. It is easy to show the growing rarity of large families, if instead of only presenting the returns at a given date, the successive returns of several dates are compared with each other.

Thus in 1885, the departments of Nord, Pas-de-Calais, Seine-Inférieure, Côtes-du-Nord, Finistère, Morbihan, Alpes-Maritimes, Bouches-du-Rhône, Pyrénées-Orientales, Aveyron, Lozère, Ardèche, Dordogne, Haute-Vienne and Corsica, had from 27 to 33 births for every 1,000 inhabitants; in 1905 there remained but three—Finistère, Morbihan, and Pas-de-Calais; in 1913 but one!

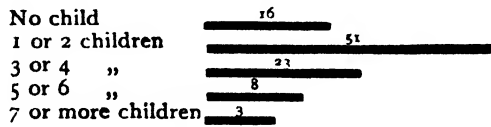
In 1885 there was only one department in which there were less than 16 births to every 1,000 inhabitants; in 1905, there were 12: Orne, Côte d'Or, Yonne, Nièvre, Gironde, Lot-et-Garonne, Gers, Hautes-Pyrénées, Ariège, Haute-Garonne, Tarn-et-Garonne, Lot; and in 1913 there were 17, since Allier, Cher, Creuse, Puy-de-Dôme, Rhône and Tarn had come to join the army of death.

In 1901, 33 departments reckoned more coffins than cradles; in 1905, the number had risen to 44; in 1911 to 65. Thus the leprosy spreads, and the onward march of the plague becomes ever more rapid.<sup>1</sup>

Here is a not less instructive document, which shows the average number of children to a family.

<sup>1</sup>See above (p. 160) the statistics of the birth-rate, which show that at the beginning of the 20th century our birth-rate only took 10 years to fall one per cent., while previously 20 or 25 years were needed for the same decrease.

Total No. of families	No. of families	Percentage of children
Families with no child	11,666,693	100
" " 1 "	1,686,915	14.6
" " 2 children	3,011,026	25.7
" " 3 "	2,557,949	23.0
" " 4 "	1,516,043	13.0
" " 5 or 6 "	880,914	7.5
" " 7 or more "	793,185	6.8
" not returned	331,072	2.8
	919,559	



Thus, out of 100 families 66 have no children or only one or two. In more than half the families of France there are fewer children than parents, fewer to fill the gaps than people whose business it is to fill them.<sup>1</sup>

We cannot even maintain a stationary position any longer; during the twenty-two years, 1890-1911—years with no war or epidemics—we have given the world of our day the amazing spectacle of a great nation, rich, cultivated, in possession of a splendid territory, which has failed to maintain its population in effective force. Of these 22 years, 7 showed a decrease of the population—the years 1890-91-92-95-1900-07-11—and at the close of each, anyone capable of reflection could say to himself: “On this soil of France, which I love with all the strength of my being, and in defence of which I am ready to give my life, the number of French people is less than it was on the 1st of January.”

I may be wrong, but for a patriot I know no more bitter or more distressing reflection than this; it makes one blush for shame and brings the tears to one's eyes.

<sup>1</sup>The average fertility of the whole of France is thus seen to be 2.7 children *born* in each family. How many of these grow up? After this inevitable allowance the figure falls to 2.2—almost exactly 2 children to a family. It is then by scarcely more than two children to each couple that a great nation reckons to make up for first of all the parents, then the childless marriages and all the unmarried people!

## 164 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

The returns which we have just given concern the whole of France and her demography as a whole; the inquiry could be conducted in another way, which, being more detailed, would only provide more distressing conclusions. It would consist in studying successively the demographic fluctuations of our various provinces, and showing the enormous decline of vitality and productive energy of most of them. I will take but one example—Normandy, one of our most famous provinces. We know her splendid history; she was at once so rich and so richly provided with vigorous and active young men that she sent the overflow of her population to conquer England and Sicily, Illyria and Dalmatia, Albania and Palestine; they swarmed to Canada, and landed on the shores of Guinea and Brazil; one cannot reckon the countries which the boys of Normandy have possessed as settlers; and every spring, from Dieppe to Granville, bountifully equipped flotillas left the ports to the accompaniment of the joyous songs of the emigrants.

These are contemporary statistics of her population :

Department	Population		Increase or Decrease
	1851	1901	
Calvados	481,000	396,000	— 85,000
Eure	399,000	324,000	— 75,000
Orne	423,000	307,000	— 116,000
Manche	591,000	476,000	— 115,000
Seine-Inferieure	790,000	877,000	— 87,000 <sup>1</sup>
Total Decrease			— 304,000

Thus, M. Gide wrote in 1914, "Normandy has lost in the course of 50 years more than 300,000 inhabitants,

<sup>1</sup>M. Charles Gide, from whom I have borrowed these figures, remarks that Seine-Inferieure is the only department showing an increase of population, thanks to the attraction of the great towns of Rouen and Havre. But if that department had followed the other four, the decrease would have been not 300,000 but 500,000 (*La France sans enfants*). If the analysis were pursued further, the result would become still more striking. It could be shown, for instance, how the inhabitants of such-and-such a little town in Lower Normandy who call themselves con-



that is to say, a population equal to that of the whole department of the Orne. Every 20 years she now loses the equivalent of a department, and as she includes but five, a century will be enough to see her fat meadows empty of Frenchmen—I say advisedly of Frenchmen, for assuredly others will come to occupy them, and it would be a pity were it otherwise. Germans work the iron mines round Caen, and for the first time, only yesterday, a vanguard of Chinese labourers landed where William the Conqueror set sail for England.”

How many other provinces are in no better condition!<sup>1</sup> In Quercy and Perigord, Saintonge and Burgundy, Provence and Gascony, and many other districts, death carries on his work and triumphs over life. From time to time the saddened witnesses of these ruins tell us of their anguish, as Dr. Emmanuel Labat has lately done in an admirable work which all good Frenchmen ought to read;<sup>2</sup> but their testimonies are scarcely listened

servatives, have scarcely proved themselves such as regards the vigour of their forefathers, and their fall is so deep that they have lost even the recollection of their ancient splendour. Are there many citizens of Coutances who know the glorious history of their city, from which the six sons of Tancred sprang forth to the conquest of Italy and the East? or do the graziers of Calvados, with their plump stomachs and faces merry with an easy life and systematic sterility, suspect that it was from their race that the illustrious Tourville sprang? Cf. also *Dépopulation en Normandie*, by Jean Guillouard, in the *Reforme sociale* of 1st November, 1904.

<sup>1</sup> Lot, in 1851, reckoned 296,224 inhabitants; 50 years afterwards, in 1901, it had no more than 226,720; 69,504 had therefore disappeared; 10 years later, in 1911, a fresh diminution of 20,951 was reported, which reduced the population to 205,769. Thus in 60 years the department has lost more than 30 per cent. of its population. The increasing rapidity of the fall will be noticed: it shows an average of 2095 per annum for the years 1901-11, an average much higher than that of the preceding 50 years (*La désolation de Quercy*, a Pastoral Letter by Mgr. the Bishop of Cahors.) Statistics of a minutely detailed kind will also be found in an excellent pamphlet by M. l'abbé G. Mugnier, of Langres Cathedral, *La Course à la Mort*: a study of the depopulation in Haute-Maine during the 25 years 1886-1911.

<sup>2</sup> *L'Âme paysanne*: Delagrave, Paris, 1919. An admirable, impartial, and judicious little book, in which a far-sighted and trustworthy physician relates the great desolation of the plain of Gascony. We quote this affecting passage at random:

to, for they interfere with enjoyment and would turn the eye from those scenes of adultery and debauch which make the fortunes of our novelists and dramatists.

Moving indeed these statements are ; yet they only assume their full significance when we compare them with the demographical position of foreign countries.

Nations, like individuals, are united by the bonds of a strict solidarity, which becomes even more strict from day to day. In vain can one of them, under the pretence of realizing I know not what puerile dream of humanitarianism, claim the right to follow a solitary way, without disturbing the advance of her neighbours ; pitiless chastisements will soon recall to her the bonds which unite her with her sisters in the great human family, and whatever may be her desire, she is always forced to ask herself where she stands with regard to them in her numbers and her strength.

Until the middle of the nineteenth century, in spite of already notorious losses, such a comparison told altogether to our advantage ; the demographical position of France, as compared with that of the other three great European Powers, was as follows :

In 1789	France	numbered	26,000,000	inhabitants.
„ „	Great Britain and Ireland	12,000,000 „		
„ „	the German Empire	28,000,000 „		

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“ Our land is always excellent ” . . . and yet “ the old roof is falling in on the empty cottages, because no more children are born there. The trouble of Gascony is well-known, and alas ! it is to be found elsewhere. Within my practice, in a certain village, two shops stood side by side ; in one of them the most charming business was carried on by a woman who made, with artistic feeling, caps for baptisms ; customers were said to come from a great distance. In a pretty window stood rows of little doll models, on their heads white caps with red and blue roses, some trimmed with one row of lace, some with many—already, before the impressive equality of Baptism, typical of the future inequality of life ! The modiste, in order to make a living, was compelled to become a confectioner. Cheeses, chocolates, sausages, have banished the caps from the window ; there is only one to be seen, hiding itself in a corner, soiled with waiting, ashamed of its surroundings. In the other shop a joiner told me his troubles : trade comes no more his way, the peasants buy ready-made furniture ; he has no work except repairs, and would die of hunger except for the coffins, which still ply a thriving trade.

Austria and Prussia, which formed part of the German Empire, numbered respectively 18,000,000 and 5,000,000 people.

The four great Powers thus comprised about 72,000,000 of people, the proportion belonging to France being 36.5 per cent.

In 1814 the following was the position.

France had 29,500,000 inhabitants  
 Great Britain and Ireland 19,000,000 inhabitants.  
 Austria 30,000,000 inhabitants.  
 Prussia 10,000,000 inhabitants.

The French population still comprised 35 per cent. of the total population of the Great Powers.

In 1880 :

France numbered	37,200,000
Great Britain and Ireland	34,800,000
Austria	39,000,000
The German Empire	45,600,000
Italy	28,600,000

In 1913 :

France	39,500,000
Great Britain and Ireland	46,000,000
Austria-Hungary and Bosnia	53,000,000
The German Empire	68,000,000
Italy	36,500,000

The fall is deep and rapid ; in 1913 the population of France only represents 16 per cent. of the population of Western Europe, without taking account of the huge Russian population, nor of the Balkan nations whose military strength must nevertheless not be ignored.

"The men of my generation," wrote M. Charles Gide, "have seen in the short space of one man's life the population of France passed, about 1865, by that of Germany ; about 1880 by Austria-Hungary ; about 1895 by England ; and now it is Italy's turn ! They have known, within fifty years, an Italy which had but 25,000,000 inhabitants, and which France treated with

## 168 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

the protecting familiarity of a great lady who gives her hand to a little child. To-morrow, or the day after, France will need to go on tip-toe if she is to give her hand to Italy."

How could it be otherwise, when one considers that in 1910, one of the last years in which there was not an absolute deficiency in the French birth-rate, the *net gains* in population achieved by various European Powers were as follows :

Germany	880,000	births in excess of deaths			
Austria-Hungary	770,000	"	"	"	"
Italy	460,000	"	"	"	"
Great Britain	410,000	"	"	"	"
Netherlands	90,000	"	"	"	"
France	70,000	"	"	"	" <sup>1</sup>

Thus, for Germany only, the annual *excess* of births over deaths is 100,000 above the *total of all our births!*<sup>2</sup>

All these statements are only too true. Not only does the population of France remain stationary and even tend to decrease, but this stagnation is taking place in a Europe whose increase of population surpasses the increases recorded in previous centuries so much that it produces, to our hurt, so marked a destruction of international equilibrium as to become absolutely calamitous.

<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that these phenomena may be expressed in endless ways : the result is always the same. Here is another way :

100 Germans in 1871	had become	161	in 1910
100 English	"	146	"
100 Austro-Hungarians	"	137	"
100 Italians	"	129	"
100 French	"	109	"

<sup>2</sup> In 1850 the population of France was greater than that of Germany. In 1860 the two populations were still equal. In 1872 the population of Germany was slightly higher than that of France. In 1911 that of France was only three-fifths of that of Germany ; and before the war of 1914 the statisticians calculated that in 1926, if the rate of increase remained the same on both sides—a mere bagatelle on the one, and "colossal" on the other—Germany would have a population exactly double that of France. It was calculated that within seventy years, 1855-1925, Germany would have doubled her population and that, at the end of that period, ours would be nearly equal to the half of hers.

To tell the truth, the results of this diminution of our human capital are so varied and so serious that it would be quite impossible to record them all, since nothing less than an indefinite series of all departments of our social system would have to be passed in review. We limit ourselves to showing what have been the repercussions of this decline of our birth-rate upon the chief elements of our national greatness and prosperity ; we shall first attempt to gauge our international position and our rank in the world ; then, in the second place, we shall seek to analyse the influence exercised by this great demographic phenomenon upon the working of our interior and domestic life.

## II

To state first, that our international position in 1914 was not what it had been in the middle or at the end of the nineteenth century is to state a truth so evident, after the returns which have been given, that I need scarcely labour the point. Who, for instance, will maintain that the military power of a nation on land and sea has nothing to do with that nation's international situation, with her diplomatic action, with the value attached to an alliance with her, to the fear (the beginning of wisdom!) which her rightful claims can arouse, or, in fine, to the loyalty which is accorded to engagements made with her? To maintain anything of the kind would have been, before 1914, culpable levity ; to defend it to-day would be a crime. Then, since in spite, or perhaps because, of the extraordinary perfection of the technique and the implements of war, it is still clear that physique is still the chief element in an army's power, it is obvious how the fall in our birth-rate and the increase of venereal diseases have injured the living strength of our forces. Even before the great conflict we had so little doubt as to the need of stringent measures to make

## 170 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

up for the numerical inferiority of our annual quota of recruits, that the law of August 9, 1913 had raised the length of military service to three years: France did not feel herself safe with an army of 530,000 men in the face of Germany's 900,000. But soon the sorrowful experience of August 1914 came to show at once the necessity of this measure and its deplorable insufficiency.<sup>1</sup> A soldier who is three years in barracks in time of peace and gives the false impression that he fills the places of three soldiers who would only be there for one year each, only counts as one in war, as was evident in the Belgian retreat and the invasion of our departments of the North. The German torrent flowed in twelve days almost beneath the walls of Paris.

The military science of our commanders, the heroism of our soldiers, saved us at the battle of the Marne, and, thanks to the British alliance, the Teuton rush could not win the victory of which it believed itself certain. But what Frenchman would dare to be sure that the issue would have been the same if France alone had been engaged in a duel with Germany? And yet there was a time—we need only look back eighty years—when the French army had nothing to fear from the Prussian, while the German navy was as yet a mere name.

The international situation of a people does not depend only on its military power: other elements help to establish it, notably the spread of its language and civilisation, the development of its colonial dominion,

<sup>1</sup> With regard to everything that relates to the wilful restriction of the birth-rate and the national defence, I venture to refer the reader to the pamphlet I published in the spring of 1913, under the auspices of the "Comité Français pour le relèvement de la natalité" which I founded with several friends in 1912. This committee, which soon after published the first number of the journal *Pour la Vie* (15th January 1914) published in 1913 three other pamphlets of one of which nearly 100,000 copies were circulated, giving a thrilling picture of the injury caused to our national life by the fall of our birth-rate. The author is the distinguished Professor of Political Economy in the Strasbourg Faculty of Law, M. Paul Gemähling; the title "La Décroissance de la natalité et l'avenir de la France." I have made several extracts from it in preparing this chapter.

and the expansion of its foreign commerce. On all these counts our falling birth-rate, our lack of men, than which Mirabeau said nothing could be worse, stay our advance, and we are even beginning to lose ground.

Speaking of our depopulation, one of our greatest historians said lately: "I do not know whether France will live or die, but I know well that her extremities are already cold." And reviewing the marches of France, Belgium, Luxembourg, Alsace, Switzerland, and Italy, he stated that all round our country, which formerly shone out and advanced her influence on every side beyond her political frontiers, our race and our language are disappearing.<sup>1</sup> In their place the German language and influence have been substituted, and when the war came we could see the truth of what all who really wished to be well-informed had known long enough—namely, that all along the German frontier and often far beyond it, German influence, and sometimes German domination, reigned supreme.

<sup>1</sup>We have been much occupied in France since the war with the left bank of the Rhine. It is not sufficiently known how far all the Rhenish lands were still under French influence in the 18th century. At Trèves, for instance, French was the general language and the University was wholly under the influence of French culture (See Julien Rovère, *Les survivances françaises*, Paris, 1918; Louis Madelin, *Le Rhin français*, *Revue des Deux Mondes* 1 December 1918).

An anonymous correspondent of *La Réforme sociale* (1916, p. 255) has recently told the tragic story of a French family: as the account is unusually instructive it seems appropriate to recapitulate it briefly.

It concerns a family of master iron-workers, the G's. The founder of the house, Pierre G., was born at Goffontaine, near Verviers, and followed his studies at Trèves University, then altogether "impregnated with French influence." After taking his degree he established himself at Sarrelouis, a fortress recently built by Vauban, and of which he became mayor under Louis XV. As coal and iron abound in this district, Pierre G. "constructed furnaces." In 1752 he established steel works in the neighbourhood of Sarrelouis, and in remembrance of his native country he named the hamlet which rose around the factory, Goffontaine. He died in 1758, leaving eleven children.

In 1794 his two eldest sons, Henry and Pierre, supplied the armies of the Republic with sabres and bullets. Then came the invasions of 1814 and 1815. In March 1914, although the first treaty of Paris, which fixed the limit of the frontier, was not yet known, Pierre G. went to Paris to seek information on a point which troubled his patriotism so keenly that he said to Berrayer, pressing his hand: "My friend, understand well that if fate makes me a Prussian, I am a dead man. Adieu!"

This humiliating French retreat was inevitable : at the time when the great European, and even Asiatic, nations were sending every year over the world an ever-increasing flood of emigrants and traders, France, exhausted by the deficit of her birth-rate, ceased all emigration, and jealously kept her children, who had become home-birds and timid, for her own home land. This turning back upon herself and shrivelling up of her strength, which seemed a losing hazard amid the splendid development of the world's traffic, has had incalculable results and caused irreparable loss. In Voltaire's time, for instance, one-fourth of Europe spoke the French language. To-day scarcely a tenth—about 50,000,000 people—are accustomed to use it. The other nine-tenths know nothing of our beautiful tongue ; scarcely a trifling hand-

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In 1815, after the second invasion, the sovereignty of Sarrelouis and Goffontaine was ceded to Prussia. When G. knew this for certain he shut himself up in his study, wrote his will with the greatest lucidity, addressed a touching letter to his wife, which he signed "G., died a Frenchman," and having arranged all this he took a pistol and fulfilled the fatal oath which he had taken the year before.

His brother Henry wished to remain both a Frenchman and an industrial magnate ; as the import duties in France were prohibitive—60 per cent. *ad valorem*—he built in 1827 the steel-works of Sarralbe near the Sarregue mines. His sons Henry and Alexandre, who were educated at Ecole Centrale in Paris, considerably developed the family business. At Hombourg-Haut, on the railway between Metz and Forbach, they built a great steel factory which supplied a French clientèle.

Forbach, Hombourg, Metz—the war of 1870 stopped all these undertakings. Several of G.'s children fell like heroes, and for the second time in less than sixty years this French family had to submit to annexation : the factory at Goffontaine was sold for a tenth of its value, because of the condition imposed on the purchaser that steel should not be worked there.

A new factory, where all branches of the industry were carried on, was built at Dieulouard, a village of the department of Meurthe-et-Moselle, between Nancy and Metz ; some of the former Hombourg workmen, who had also clung to their French nationality, formed the nucleus of the employés.

In 1914, for the third time, the Hombourg factory again fell into German hands ; Dieulouard, only six kilomètres from the trenches, was often bombarded ; out of 600 workmen 200 continued to carry on the industry ; their chief was not with them, he had gone to the front, where he was wounded twice. He waits for the day when he will go back to his ancestral iron-works, trusting that his children will never know the miseries of a fresh invasion.



ful know a smattering of it, out of curiosity or snobbishness. On the other hand, the English language, which at the beginning of the nineteenth century was that of only 40,000,000, is to-day understood and spoken all over the world by 160,000,000, and the German tongue by 120,000,000, of whom 20,000,000 are outside Europe. Our language thus takes a place behind Chinese, English, Russian, German, Spanish, Japanese, and soon will be behind Italian, and in proportion as it retreats, there retreat along with it both our influence and the radiance of our culture.<sup>1</sup>

If instead of listening to the sonorous and empty talk of professional wheedlers of the public conscience, we took the trouble to gauge the decline of our influence in the world during the second half of the nineteenth, and the first thirteen years of the twentieth century, we should be so dismayed at the results that we should hesitate to admit their evidence. Who speaks, for instance, of the decline of our fame in the eastern Mediterranean and the Levant, at Peking, at Tokio, and

<sup>1</sup> The decline of our birth-rate has also had the most grievous effect upon the French publishing trade. Who has not heard of the phenomenal prosperity of the Leipzig trade? "German superiority," writes M. Edouard Jordan, professor at the Sorbonne, "becomes at times a practical monopoly, with regard to works of reference, dictionaries, bibliographical works, encyclopædias, statistical tables, annuals, great treatises, maps, travellers' hand-books, collections of classical and modern authors. French is no longer the chief language for scientific works; which can only result from the fact of the greater number of workers, which causes German scientific output to be so much beyond French, in quantity." (*L'industrie du Livre et le nombre*, in "Pour la Vie" for January, 1917.) The decline of our literary output is so marked that our course for literary degrees and fellowships includes authors of which no French edition exists. A young French publisher, M. Jean-Paul Belin, recently told at a public meeting (*Bulletin de la Société d'encouragement pour l'industrie nationale*, May-June 1917) how when studying for their degree, he and his companions were obliged to procure from Germany a text of Andocides, *De Mysteriis*, which was one of the prescribed books, and he added: "It would have been a great risk to print an edition for the few students who took their degree [in this school] in Paris during the three years that this book remained on the list." That is evident, but what would our great ancestors, our poets and prose authors, our linguists and novelists of the 17th and 18th centuries say of us, if they returned to France? Would they find that we had traded to advantage with the legacy they had left us?

in the Far East?<sup>1</sup> We know what was the German supremacy at Constantinople during the twenty years before the war, but we forget that for at least sixty years no one challenged our possession of the first place in the Ottoman capital. For several centuries Marseilles was, practically, the only great market with which that empire had established commercial relations, and when in the eighteenth century the Sultan signed to the advantage of Louis XV., the famous capitulation of 1740, he could not find terms sufficiently pompous to express the sentiments of admiration and gratitude which he felt for "the Emperor of France;" it was, too, under the flag of this "Emperor," as a protecting emblem, that shelter was afforded to the traders and travellers of every country which was not yet officially represented at Constantinople.

If we turn our attention to the New World, do we not see the ancient hearths of French civilization cold because they have not been kept up by fresh supplies? In Canada and the valley of the Mississippi, in Mexico and the South American republics, French industry, manners, and thought lately held a preponderating influence. It was necessary that French envoys should come to maintain those relations and nourish those sympathies. The expected envoys did not come, and in their place there landed others who sometimes were far from being our friends.

It will be replied that in compensation for this decline of French influence and culture in relation to the foreigner, our country has at least won a fine colonial empire; but one would be blind not to see that the realization of this great dominion overseas presents exactly those formidable problems which we are not in a position to solve. Not only do our French Antilles languish in the misery

<sup>1</sup>At the beginning of 1919 the director of one of our most powerful smelting concerns wrote to me: "Yesterday again I was begged to help in forming a company for the expansion of French trade in the Far East: I did not dare to associate myself with the movement because of people's present poverty and absolute want of confidence in the future. Why begin a work which one knows will fail for lack of workers; why undertake the construction of a building for which one has the materials but can find no masons to build?"

of neglect by the side of the English Antilles, so rich and prosperous; our New Caledonia, cuts a pitiable figure by the side of the British Colonies of Australia; our Indo-China, is encroached upon by the Chinese, Japanese, and Germans; but even at the very gates of her metropolis Algeria sees, in several of her districts, Spanish colonization prevailing over French colonization, while in Tunis, among 175,000 Europeans, were reckoned, in 1911, 50,000 French, 109,000 Italians, 12,000 Anglo-Maltese, etc. When by the annexation of Morocco, our magnificent French North Africa was established, the vast immigration of races other than our own created a problem which is bound to grow more and more painful, and the very means we have taken to meet the difficulty—that is, by naturalization—can but increase it, since it must lead to political power passing to those in competition with us. While we seek the remedy, the foreign occupation goes on its way, and it is a historical law that in every country occupied by mixed races political power, sooner or later, goes to the race that cultivates the soil.

Thus our colonies, which were won by the heroism of our explorers and our soldiers, which we have pacified and which we administer, are sadly in danger of remaining undeveloped for lack of workers, capital, and managers, or are on the way to be developed and occupied by others.

How can we escape this alternative when we see that our reduced birth-rate deprives the very frontier of the mother-land of the living barrier which can alone protect her soil from the slow infiltration of the foreigner, which is no less threatening to a nation's independence than the invasion of an army. Nations, it has been said, are like connecting vessels whose water-level tends to equalize itself; and before the war the compact populations of neighbouring countries already pressed upon us more and more, and already "fused" across our frontiers.

The number of foreigners residing in France has more than doubled in 50 years; at the census of 1911 it

## 176 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

reached 1,300,000.<sup>1</sup> There was, therefore, one foreigner to every 32 French people. But that is only an average; in some departments the proportion is much higher: there is one foreigner to every 5 French in Bouches-du-Rhône, to 8 in Meurthe-et-Moselle, to 10 in Nord, and in the department of the Seine itself one foreigner to every 19 of ourselves.<sup>2</sup>

We have learnt since the war, thanks chiefly to the vigorous campaign of M. Leon Daudet and *L'Action Française*, what danger might exist for our country in the presence of so large a number of foreigners whom our enfeebled race is not able to assimilate; but no one has yet pointed out an adequate means by which we can protect the future against a return of this danger. France reckons 74 inhabitants to the square kilometre, Belgium 243, Switzerland 91, Germany 123, Italy 121.

<sup>1</sup> We do not include in this the naturalised citizens, who numbered about 223,000, and who are far from being wholly assimilated, nor workmen resident abroad and crossing the frontier daily to their work in France, the number of whom is estimated at about 300,000.

<sup>2</sup> This proportion of foreigners was nowhere higher than in the district of Briey, where the number increased by about 10,000 yearly for some time before the war: 49,255 in 1911, 61,108 in 1912, 70,000 in 1913, and this increase was in excess of the increase of the whole population, which means that the French population was being driven back. The report of the chief mining engineer for 1913 says:

“The Italians have not only supplied the increase of the working population, but they have actually driven back the French workers. While the total effective force has risen from 16,415 to 17,326, the French have gone down from 5,806 to 5,321. The proportion of French workmen in the district has therefore fallen from 25 per cent. to 21 per cent.”

The report concludes philosophically: “This state of things is in no way prejudicial to France, for poverty is always the lot of the manual labourer.”

What this engineer does not say is that millions of francs are sent to Italy for the up-keep of families whose many children will to-morrow be a menace to our settlements of Tunis and Djibouti, instead of being employed to bring up stout lads of France; and that it is not only in the depths of the mine or around the great furnaces that the foreigner is to be found; we find him everywhere: as inn-keeper, of course, as contractor and builder, mason, glazier, carpenter, wine and provision merchant, hair-dresser, hawker, tradesman of every description. (Cf. *Natalité et main-d'œuvre dans le bassin de Briey*, by M. C. Hottenger in *Pour la Vie* for February 1917.)

This is a fact that must not be forgotten and must be remedied.<sup>1</sup>

Finally, the decline of our birth-rate has caused irreparable loss to a certain category of our external relations which, while not exactly the most ideal or immaterial, nevertheless influences greatly our moral influence in the world, our dynamic force and our good name; I mean our international, commercial and business relations. The international Exchanges do not include a country's whole commerce, any more than her export of manufactured goods represents her industrial power; yet governments and public opinion have for long rightly attached great importance to the development of foreign commerce, above all with regard to exports. In the great international markets business men of different nations can measure themselves with each other, and the client's preference is a verdict of which neither the impartiality nor the competence can be disputed; it is a kind of permanent competition is open and only the strong carry off the prize.

It can be no mystery to anyone that the foreign commerce of France has not benefited in proportion to that of the great Powers with whom we cannot cease to compete unless we desire commercial ruin.

In 1874 France was still the second commercial Power in the world; surpassed only by Great Britain and in advance of Germany and the United States.

In 1911 she found herself relegated to the fourth place (14,000 million francs), surpassed by England (26,000 million), Germany (22,000 millions), and the United States (18,000 millions).

In 1913 French foreign commerce reached 15,300

<sup>1</sup> Of course, in conformity with our stubborn tendency to live and think in the artificial, conventional, and unreal, there were plenty of learned politicians and publicists to reassure us and hold up to our gaze the advantage of these naturalisations. In good time we and others discovered that this cure cured nothing; the war showed too soon, alas! that our foresight was correct, and now the very men who lately extolled most loudly the benefit of it are the most urgent in demanding its decrease. This recantation on their part is not surprising, but what is less comprehensible is the docility with which the public continues to listen to the "wise counsels" of these wretched impostors.

millions, while that of Germany rose to 25,500 millions.

If we only take the exports into account we find that those of Germany rose from 2,859,400,000 marks in 1885 to 8,957,000,000 marks in 1912; and comparing the exports of the other three great industrial Powers we find that from 1898 to 1913 the exports increased by 95 per cent. in France, by 100 per cent. in the United States, by 115 per cent. in England, and by 168 per cent. in Germany.<sup>1</sup>

Why should we, of those four competitors, be the one least successful in increasing our markets? To be sure, endless explanations are offered: our lack of initiative, the defects of our consular *personnel*, our stay-at-home ways, our too highly developed artistic sense, which diverts us from the manufacture of everyday articles on a large scale, and so on. The one thing we must *not* say is that such of these as are really efficient causes are the very ones which urge us to our deplorable system of voluntary sterility, or are the product of it; it would put the case still more simply to say that if Germany in 1913 had a foreign trade of 25,500,000,000 francs, she had also at that date a population of 67,000,000; while if France had a foreign trade of only 15,300,000,000 francs, her population was only 39½ millions, and a very little calculation will show that the commerce of France was greater, per head, than that of Germany: 385 francs and 380 respectively.

The first and real cause of our inferior advance in foreign trade is therefore always the same, our *deficiency in births*, for this reason we have in our country fewer leaders of industry, engineers, foremen, manual labourers, merchants and export agents. Foreign countries which have no longer any French inhabitants and which are

<sup>1</sup> Even these figures give a very inadequate idea of the real state of affairs and if space permitted we could show that in some markets the development of our foreign commerce, compared with the enormous development of that of our rivals, amounts to a veritable shrinkage.

neglected by French commercial travellers, no longer send us orders.<sup>1</sup>

With our foreign trade our mercantile marine also diminishes, its difficult and hopeless condition is well enough known; and these two sources of weakness take effect in the decline of our national glory, renown of our name, and of the influence of our language and culture.

### III

Thus all witnesses agree that all the phenomena tend in the same direction, hanging on, if one may so express it, to the one motive and regulating phenomenon, that of the birth-rate and moral discipline; our international position was worse in 1914, from many points of view, than it had been fifty or a hundred years before. But it would show a lack of comprehension of the neo-malthusian teachers if we imagined that they would admit the demonstrative value of these arguments. Our novelists and play-writers are content to ignore them, thinking, no doubt, that such "details" would not interest the people who have undertaken the mission of guiding humanity in its struggle for freedom and its search for happiness. Our high officials, our ministers

<sup>1</sup> " . . . Of the special causes of the weakness from which we are suffering the most powerful is the lamentable arrest of the growth of our population. The deficient birth-rate (one cannot repeat it too often) cripples our productive power, and we cannot hope to meet this by a more intensive use of machinery, since all countries compete largely by means of machinery. It hinders us, besides, from spreading over the world, from multiplying the centres of our influence and commercial propaganda. Finally—and here is one of its most deplorable results—it deprives our home market of the elasticity which would be so valuable, it exposes us to crises of over-production, while the great neighbouring States, finding in the constant increase of their population the elements of a steady and ever growing clientèle, can develop their means of action with more security, and sustain without so much loss the variations of the foreign market." (Report to the Minister of Commerce and Industry for 1911, by M. Alfred Picard, president of the permanent Customs Commission. *Annales du commerce extérieur*, 1911, part 6, pp. 85, 86.)

and political high-priests, go on balancing sonorous phrases which calmly celebrate "the glorious upward progress of France these last forty years under the beneficent sway of science, progress and solidarity." Meanwhile the neo-malthusians, slightly less ignorant of scientific procedure, think themselves bound to answer an objection of which they feel the full force.

No doubt, they say, restrictive practices may for a time place French society in a position inferior to that of foreign countries, but there is nothing in this temporary disadvantage to make us seriously anxious, for it secures us ample compensation in the future ; and in any case the moralist need not be troubled, since the characteristic of great moral inventions is always to upset the people, or the classes of people, who are the first to accept them as their rule of life. We cannot reckon the "martyrs" whom the spirit of routine, idleness, and egotism, has forced to expiate the daring with which they have disturbed the lazy quiet and laid down the new paths. "What pleases me about France," Jules Lemâitre wrote, "is that everything happens there a hundred years sooner than elsewhere." This historic mission of our country is not without its dangers,<sup>1</sup> but who would wish to refuse the honour? Besides the neo-malthusians offer ample compensation to those whom this does not satisfy.

<sup>1</sup> With a view of diminishing these dangers of a too great "advance," M. G. Hardy, manager of the *Neo-Malthusien*, addressed, 19th October, 1916, a letter to the Government of National Defence, in which having predicted that "fresh slaughters" must be expected "if the Germans persist in having children without discretion," if they continue to be the increasing, overflowing, aggressive people they have always been ; that "the French have consistently shown themselves to be the least exaggerated of mankind in the question of the birth-rate, and consequently, in spite of certain appearances, the most fundamentally peaceful and civilized ;" the author proceeds to declare that the only way to avoid a new cataclysm is "to reduce the mischievous increase of the too prolific nations." He would therefore make it his business, after the war, or even at once, to spread over Germany, by hundreds of thousands, popular pamphlets, explaining in plain language the measures of "parental prudence" such as Paul Robin published in France. "To make this useful propaganda attractive (it is the safeguard of the world's peace) I ask leave to distribute among the prisoners in our internment camps the enclosed prospectus and the practical pamphlet which it recommends, and which I published in Paris, in German (*Mittel zur*



We are no longer, they say, in the period when it was believed that society had the right to sacrifice the individual to the supposed collective weal. The human personality is in itself and by its own worth an end and has a right to happiness, to the full expansion of its being. Now, prudence as to the number of one's family is necessary to this well-being, this individual happiness.

I know that this neo-malthusian argument, applied to support a similar theme, usually appears so revolting that one refuses even to examine it. But in a book in which we have resolved never to yield to the impulses of mere sentiment, we should not permit this system of the preliminary question, and we willingly recognize with M. Ruysen that the opponents of neo-malthusianism should "take into account the narrowness of the ground on which they usually carry on their polemic." Their arguments—"to discuss them logically, lose in their general scope what they gain in the particular point. If it is in fact the national danger that makes us severe upon the voluntary restriction of our birth-rate, do we not judge altogether differently the neo-malthusian propaganda among our neighbours?"<sup>1</sup> How zealously, before

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*Schwangerschaftsverhütung, How to avoid Pregnancy*, 104 pages and 39 illustrations) several months before the present happenings. It will win the same success, I have no doubt, among them as it has won in Germany since its publication. I leave besides, at the service of the Government any pecuniary advantage that may be realized. After the war these prisoners will undoubtedly benefit their countrymen by the instructions they will have received."

We may usefully compare with this strange letter the not less strange remarks of M. Engerand, conservative deputy for Calvados, in describing the dangers of Germany's excessive birth-rate. "Like the barbarians," he writes, "Germany prides herself on her physical force, and also like them needs to multiply it to an extreme point . . . We might smile at this productive prowess, were it not that at all periods this has been the initial cause of all invasions." (*L'Allemagne et le fer; les frontières lorraines et la force allemande*, p. 225). The whole sentence is a pearl! or perhaps a precious setting destined to show up the pearl which is its principal ornament.

<sup>1</sup> I am also in a position to assure the reader that this propaganda is carried on in Germany with a zeal that sometimes makes our most ardent French propagandists grow pale with envy. The *Volkswart*, the organ of the Men's Union for combating immorality, at Cologne, lately reported that an ordinary railway servant had received no less than 23 prospectuses,

the war, the newspapers kept us informed as to the decline of the birth-rate as reported in foreign countries, notably in some great German towns! The reporter, in communicating the information, usually added an expression of the satisfaction it gave him, confident that the reader would share his sentiment.

We must then, if we would proceed scientifically, extend our analysis, and enquire, by collecting the objective witness of the facts, if the practice and teaching of sexual emancipation have helped to make France stronger, freer, or happier. Are the French people who have rejected the ancient sexual discipline, (even putting aside the solidarity which unites their destinies with that of other nations), more advanced in securing happiness, material prosperity, physical health, and in intellectual culture, by their attempts at "morality?"

The facts recorded in the preceding pages furnish more than a suggestion of the answer to these questions. Let us try, nevertheless, to give some complementary information, bearing chiefly on the principal point of the neo-malthusian theory—the progressive enrichment of a nation with a falling birth-rate, and the fatal impoverishment of a people with large families.

With regard to the improvement in health, a few words will suffice. However strong our wish to answer all objections methodically, it is all the same very difficult to take seriously the assertion that sexual "emancipa-

relating to the use of preventives, as soon as his first child was born. It was a Government office that had furnished the address of this "happy father" to the interested senders!

This propaganda has also invaded the country districts; it clothes itself in the most ingenious shapes, and makes use of all kinds of co-operators. The wandering vendors of umbrellas, toys, and toilet necessities, spread the pamphlets and sell the preparations. Sometimes, on the birth of a first child, the firm, under pretence of congratulations, insinuates, in the section dealing with advice as to health, counsels which scarcely hide the chief object of the communication. If the correspondent asks for enlightenment or further information, the sender can easily forward, quite openly, detailed prospectuses. He no longer fears being accused of an offence and being obliged to apologize. Cf. Julius Wolf, *Das Zweikindersystem*. See below as to the decline of the birth-rate in Germany.

tion" would tend to strengthen one's body and improve one's health. On every side one hears of the diminished vigour of both young people and adults. Before the war the military authorities had to lower, time after time, the physical standard of the recruits, and the power of endurance has seriously diminished throughout the whole nation. Doubtless it would be unjust to maintain that lack of moral discipline is alone responsible for this decline, but it has a large share in it, together with alcoholism, insanitary housing, etc.; and if we look closely we shall easily discover that this indiscipline and the sentiments which perpetuate it are the strongest allies of these other scourges. The frightful extension of venereal diseases has done incalculable injury to the public health, and a specialist, Dr. Leredde, lately stated that syphilis, by its immediate or ultimate results—general paralysis, and other nervous affections—is the most deadly of modern maladies, after tuberculosis, 30,000 lives being sacrificed to it every year. And syphilis is not the only venereal disease.<sup>1</sup>

In the same way, if we would compare what has been done in France these 25 years to combat tuberculosis with what our rivals across the Rhine have done, we shall find such backwardness, such a combination of incapacity and inactivity, as are almost incredible.

<sup>1</sup> What shocking details could be given here! In a cantonment near the Front a soldier one night entered one of those houses of ill-fame which are found everywhere; twenty-four men were taking advantage of it, twenty-two of them caught infection. Here is a father of five children who, coming back from leave, and being under the influence of alcohol, followed a harlot who solicited him to the vicinity of a Paris railway station, and contracted the terrible malady. In a garrison town of average importance 242 victims to it were under treatment at the same time in the town hospitals (Report of M. Emile Pourésy, 24th December, 1916). The number of soldiers whom it was for this cause necessary to send to the hospitals at the rear, during the war, is estimated at 75,000; they had to be cared for during many months, and sometimes to be discharged. All this time the vigorous and healthy young men had to keep things going at the Front, and thus the survival of the least fit was assured automatically. Real solidarity—that of nature, not that of public meetings, served up to the "dear constituents"—has thus two aspects.

We come now to the essential thesis, to the demonstration on which the neo-malthusians never fail to insist, knowing that their arguments almost invariably produce a great effect on their ignorant audience; I refer to the larger share of wealth dealt out to each person in a society with a "prudently" regulated birth-rate; as happens to a cake divided among several people, the slice given to each is bigger in proportion as those to partake are fewer. "Everyone knows that." Yes, everyone knows that, and therefore sociological science realizes to-day, as a valuable truth, that it must reckon with the worst sophisms of which our good sense, so often extolled and so feeble in reality, infallibly becomes the dupe every time it withdraws from methodical analysis and the minute observation of facts.

The neo-malthusians, besides, have not been the inventors here; they have but followed, as we have said, the path marked out by the liberal economists who followed Malthus. They, up to John Stuart Mill, taught that the wealth of a nation increased the more rapidly in proportion as the birth-rate remained fairly low, and a wise restriction in this respect, by means which they never explained, appeared to them a necessary condition of the economic development of a people. Especially for the working-class they saw no remedy for poverty except in the increase of capital and the limitation of births; otherwise, what one of them called "the devastating torrent of children" would sweep away all effort towards a more comfortable and less painful life.<sup>1</sup>

Nowhere did this teaching find more docile disciples than in France, where everyone knows it is burdensome to bring up a child; and if we estimate with M. Gide that to bring one up to man's estate costs 6000 francs—which is equal to 300 francs a year—without reckoning

<sup>1</sup> "Even supposing a progressive condition of wealth, a prudent and deliberate limitation of the population is indispensable in order to prevent the increase of men from interfering with the increase of capital" (J. S. Mill, *Political Economy*, chapter on the stationary condition of wealth.)

loss of interest<sup>1</sup>—we find that the million infants which France annually suppresses must represent an economy of 6,000,000,000. Besides, France was one of the chief bankers of the world, and the economists long ago pointed out the close connection between the abundance of our disposable capital and our low birth-rate. The reasoning then appeared unanswerable, and it certainly will not be disputed by the French middle-class, who for a century have proclaimed loudly that its systematic sterility is usually the best auxiliary to its enrichment.

Nevertheless there the facts are, and seldom does theory so well framed receive a more complete contradiction. Among all the political or economic phenomena which dominate contemporary European history, there is none more notorious or more important than that of the great increase in the population of the majority of European nations, an increase far more than proportional to the wealth of these nations *when the economic and political conditions were sufficiently advanced to favour this increase of wealth*. Whether we look at Great Britain or Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, or Holland, Bulgaria or Rumania, everywhere the two phenomena develop in strictest correlation. Nowhere, it must be said, is the twofold increase more evident than in Germany; I ask leave therefore to devote a parenthesis of several pages to this great phenomenon, for a clear apprehension of it is indispensable in order to understand the situation created in France by the voluntary restriction of the birth-rate.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> In a bourgeois family it is calculated that the upbringing of a child costs on an average 2000 francs a year, a little less during the first years, a little more when the child has become a young man. Now 2000 francs saved each year and invested at only 3½ per cent. produce 80,626 francs in 25 years. If we suppose then that two couples start with a capital of 100,000 francs each, and that one has two and the other six children, 25 years afterwards, at the parents' death, the two children of the first couple would have, all things being otherwise equal, 420,000 francs to divide between them, while the six children of the other would have, all together, only 100,000 francs, a sum which would provide each with only 16,666 francs.

<sup>2</sup> On the extraordinary development of German wealth and industry one may consult the well-known works of MM. Bérard, *L'éternelle Allemagne*; Georges Blondel, *L'essor industriel et commercial du peuple allemand*;

No one, at the time of the Franco-German war of 1870, or even several years afterwards, would have dreamt of comparing the wealth of France with that of Germany. It was understood that our German neighbours were lamentably poor, and their enormous annual emigration seemed to prove the hopeless inability of the country to sustain her children. This condition of things continued until towards 1880.<sup>1</sup> Since that period we have seen, simultaneously, a great increase in the population,<sup>2</sup> while public and private wealth have increased to a degree that the most optimistic prophets would not have believed possible. The fecundity of the nation has made possible the extraordinary development of agriculture, of industry and commerce, of banks and universities, and in turn, the wealth which circulates abundantly calls for men to such a degree that not only does emigration cease, but Germany becomes a country for immigration!<sup>3</sup> She calls for labour from outside her borders, her workmen and her own children are not enough for her any longer, and as the native race is strong and vigorous, this influx of foreigners, which is a danger for us, becomes an additional source of energy and production for our rivals.

We cannot attempt to describe here, even briefly

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Victor Cambon, *L'Allemagne au travail*; Lichtenberger, *L'Allemagne moderne et son évolution*. An excellent picture of this development has been drawn by M. Henry Laposse, a tradesman of Rouen, who has presented to the Societe industrielle de Rouen a report upon *les foies économiques de l'Allemagne*, a pamphlet of 55 pages. We shall quote copiously from it in the following pages.

<sup>1</sup> In 1881 the emigration from Germany was over 200,000.

<sup>2</sup> Between 1880 and 1914 the population of Germany increased from 45 to 68 millions—a growth of 50 per cent.

<sup>3</sup> The foreigners, of whom the great majority are workmen, numbered 799,000 in 1900, 1,029,000 in 1906, and 1,260,000 in 1910.

The German emigration has fallen from 48 to 3 in every 10,000; it is therefore less than that of Great Britain, the Scandinavian states, Austria-Hungary, Italy, Spain, and Belgium, and scarcely above that of France, which is estimated at 2 in every 10,000. Cf. on all these points Charles Gide. *Les conséquences économiques de la décroissance de la natalité*, in the *Revue économique internationale*, March, 1910.

this economic advance of Germany which will remain, along with the marvellous increase of her population, the outstanding historical fact of the close of the nineteenth century and the first decade of the twentieth; we will only quote, at hazard, some figures in order to give an idea of the dynamic force that a nation can attain which consents to hand on the gift of life generously.

The Rhenish-Westphalian coal basin is of incomparable importance. In 1912 the fabulous amount of 102,000,000 tons was taken out of it; if to this we join the output of the other coal districts, Germany reaches a total of 174,000,000 tons—nearly six times the French output—without reckoning 80,000,000 tons of lignite. Germany is on the point of surpassing England.

Only a small part—260 million francs' worth in 1903, 460 in 1911—is exported; the rest goes to put in action the millions of machines and perfectly developed tools, new arms of untiring steel which, night and day at work, save fatigue to human muscles. To make these machines and tools iron is necessary, and with continually increasing energy is this mineral worked. The German soil provided 28,000,000 tons in 1913, but so much is consumed that this amount, though enormous, is far from sufficient, since 12,000,000 tons are imported. With these combined resources the production of cast-iron can exceed 20,000,000 tons.

The production and consumption of other important materials is equally satisfactory. "In 22 years," writes Lysis, "the consumption of zinc, lead, and brass has tripled in Germany, and that of cotton doubled, *per head of the population*, although this has increased by 15 millions." Who is not aware of the extraordinary development of German metal-working, under the direction of the great captains of industry. The Krupps<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The workshops of Essen are the most highly developed in this respect that the world has yet seen. They occupy a thousand acres, and employ 40,000 workmen, and the firm has branches at Kiel, Stettin, Hamburg, Rheinhausen, and Annen. The ground covered by all these factories attends to 12,548 acres, on which 75,000 men work. The capital amounts to 300 millions, stocks and obligations; in 1913 the net profit was forty millions (francs).

and their competitors, of Thyssen, in whom M. Engerand finds the soul of a conqueror, served by an ever-faithful fortune, Thyssen, of whom M. Victor Cainbon says that no one has so profoundly influenced Germany's economic development?

"In 1871 his ironworks at Mulheim employed 70 workmen; the number to-day is 8,000. Thyssen bought collieries which now produce 4,000,000 tons annually, extracted by 15,000 workmen. These tons of coal he consumes in furnaces which produce a million tons of coke, the gas of which is sent, by a tube 52 kilometres long, to give light, warmth, and motive power, to the town of Barmen. Finally, his 'Deutscher Kaiser' factory turns out the latest results of metal-working, and employs 8,500 men. Then there are the new collieries, inland ports which are his creation, a fleet of cargo-boats and tugs which he has launched for the transport of his merchandise. Thyssen, in fact, has his capital, Hamburg (which is a bundle of small towns), an industrial fief which covers many thousand acres and contains about 100,000 inhabitants."

Before the war, Germany had acquired such a mastery in the making of optical instruments<sup>1</sup> and chemical products, perfumes, drugs, medicines, and pharmaceutical products, that she had attained to an almost world-wide monopoly. Her production of colouring matters, alone, supplies 90 per cent. of the entire demand, and we relied on her so absolutely that at the moment war was declared neither France, nor England, nor their American contractors, knew how to provide the cloth needed for the soldiers' uniforms. The five great firms that manufacture chemicals have agencies, representatives, or branches, all over the world, whose business it is to sell the enormous product of the 10,000 workmen and the 500 workshops of Bavaria or the Bayerische Gesellschaft, of which the workshops at Leverhusen cover 460 acres.

<sup>1</sup> We confine ourselves to one quotation, which refers to the Zeiss factory: "When we consider the prodigious accumulation of science, of experiments, of models, material, manual dexterity, secrets of manufacture, we realize that in the whole world there is but one Karl Zeiss factory."



In the opinion of all competent people, business men, and students, "the organization of all these undertakings represents the summit of perfection which can be reached in industry, from the triple standpoint of technical skill, commercial ability and organization."<sup>1</sup>

The capital sum invested in electric apparatus is estimated at 3,000,000,000 francs, and we can scarcely think this estimate exaggerated when we study the only company of which we know the history, the Allgemeine Electricitats Gesellschaft.

"This is, in fact, the most important company in Europe. It was founded in 1883 with a capital of six millions, it deals to-day, in shares, obligations, and reserves, with more than 450,000,000 for the furtherance of its undertakings. Its central bureau and its six factories are at Berlin; the bureau, which one may term the ministry, employs 2,000 people, the workmen number 71,000, besides the personel of the various bureaux and the technical advisers—a perfect army. The workshops are overwhelmed with orders, work goes on night and day, in three shifts of eight hours each, the wages vary from 75c. to 1 fr. 25c. per hour; the women only work 7½ hours, at the rate of 60c. to 80c. per hour. One workshop alone provides 400 electric motors a day, from another 95,000 electric meters are sent out yearly. The Company's field of action is continually extended; it builds steam turbines, establishes a steel-cable plant which absorbs 180,000 francs' worth of steel a day, it supplies the electric power to Berlin from three central power-stations which produce more than 200,000 horse-power; it constructs the city electric-lighting system in Berlin and Hamburg; it sets up powerful hydro-electric installations in Norway, the Milanese district, and the Dutch Indies; it throws itself into the construction of

<sup>1</sup> One of these companies has recently undertaken the manufacture of cinema-films, and has secured a kind of European monopoly in this French invention, thanks to two Paris chemists who have succeeded in replacing celluloid by a less inflammable material. This discovery was not appreciated in France. The Allgemeine Electricitats Gesellschaft secured the invention; the use of the new film is now imposed by our municipal regulations.

## 190 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

automobiles, motor-boats and aeroplanes, and, finally, of type-writers. Three sets of figures give the extent of its growth: the horse power of its manufactures throughout was 1,476,000 in 1910; 2,386,000 in 1911; 2,529,000 in 1912.

“The construction of electric apparatus is one of the specialities which Germany exploits with feverish energy. The more science an industry demands, the more the Germans excel in it.”

I cannot urge all that should be said, and said again, in order that all Frenchmen capable of listening and reasoning may at length resolve to open their eyes.<sup>1</sup> But we must add—and this is of capital importance—that this huge trade, this enormous commerce, has not produced a *personel* of workmen in wretched circumstances, hirelings in rags, or starving employés. If it pleases neo-malthusian orators to hawk around this folly and rubbish, while the fact does not exist without which all their theory crumbles to nothing, that is their business and that of the “conscientious” workers, if these are pleased to listen to them. But, in any case, no well-informed sociologist will support their evidence. On the contrary, what is certain and incontestable, confirmed by the most methodical inquiries and the most concordant reports, is that there is no working-class community in Europe, or indeed in the world, which has not profited, these last thirty years, by an unparalleled amelioration of the material conditions of existence. Clothing and food, housing and opportunity of leisure, have been ameliorated to an un hoped-for degree, the intellectual level of the workers is much higher, wages have steadily risen, while agriculture and trade have united to furnish without intermission, in greater abundance and with a better market, the necessaries and comforts of life.

We have already seen what the increase in the

<sup>1</sup>Mention should also yet be made of the German publishing industry centred at Leipzig, where more than a thousand publishers are established, and where more than 10,000 German publishing houses are represented by their agents the development of banks and their branches, the multiplication and extension of great towns, etc., etc.

quantity of cotton used per head has been. From the same cause, the building industry has developed in a "colossal" fashion. Homes were needed for thirty millions of an increase in the German population—800,000 a year during the last decades. "Reckoning 15 people to a house, two million new habitations were needed. It is equal to a whole new France. And all these houses have the advantages of hygienic progress and modern comfort; a fact which, by the force of example, has brought similar improvement in the alteration and re-arrangement of the old dwellings. What a dismal contrast to the dwellings of the country of restricted families, which lacks the thirty millions that she might have had. Except in Paris and a few exceptional new quarters of great cities, our houses, often destitute of air and light, are unhealthy, and 'unworthy of a civilized nation.' The expression is not ours, but M. Ribot's."

If the German workman and employé are well housed, they are not less well fed, and after the brave words of M. Rossignol, the gallant patriot who was one of the first to proclaim the great French evil by the publication in 1897 of his admirable book *Un pays de célibataires et de fils uniques*, let us hear Lysis, whose witness is not suspect:

"From 1883 to 1910 the consumption per head has increased in Germany by 23.9 per cent. for wheat and rye, 80 per cent. for potatoes, 4.69 per cent. for flesh meat, 188.5 per cent. for sugar, 44 per cent. for coffee, tea, and cocoa. Besides, this wages have risen by 35 per cent. for miners, 125 per cent. for masons and joiners, 67 per cent. for painters, the employés at Krupp's factories etc." They have followed a rapidly ascending scale, more rapid than that of France, and appear to-day to be little under English wages.

<sup>1</sup> Georges Rossignol, *Pour la Vie*, February 1917. It is estimated that houses for 240,000 are built each year in Germany.

<sup>2</sup> *Vers la Démocratie nouvelle*, Paris, Payot et Cie., 1917, p. 81—"Germany drank 81 litres of beer in 1872, 101 in 1912; she consumed 8 kilogrammes of sugar in 1888, 19 in 1913."

## 192 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

This improvement in the food of the working-class cannot be a matter of surprise, since the progress of agriculture has been as great as that of industrial enterprise, and perhaps still more wonderful. Who would have ventured, sixty years ago, to compare the rich wheat-districts of Beauce or Brie, the luxuriant valleys of Gascony or the plentiful Norman meadows, with the poor lands, the rough moors, the marshes and unfertile soil of Northern Germany? Even in 1880 it was still too evident that the unprofitable land of this foggy country could yield but a miserable return. Thirty years have rolled by, and the following figures show the comparative return per acre for the two countries :

	Germany	France
Wheat	2,060 kilogr.	1,380 kilogr.
Rye	1,770 "	1,430 "
Barley	1,990 "	1,430 "
Oats	1,780 "	1,260 "
Potatoes	10,350 "	7,420 "

Also, between 1883-87 and 1912, with a soil cultivated but little differently from our own, and thanks to the perfection of the methods employed, the agricultural production of Germany has risen from 59 to 110 million cwt. of rye, from 26 to 40 million cwt. of wheat, from 168 to 250 million cwt. of fodder, and from 225 to 442 million cwt. of potatoes.<sup>3</sup> To this enormous alimentary production must be added the 2,000 million cwt. of food annually bought from abroad, and thus abundant and substantial nourishment is assured to a population of 68 millions. Labour, science, discipline, perseverance, have achieved these wonders. We note above all—for this is especially pertinent to a book of this kind—that the multitude of hands, far from lessening the employment of machinery, demands on the contrary, to secure this immense production, an incomparable array of tools. The

<sup>1</sup> Is it known that our own agriculture—that of “the fairest kingdom under heaven”—has sunk to the thirteenth place from the standpoint of return to the acre?

<sup>3</sup> Lysis, *op. cit.* p. 38.

great estates of Eastern Germany employ 700,000 Slav workmen, and yet in 1907 there were in use 3,000 steam-waggon, 300,000 sowers, besides reapers and half-a-million threshing machines: while 300 agricultural drying-floors of potatoes secure the careful harvesting of the precious tuber.<sup>1</sup>

Compare this increase in so many departments, these phenomenal advances in food production which have led to the increase of the population, and you will understand how each individual in this vast conglomeration of 68 million human beings, compact in serried ranks on a territory precisely the size of France, is far better off, far more comfortably clothed, housed, and fed, in 1913, than were their grandfathers in 1830 or their fathers in 1875.

"People died of hunger in Germany," writes M. Rossignol, "when she had but 41,000,000 inhabitants: they have become richer and richer since she numbered 68,000,000." And these people, who are by no means ascetics, found it possible to place annually in the savings-banks sums which in 1911 amounted to 22,000 million francs, while in 1895 the deposits only reached 8,000 millions; an increase of 850 millions a year.

Should we add that the rise of the intellectual level and of general culture has followed *pari passu*, this material progress? Without being initiated into the depths of sociology one can have no doubt of it, for it is quite evident that such technical progress would have been impossible had not workmen of a more refined type, foremen more highly educated, perfectly trained engineers, been found to handle these tools and to apply these

<sup>1</sup> These splendid results are partly due to the employment on a huge scale of chemical manures; to the square kilomètre of cultivated surface Germany devotes 1,200 kilogrammes of potash manure, France but 80 l. The immense development of the sugar trade has also greatly contributed. Some figures show the increase. The quantity of beetroot cultivated in 1871 was 2,250,000 kil.; in 1911, 15,720,000 kil. In 1871, 12 kilogrammes of beetroot were used for one kilogramme of dry sugar, and only half the quantity, 6 kil., in 1911. The average crop in 1871 was 20,400 kil. to the acre, in 1911 it had risen to 33,000. In short, Germany has become the premier state in the production of sugar.

methods. We will only note, in a brief list of bare facts, that the industrial schools are of three kinds : professional, numbering over 500, with 70,000 pupils ; technical, still more numerous, and some of them with over 1,000 pupils ; lastly, the colleges devoted to higher instruction, the eleven "polytechnics" with their 15,000 pupils, which confer, like the Universities, the envied title of doctor. By the side of these, 365 commercial schools attract 31,000 pupils, and in innumerable schools courses of agriculture give instruction to over 90,000. What, compared with these 400,000 pupils in the different lines of the production of wealth, are the 35,000 pupils of our professional courses, and why, since 1,770,000 of our people, of whom 779,798 are below eighteen years of age, live by the cultivation of the soil, are there but 3,225 pupils in our special schools of agriculture ?

What is our conclusion from all this ? Shall we say, as the neo-malthusians, who call us "procreative-maniacs," give us credit for saying and as we regret to see, Dr. Gustav Le Bon ascribes to some of us, that Germany has needed nothing but many children in order to realize these marvels ? Such an absurdity never entered our heads. Long ago our professors of logic taught us to distinguish between *necessary* and *sufficient* conditions. We say that the condition of Germany, and in a less degree that of many other countries in which the conditions have been improved, prove that an increase of population, far from producing a growing impoverishment of the individual and of the nation greatly tends to their enrichment, and that this increase is even a *necessary* condition of that enrichment and of their general advance in well-being, culture, and civilization. Who will venture to maintain, in fact, that an equal development of economic power and wealth would have been possible to a Germany that had listened to the teaching of the neo-malthusian doctors, and had remained a country of 40,000,000 inhabitants ? The increase of the population would never have sufficed by itself to produce these developments, but it was necessary if they were to become possible ; and if the one had

been less, the others would have been greatly inferior to what they are.

#### IV

Now we must supply the counter-proof, and by an examination of the economic state of France and her national wealth, demonstrate that the low birth-rate, far from contributing to the enrichment of the country, and the advance of its general well-being, has on the contrary done them irreparable harm? Are we not edified by the revelations? In order to understand more fully the terrible wound from which France suffers, it was necessary to go off on a side track, and to look at the great country on our frontier; and we have found that our misfortune is fully demonstrated. What have we to set against these figures, which reveal such universal progress? Are we not aware that France occupies the fourth place—and that a very long way below the third—in regard to the total sum of national wealth?<sup>1</sup> We must also take into account that our wealth—invested, so to speak, in shares of an undisturbed domestic life (a pretty description for a country with so few children!) only provides us with an annual revenue of from 20,000 to 25,000 million francs, while the Germans are drawing from their investments a revenue estimated at 50,000 million. The economists, as a rule, are even inclined to think that the total wealth of France, far from benefitting, as the theory of the liberal neo-malthusian school would have it, by the money saved on the up-bringing of the million children which she refuses to have, actually tends to decrease, or at

<sup>1</sup> United States 560,000 million frcs.	Germany 370,000 million frcs.
Great Britain 400,000 " "	France 240,000 " "

least to remain stationary ;<sup>1</sup> nor does this seem impossible when one reflects that our national soil has suffered in thirty-five years, from 1879 to 1914, a depreciation of 40,000 million francs, and as worth only 52,000, instead of 92,000 millions!<sup>2</sup> Whole departments of the country lack men to work the soil, and there are districts where one sees scarcely any but old men : how can the value of the land be maintained under such conditions ? The soil never fails in its power of fruitfulness, but weeds have taken possession and the buildings fall to ruin, because man has disappeared.

We have established the wretched insufficiency of our agricultural production. How easy it would be to prove that of our industrial activity ! As a publicist of great ability, M. Paul Gemähling, from whom we have quoted several times in this chapter, says : " In a great nation, it is not with impunity that each family can confine its ambitions to providing a *dot* for its daughter and securing a comfortable career for its son. The whole life of such a nation cannot fail to shrink gradually in the same proportion. To a foreign industry rich in initiative what have we to oppose ? An industry of an only son who, little thinking of the conquest of the world, limits his ambition to continuing the position he already possesses. The only son has created a stationary industry, which, in its turn, has produced the only son. Always the same iron circle !"<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>The chief reason for this conclusion, to the eyes of the economic writers is the stationary condition of the "annuité successorale." The following are the gross figures, without deduction of debts :

1872-1876 . . .	4110 millions	1897-1901 . . .	5883 millions
1877-1881 . . .	4870 "	1902-1906 . . .	5664 "
1882-1886 . . .	5225 "	1907 . . . . .	5901 "
1887-1891 . . .	5488 "	1908 . . . . .	5879 "
1892-1896 . . .	5890 "		

<sup>2</sup>*La valeur de la terre en France*, by M. Caziot, chief inspector of the Credit Foncier. It should be added that the figure given by M. Caziot is disputed, and according to the official statements the decline is somewhat less—30 instead of 40 thousand millions.

<sup>3</sup>This whole article should be re-printed : *Industrie de fils uniques (Pour la Vie*, March 1917).



Thus in all ways, and much beyond what even the most well-informed suspect, the various forms of moral indiscipline have worked in France to the prejudice of the development of her wealth and material well-being. According to the assurances which the neo-malthusians gave us, we ought to have been raised to the very summit of wealth by the means of the annual six thousand millions which we save by avoiding the expenses which a million children would cost us; and yet we find ourselves deplorably impoverished. The country has been deprived of the fresh supply of producers which is indispensable to her, and, simultaneously, the quality of those whom she recruited or preserved has become weak and degraded; the father no longer has incentives to conceive plans on a large scale, and the only son, docilely following the father's teaching, has only too many motives to provide himself with a life-programme on the scale of the petty and mediocre ideals which has surrounded his childhood.

Yet this is not all. Have we reflected, for instance, that moral indiscipline and systematic sterility means the diminution of natural abilities in the community, and the undisputed predominance of the old men in social life?

Society recruits from all classes and every branch of activity, her men of worth, and all great pioneers of industry or science, political leaders or artistic geniuses who widen the horizons, prepare the ways, and give to the efforts of millions of human beings a fruitfulness that would not have been achieved without their initiative. Now the recruiting of these "men of worth" is easier in proportion as the number of children is greater. Does that individual who, under pretence of sowing his wild oats, has made himself henceforth incapable of transmitting life, or this couple, who maintain a stubborn resolution to have no more than two children, know of what talents, or of what genius, they may be depriving the human race?

"If the universal practice had been to be content with

two children," remarks M. Henri Joly, "we should have had no Montaigne, no Descartes, no Cardinal de Richelieu; if three had been the limit, Italy would not have known Michael Angelo, nor England Cromwell, nor France Napoleon. To go beyond four was necessary to have a Mozart, or a Mirabeau; Franklin was at least the fourteenth of his family, and examples of this sort could easily be multiplied."<sup>1</sup>

If we wish to present an exact analysis, we should go further still. Who can say that Franklin would have been what he was if he had been born an only son, and brought up with one sister—all the children the parents had arranged for? Here we touch on yet another problem. It is often a complaint in France that we lack initiative, that we shun responsibilities, and are deficient in virility and energy. A journalist has even been found to sum up his grievances on the subject by writing: "The land of initiative has become merely the empire of old men." The sentence had perhaps more in it than the author suspected, since he did not know to what a degree our deplorable domestic moral standard has ensured the predominance of the old in our social and public life, and placed in power what has been called "geronocracy" [government by the grey-beards]. It is too ingenuous to cry "make way for the young," when we have taken so many precautions to diminish their number, and when they live in a society where the old, by their very number, will easily hold the supremacy and lead the rest. The fact has not received attention, but all the same it is not a negligible fact that in France there are but 170 children and young people to every 1000 inhabitants, while in Germany there are 220, in England 210.

Fix your attention on this detail, and you will be surprised at the light which it throws on your inquiries. "We have all the qualities and all the defects of mature age: we administer, we economise, we foresee. We

<sup>1</sup> Henri Joly, *La dépopulation* (Revue *L'Education*, June 1912, p. 157).

take no risks. We have taken care to provide workmen's pensions, but have done nothing to protect and multiply the children. Our trade and commerce would rather sit by the chimney-corner than circulate through the world." The proportion of the old is greater than it should be, and the others who are prematurely aged through moral indiscipline and voluntary sterility share in all the senile fears of a debilitated race.

No one can be astonished at the indifference of the public authorities to the great interests of the French family and the national education of children and young people, when we consider that among the prominent politicians of the Third Republic there was scarcely one who had a large family, and that the great majority have no children at all. Neither Thiers, nor Jules Ferry, nor Gambetta, nor Lepère, nor Spuller, nor Challemel-Lacour, nor Goblet, nor Floquet, nor Waldeck-Rousseau, to mention only the dead, had any children, and several were not even married, or at any rate they contracted marriages which could not be quoted as examples to the young people in our schools. A Belgian publicist had good reason to say that "the French Government is a committee of celibates guiding a country that is depopulating itself.

We know that the immense majority of French people are indifferent to this domestic position of their rulers, thanks to the convenient theory of the "wall round private life"; we pretend to believe that the attitude which each of us takes with regard to moral discipline has nothing to do with our acts and general conduct in public life. But observation contradicts this puerile belief. "It is a fine thing to go to war in order to cast down infamous abuses, and to break the chains of those who suffer from them. But how about men whose fears have not known how to guard their consciences from enticements; men whose courage is at the mercy of a caress or a fit of sulks; . . . men who with no shame, perhaps glorying in the exploit, repudiate the vow which in a joyous and solemn hour they made to the wife of their youth; men who burden their home

with the tyranny of an exaggerated and selfish egotism—how can such men be liberators?"<sup>1</sup> "Promising them liberty, when they themselves are the slaves of corruption: for by whom a man is overcome, of the same also he is made the slave."<sup>2</sup>

The war has but aggravated these various evils. What will become of us if there is no reaction?

By way of completing our destruction, taxation and the expenses of the public services will weigh more heavily on the shoulders of each one of us, the fewer there are to support the weight. It would be easy to show how the efficient working of the public services—of light, water, transport, telephone, telegraph, etc.—is carried on at less cost in proportion as those who make use of them are more numerous, and many public works of which the economic utility is beyond question are only possible where the population is large and industrious. When Germany attains a population double of our own, shall we be content to have an administration, an army and navy, an economic plant, inferior to hers by half? If we are not, how can we meet the expense? If we are, what is to be our future?

Thus, whichever way we turn, we always find that the various forms of our moral indiscipline have caused serious hurt to the individual, the family, and society at large, and have inflicted on us suffering which is literally inexpressible. The licentious conduct of our young people, prostitution, pornography, and marriages for money, vanity or luxury, adultery and divorce, voluntary sterility and abortion, have debilitated the nation and stopped its increase; the individual has been unable to conserve his energies, and the quality of the new growth has diminished simultaneously with its quantity. "Fewer births and more fine men" was the watch-word, which had something enticing about it for those who, shut up in their materialistic conception of

<sup>1</sup> Leopold Monod, in a sermon preached at the "Eglise Evangélique" at Lyons, 27th June 1915. Paris, Fischbacher.

<sup>2</sup> II. St. Peter ii. 19.

individual and social life, thought they could assimilate the breeding of men to that of sheep or horses. As Auguste Comte said with stinging force, these pretended physicians of our social ills would have done better to become veterinary surgeons, incapable as they always were of comprehending the infinite complexity of the psychology both of the individual and of society.

The truth is, that of all the attitudes which a man adopts, of all the decisions at which he arrives, of all the habits which he contracts, there is none which exerts over his personal and social life an influence comparable to that exerted by his attitudes, his decisions, and his habits with regard to the appeals of the sexual appetite. Whether he resists and controls them, or whether he yields and allows himself to be controlled by them, the most remote regions of social life will experience the echo of his action, since nature has ordained that the most hidden and intimate action should produce infinite repercussions.

Thanks to this very mystery, we like to persuade ourselves, when we violate in any way the moral discipline, that our misdeed will have no grievous consequence. As to ourselves, in the first place, we are satisfied, since our own interest or pleasure has been the motive of our action ; as to society at large, we think it is so high above our modest selves that it will not even notice our misdeeds ; and, above all, we secretly hope that "the others" will have the sense to remain devout and virtuous. The worst of it is that this cowardly calculation almost succeeds while our conduct is as yet an abnormal and exceptional act ; then, proud of our success, we persevere in our attitude, and when there is occasion we come—and this is our supreme punishment—to believe it lawful.

But a day comes when the example given by this conduct involves other defections ; each of our evil deeds has the result of making more difficult and more heroic that attachment to virtue which we have counted on in "the others," and our neighbour, tired of being duped, is now in a hurry to imitate us. That day

the downfall begins and each can estimate at once the consequences of his misdeeds and the extent of his responsibilities.

A hundred years ago the French birth-rate still maintained a satisfactory figure. At that time the various sections of the middle-class began to limit the number of their children; little by little this practice became general, and a day came when merchants and farmers, artisans and officials, country people and townfolk, were seen to compete with each other in their zeal to have no more than one or two children. Gradually, the shameful wound of voluntary restriction of births spread like a leprosy, and with each decade the evil became more pronounced. For a long time one section of society appeared to reject this corruption: the industrial workers seemed still to merit the name of "proletariat," which since the Romans has been given to the representatives of their class, and their fecundity concealed from careless eyes the hurtfulness of the practices followed by their fellow-citizens in easier circumstances. But now for five-and-twenty years the manual workers have, in their turn, allowed themselves to be invaded by the enemy, and Frenchmen who think can discern the gravity of the situation for which a stubborn and cunning egotism is alone responsible: the work of death has begotten death. The time has gone by for finding pleasure in the contemplation of the personal profit accumulated: the general suffering is so great that one asks whether this complete social disorganization can fail to involve the destruction of the too lovingly cherished prosperity of the individual.

The secret act has come out of the hiding-place in which we thought it was confined. Endowed in its own way with a kind of immaterial radio-activity, it has run through all sections; all suffer from the fault of each, because, in spite of our precautions the influence of our actions, like the wavelets spreading from an eddy, makes itself felt in the most remote regions of the general social life.

We should feel no surprise at the serious character

and the multiplicity of these sufferings, and it is logical that each piece of the great social machine should be affected in its power of resistance and in the performance of its function. How could it be otherwise since the act which has for its end the recruitment of the race, is bound up with the deepest and most intimate psychological elements of him who accomplishes it? Therefore, when there is transgression, society is doubly affected in its *personel*, suffering at the same time diminution of its number and a lowering of the value of the members it possesses. "Less children means enfeebled men," that is nature's reply to the rash promise of the neo-malthusians. And this double injury is one of those that admit of no compensation: in all society the human value is the principle and source of all other values, and these can only hold their ground and develop in such measure as human value produces them, nourishes them with its substance, and supports them by its power. This has been forgotten and it is easy to see the reasons for such forgetfulness. Man, astonished at the splendour of his discoveries, and accustomed to seeing his place so easily taken, in labour and the production of wealth, by perfected mechanical means, has come to represent social life to himself as a collection of machines and methods, of formulæ and chemical or financial combinations, where man has no doubt still an irreplaceable function, but the function merely of a director or overseer, just as workmen in the shops press electric buttons to put powerful machines in motion. This was at once an excess of pride and of humility. If it is true, as we have already said, and we shall often repeat, that the mere number of a population is not enough to assure power to a nation, as the examples of China and India have proved for centuries, as Russia proved only the other day, and that other conditions must be added, it nevertheless remains true that for the great modern societies which make up Western civilization, a large population is an *essential* element of their prosperity and power. Provided as they are with the same appliances, initiated into the same discoveries, sharers of the same moral tradition, these

societies can only maintain their ranks by increasing both their numbers and the value of the members who compose them; and far from its being possible for any one of them to compensate by fortresses and cannon, machines or capital, for the lack of human capital, we find on the contrary that all these exterior advantages produce their maximum efficacy in the case of the nations which have an abundant population. The progress of civilization, some appearances notwithstanding, tends to raise and magnify human values, and alike in times of peace and war the common aim of all social leaders should be the recruiting of effective members, and the provision against wear and tear. Moral indiscipline at once dries up the fountains of the race, and hastens the wear and tear of the adults whom it debilitates both morally and physically.

We should do ill to complain of the undiminished pre-eminence of human values, even at a time when we perhaps think we have found sufficient substitutes; it should rather be a motive of joy and pride to find that of the three factors of production recognized by all economists, the human factor remains predominant. "St Paul," writes M. Gide, "said that there were three great virtues: faith, hope, and charity. But, he adds, the greatest of all is charity. In the same way, when the economists say: There are three factors of production: the earth, capital, and man, we must add: The greatest of all is man—much greater than capital."<sup>1</sup>

Every human being at birth possesses two arms and a brain capable, by their combined effort, of producing

<sup>1</sup> Charles Gide, *Revue économique internationale*, March 1910. The learned professor adds: "A farmer breeds cattle and horses; he thus produces wealth, or rather the means of future production. And, from the economic point of view, what does the father of a family do who brings up children? Will it be said that a bull or a horse is of more use than a man?" If one tries to resolve the antinomy between the arguments of the neo-malthusian father and of human society, it is easy to see the error which vitiates the debate; the one is thinking of the present and personal interest of a married individual, the other of the abiding interest of the community; there is seldom agreement between the two, and a moral life lies in knowing how to sacrifice the first to the second. Besides, the father, in his argument, confines himself to the wealth



wealth in indefinite amount, and if it is true, as has been remarked, that he also has a mouth and that this member functions, and claims nourishment, long before his arms can procure it, the fact remains, nevertheless, that every normal man produces during his life much more wealth than he consumes. If it were otherwise, how could men have accumulated, in the course of ages, the immense capital sums of which we reap the benefit under the forms of clearing the soil, construction, canals, and great works of all kinds? And how rapidly this accumulation grows during an epoch like our own when science and the mechanical arts have come to bestow such enormous returns on human labour!

## V

It is then not by chance or mere coincidence that the country of Europe which has most obstinately restricted its birth-rate is also the country which has been most injured in her economic activity, her power, wealth and expansion; the two phenomena are correlative, and the scourge has extended so far that it has gradually laid waste the various fields of social energy. At the hours of supreme danger it was shown that the war-like qualities of the nation had been maintained, and our soldiers of 1914 and 1918 were worthy of their most glorious ancestors. But war is only a passing phase of social life; supported by the preceding time of peace, it has no other aim but to prepare for the time of peace which ought to follow.

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produced, and stored in his title-deeds and shares; on the other hand society is occupied with the production of wealth, and there again it is in the right, for if it were not for our narrow outlook we should realize that the wealth accumulated in a country, however great, is nothing in comparison with the wealth to be produced, the potential wealth which nature, indefinitely fruitful, holds in reserve for those who will trust her.

France, then appears to be injured in the vital parts of her organism to such a point, that it is sometimes asked whether her very existence is not compromised, if indeed her dynamic force, her expansion, the splendour of her culture and the diffusion of her language throughout the world, is not forfeited for ever.

The question, alas! is no new one: "France is dying, do not disturb her agony" said Renan, discouraged from proceeding with *La Reforme*, to Déroulède forty years ago; and was it not Taine who, bent in study over the records that told of the origins of contemporary France, cried: "I am listening to the hollow coughs of a consumptive? What would the great historian have said if he had lived in the spring of 1914? Would he not have ratified the judgment of these well-informed men, Paul Leroy-Beaulieu,<sup>1</sup> Georges Rossignol, Jacques Bertillon, Ferdinand Buisson, Emile Faguet, and so many others whose patriotism and clear-sightedness are equally beyond suspicion, and whose verdict M. Charles Gide summed up in an article on the French birth-rate under the title "Le Glas?"<sup>2</sup> This most learned and courageous economist had already said: "France is an islet of sugar which is foundering." "If the French nation," wrote M. Robert Hertz, "does not without delay take the most energetic measures, it will inevitably lose several millions in the course of the twentieth century. From whatever point of view we look at the question, depopulation is a universal malady which corrodes the body social and reaches to its very heart. Politicians, living from day to day, can accommodate themselves to a situation which does not affect their own immediate interests, but patriots cannot do this, for they are mindful of the future harvests which are compromised by the present improvidence."

<sup>1</sup>"Few people," said M. Leroy-Beaulieu, "realize that the French nation is on the way to suicide, and that in a few generations, if energetic and efficacious measures are not promptly applied, it will have disappeared." *Journal des Debats*, 12th July, 1910, in an article entitled "Le suicide national."

<sup>2</sup>[i.e. "The Knell"] *L'Emancipation*, a co-operative review, July, 1914.

And the author adds in his own italics: "There is not a minute to lose."<sup>1</sup>

"Every country," says M. Edmond Perrier, director of the Museum, "in which the population is decreasing is inevitably destined to ruin, and to be crushed by its neighbours. The fall of our birth-rate remains, therefore, a fearful peril." "The evil from which France suffers," writes M. Charles Richet, "the decrease in the number of our births, is so grave that it dominates everything; it is annihilation at short notice." "The growing and deliberate sterility of France," M. de Foville reminds us, "is a disease of which she will probably die." "It is more than a moral question," wrote Professor Delmas in December 1909, "the crisis of the birth-rate is a matter of life and death." And M. Ferdinand Buisson sums up all these warnings by the often-quoted phrase: "France is threatened with death, and of all deaths the most shameful, from mere incapacity to live."

After these warnings from various fellow-countrymen, let us listen to the witness of foreigners. This first, from an opponent who was no bitter enemy: "There is no greater anxiety for the patriotic Frenchman," says Dr. Julius Wolf, "than the sterility of the French people; in its exhaustion we perceive a catastrophe, a fatal evil which must, as time goes on, inevitably force her into a lower place among the nations as one of the smaller states."

"France was not made," declares Dr. Rommel, a Swiss, "to be a home for the French nation at its present figure, but to support in 1900 so many inhabitants per square kilometre; in 1910, so many; in 1920, so many, according to the resources of the country; and the greatest general in the world, if the land is not being replenished per square kilometre in the way prescribed by nature, cannot hinder it from falling to foreigners."

<sup>1</sup> Robert Hertz, *Socialisme et dépopulation*, in the collection *Cahiers du socialiste*, pp. 8, 10. It will be noticed that all the authorities urge the necessity of *immediate* measures. What would these publicists say to-day, now that we have lost, not years only, but also 1,500,000 young men taken from the very *élite* of the youth of France!

And 200 pages further on, the doctor, undeterred by any scruples of moral delicacy, somewhat brutally adds: "The time approaches when the five poor sons of the German family will easily account for the only son of the French family . . . You will not pay for your children or bear the tediousness of their up-bringing; you will pay those who will do it, who need room and money, and will come to take in your country what they do not find in their own. It is barbarous (you will say) it is monstrous, it is anything you like; unhappily it is according to nature, and nature has not made Germany, Belgium, or Italy elastic, with the faculty of extending their borders to suit the increase of their people. When a growing country is in close contact with another thinly populated, which therefore forms a centre of depression, there is established an air-current, commonly called invasion, during which civil law is temporarily suspended."

"More coffins than cradles," wrote a German author with regard to us; and he adds: "Thus must disappear through their own fault the nations who have broken the fundamental laws of life." It may be said that the Swiss doctor and his German compeer do not love us. But, side by side with them, how many other foreigners there are who sympathize with us, who love our acuteness, our sense of proportion, our refined culture, and yet whose judgment is the same. An affectionate delicacy does not permit them to speak, nor even, doubtless, to think, of us with such brutal frankness, but all

<sup>1</sup> Dr. Rommel, *Au pays de la revanche*, Geneva, 1886, p. 221. Elsewhere the doctor writes: "What a gigantic displacement of the European political pressure! . . . France has given way all along the line, everything is going to pieces, everything is growing weak, within her, and now we can speak of her without fear or anger, but with the respectful pity which is due to a great nation in its decline. The oil begins to fail in the lamp of France . . . she is no longer young; she has no longer courage to push the plough, to trade with far lands, to bear children. This decadence is even more striking in view of the redoubled energy shown by the neighbouring peoples, the Spaniards excepted. England, Germany, Italy, Switzerland, Belgium, all have risen in proportion as France has gone down. Why so much hesitation in speaking of this decadence? What further symptom do you wait for? Do you desire to see a wild forest on the Place de la Concorde?" Thus Dr. Rommel wrote in 1886. What would he have written in 1913?

the same they come to an identical conclusion. "This beautiful nation is committing suicide," said of us President Roosevelt, a great friend to France. And what other judgment could be sincere on the lips of this good citizen, who has so often said: "A people whose women are not convinced that there is nothing more beautiful for them than to be a good wife and mother, is a people who has serious reason to be alarmed for its future." Shortly before the war, Cardinal Mercier, another great friend of France, desiring to warn his compatriots against the same scourge, quoted our distressing statistics, and gave vent to his sorrow: "You know to what peril a noble nation, our neighbour, is exposed, who yet keeps within itself such great reserves of generosity and grandeur of soul." And a Japanese journalist, having spoken of the great European Powers in most judicious terms, pronounced this judgment on France.

"France is no longer what she was. In spite of the external glitter of her civilization she is absolutely rotten at the core; we may envy her refinement, her artistic possessions and her wealth, but her vital energy is exhausted. Her population dwindles from day to day, and it is not unreasonable to believe that she will disappear from the rank of nations towards the end of this century."

"The judgment is terrible," says Professor Izoulet; "terrible, because perhaps it is true."

How many witnesses could be added to these? French people, at home and among themselves, easily persuade themselves that "France is always France" and that "the French are always the French"; but foreigners, witnesses on their own soil of the constant competition between all the various international forces, have not the same reasons to share our illusions, and how could they do otherwise than mark the melancholy testimony of facts? How often, in Holland or Norway, in England or the United States, I have *felt* thrilling through my interlocutors or my hosts a sentiment which, in spite of their good-will suddenly became evident

through a remark, a gesture, an intonation of the voice. Their sympathy, their affection even, was beyond all doubt, but they loved us as one loves a gracious marquis of past days, or as a business man who has made a great fortune during his day of hard work loves an artist jeweller who helps him to spend a little, and who can conceive the wonderful trinket that can so well set off, at ball or theatre, a girl's beauty; as, in one word, we love all delicate, fine, ingenious, pretty things, but which we know cannot supply the substantial marrow of thought and life. And their affection was mingled with melancholy, regret, and pity. They felt and knew that, in the huge timber-yard of the world, innumerable workmen, recruited from all the great nations, were exerting themselves to construct a building of which no one could exactly describe the style, or even the precise destiny, ignorant as we are as yet of the habits and plans of the men who should inhabit it. They only knew that the building must be vast, that the workmen and architects of France were indispensable if it was to be beautiful, a real work of art; and yet, of the number of those entering the yard, it was seen that every year the proportion of French workers was growing less!

Such were the judgments which, before 1914, friendly foreigners, and some Frenchmen themselves, passed upon France. Unhappily, the vast majority of our fellow-countrymen continued to go on heedless of the terrible scourge of moral indiscipline that was ravaging their country, and even a section of the intellectual and scientific *élite* seemed to ally themselves with our worst political sycophants, in order to drug men's consciences and encourage their illusions. "If France is not in the first rank numerically," wrote a famous statistician, an administrator of the Collège de France and member of the Institute, "it is certain that by her agricultural, industrial, and commercial wealth, she is and will remain one of the great nations of the world, on the level of the highest."<sup>1</sup>

"Let us not abdicate before statistics," bravely de-

<sup>1</sup> Emile Lavasseur *La population française*, t. III, p. 493.

clared Admiral Jurien de la Gravière; and the phrase struck a vein, being taken up especially by a famous historian, director of the higher Ecole Normale and a member of the French Academy, who placed his great ability as a dramatic author at the service of the neo-malthusian theory and voluntary sterility; and was it not another academician, administrator of the Comédie Française, a constant contributor to our chief evening papers, who came to the criminal court of the Seine to give his evidence in favour of the manager of the Folies-Pigalle, who was charged with having outraged public decency by the exhibition of naked women on the stage of his theatre?¹

By the side of these "masters," other literary leaders gave us in our novels and our plays the same teaching; yet the prophets of the new spirit announced that France, as the result of her great past, was on the way towards splendid destinies and was marching at the head of civilization. This was in fact only an inversion of the story of Roland's mare, which was endowed with all admirable qualities except one—that of

¹The magistrates, supported by "such a valuable appreciation," hastened to acquit the accused: "whereas, besides a net being placed in front of the actress, who was surrounded by electric lights of various shades, which rendered the form and outlines less distinct, a small piece of rose silk taffeta was worn.

"Whereas, it is true, M. the Commissary of Police mentions, according to the terms of his report, that it could be observed that the girl Aymos had been 'shaved' . . .

"Whereas the artistic impression produced by this spectacle is attested by a letter, which appears in the dossier, from a member of the French Academy (M. Jules Claretie) whose judgment and honesty in artistic and theatrical matters cannot be doubted:

"Whereas in this letter the writer, having expressed his respect for the President of 'La Ligue de la licence des rues,' says expressly: "that in M. Parcelier's production at the Follies-Pigalle there is nothing that could arouse unwholesome thoughts, that the appearance of the *danseuse* had nothing that suggested an indecent exhibition . . . in fine, that the impression left by the spectacle was merely artistic:

"Whereas an appreciation of such value to the court, because of the unchallenged artistic competence of this high authority, and also the circumstances of the fact, as stated above, prevent the act with which the girl Aymos and Parcelier are charged from being considered a public outrage on decency."

(Tribunal correctionnel de la Seine, 28th July, 1908).

## 212 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

existence ; France was repeating the tale, only backwards ; she had existed, and her existence had left in history a luminous beam of glory and of service to the world ; now the hour had come for her to rise to the summit of all the virtues ; only, in rising, she was losing her very existence.

Thus the work of death went on. A glorious race, beautiful above all the rest, had sworn to commit suicide, and obsequious servants were administering the magic opium. How could one but remember the often-quoted line :

*Quos vult perdere Jupiter prius dementat.*

As a matter of fact, the number of French people who were conscious of the decay of our national vitality was perhaps greater than was acknowledged. Some—why not acknowledge it now?—were on the side of the decline ; defaulting heirs of too weighty an inheritance, they refused to wear an armour fashioned for the giants they no longer wished to be, and their wearied dream was limited to the desire that France, given up to “realism,” should be content to become a somewhat larger Belgium or Holland.

Others formed, though they did not venture to express them, wishes scarcely more strange or sacrilegious. Taking hold of, so to speak, information gleaned from every quarter, which witnessed to the lowered birth-rate in other countries, notably in Great Britain, the United States, and some German towns, they came to think that our present humiliations were simply the price of our “advance.” The day was approaching when the other nations would fall into line with France. All was being settled, or at least would be settled, and all we had to do was to wait. It would be perhaps unbecoming to start a propaganda on such a subject ; but patience ! the rest imitate us spontaneously ; “once more we have shown the road”—and they repeated Jules Lemaitre’s phrase which we have already quoted.

It would serve no purpose, after the Marne and Le Grand Couronné, after the Yser and Verdun, to discuss



these humiliating solutions of the problem which so deeply wounds our patriotic sense. Both are equally unacceptable. Besides the fact, as M. Gide remarked, that it is one thing to be a little country and quite another to be a country that is growing smaller, no one has ever been able to explain how such an impious wish is to be realized. Is it not obvious, on the contrary, that the causes which have enfeebled a vigorous being must, if they continue, enfeeble it to the point of complete exhaustion and eventual disappearance? A society is not a hard block of inorganic substance, but a living organism, subject to the law of increase or decrepitude: when it ceases to grow it begins to fail, and there is no limit to its failure. If France ever became a greater Holland, it would take little time for her to become a small one, and soon she would disappear altogether.

Everything urges us, everything obliges us, to be a power of the first rank among the great Powers: our past, our wonderful territory, our geographical position, the charms of our climate, the wealth of our colonial dominion, the splendour of our literature and the renown of our learned men, the clarity of our intelligence and the resources of our genius, so flexible and so keen. The military glory with which the world-war has invested us has also increased our obligations. Nations, like individuals, cannot choose, they are embarked on their destiny; it is not in our power to make our desires and our destinies square with the measure of our declining forces.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> On the fall of the birth-rate in Great Britain and the United States, see Paul Leroy-Beaulieu—*La Question de la Population*.

As to Germany, it seems certain that in the great towns an important decline in the birth-rate is proved to have taken place between 1880 and 1910. If we are to believe the information furnished by M. Julius Wolf in his work *Le Zwei-kinder-System* the decrease must be very serious, since it has been for Berlin a fall from 399 to 215 births per 10,000 inhabitants; for Hamburg, from 384 to 154; for Munich, from 396 to 162; for Dresden from 351 to 135; for Breslau, from 376 to 101.

But we must hasten to add: 1st, that this decline appears so far to be confined to certain great centres of population, and that the *excess* of births over deaths has not ceased to increase the last 30 years, both relatively and absolutely; for, during the period 1901-9, Germany has only

As to the other wish, if by chance it were realised in the near future—which may not be impossible, at least for some of the rival nations of which we think—it will be seen that the very extension of the scourge of moral indiscipline will only add to the suffering and wretchedness of the nations previously affected. Alcoholic intemperance puts one who is a victim to this degrading habit in a position inferior to that of his sober and industrious competitors; but would it be any advantage to him if the others also abandoned themselves to drunkenness? It is the same with regard to our inability to submit our sexual appetites to the sway of reason and conscience; our prevarications are an evil ruinous to our social well-being, and their multiplication to infinity could only increase our own sufferings. We should lose a powerful motive for regeneration, and the torrents of filth which would be cast upon our borders would yet more defile our own rivers.

Besides, as was easy to foresee, the event left us no choice between the two solutions, and on the first of August, 1914, the call to arms came to bid us shake off

taken nine years to obtain an excess of 7,784,255 births, while from 1872 to 1885, she needed 14 years to obtain an excess slightly lower, i.e., 7,506,113.

The progress of *relative* gain is not less than that of the absolute increase, as the following instructive comparison proves, showing the excess of births per 10,000 inhabitants.

	Germany	France
1841-1850	9.9	4.1
1861-1870	10.3	2.5
1891-1900	13.9	0.6

2nd. That supposing the movement for voluntary restriction of births extends in Germany, the excess of births over deaths is so considerable that for several decades yet she will benefit by substantial increases.

3rd. In fine, that nothing guarantees the extension of this movement; just as the serious defects of our political institutions during the last 45 years have greatly lessened the sympathy which showed itself in Europe with the republican form of rule, so the example of the rapid weakening of nations that do not secure the abundant recruiting of their people may also be a salutary lesson to others.

4th. That in Germany the public authorities, professors and ministers of religion have rightly and promptly led the crusade against this scourge; and that also is widely different from what happens in France.

our torpor and awake from our lethargy. The terrible war, which no one would have dared to declare against us if we had possessed the 65 millions which we ought to have had, and who could have lived on our splendid soil *in a comfort of which Frenchmen at this beginning of the twentieth century in spite of their scientific economies, their profitable investments, and their general luxury, have no conception.* War was declared against us, and having allowed that to be possible, we had made possible a thousand other evils—in which universal suffering all other suffering came to a climax.

I will make here but one remark as to this war. The neo-malthusian theorists, whom nothing discourages and nothing teaches, have been repeating these last four years that it is the excessive birth-rate in Germany which led her to declare war; her population, enclosed in a too narrow territory, which could no longer support it, was compelled to seek a safety-valve in the acquisition of new lands. That is why she was obliged to make war. And, since the neo-malthusians are by way of being pacifists, they take care to add: "If France became prolific she too would soon be overpopulated, and in her turn would become warlike. In the interests of peace, do not let us have too many children."

This proposition, which is also that of Germany, is false, and we have already supplied its refutation. We have shown how industrial Germany has become a country for immigration. "Far from being glutted with men," writes the very celebrated Professor in the Faculté des lettres at Dijon, M. Henri Hauser, "Germany before the war had not even enough; industrial civilization, itself the offspring of a dense population, is in its turn a terrible devourer of men. To feed these new mouths she has the supplies produced by a perfectly developed agriculture, and those commodities which she imports in exchange for her own products; but she needs an increased number of hands to work. It is evident that we are a long way from seeing Germany stifled within narrow frontiers, compelled to conquer her neighbours' territory because the number of her too numerous births makes

the share of each, at the common table too little. It was not the poor and starving Germany of thirty years ago, but an upstart Germany, rich and well-nourished and greedy of pleasure, which declared war upon us. We cannot say that she was obliged to make war in order to save her little children from dying of hunger."<sup>1</sup>

It would also be easy to show how, on this side of the Vosges our growing feebleness worked with this German eagerness for domination and enjoyment, to precipitate the war. God forbid that I should seem here to plead extenuating circumstances for that criminal country, whose very power laid on her the obligation of remembering that no increase of power or wealth comes to a nation, any more than to an individual, without a corresponding increase of duties. But all the same, I am certainly right in saying that, human nature being in its present elementary moral condition, war was sure to break out some day, and several French writers had not failed to tell us, as long ago as 1912, that we were on the brink of conflict. No doubt Germany had before her the open seas, ever wider markets, and her people had every liberty to trade, to achieve, to plant themselves in all quarters of the world. But it would imply a very slight knowledge of the laws which govern the psychology of a multitude to believe that these facilities, however great they might be, however wide open were the hospitable doors of foreign countries, could satisfy indefinitely a young nation conscious of its expansive power, emboldened by its success in war, and aware that beside it another nation with a falling birth-rate, a population 40 per cent, less than its own in number, possessed an

<sup>1</sup>*Pour la Vie*, February 1917. M. Hauser adds: "We can go further; when we see how the Germans treat the people of occupied countries, how they seek to transform them into labour for the lower needs of economic life, we may ask ourselves if one objective of the war, for Germany, was not to secure an increased population for herself, a kind of human cattle. The nation of supermen would thus have at her disposal one nation, or more, of slaves."

M. Adler, as long ago as 1914, gave this warning: "We must make up our minds. Henceforth there exists in Germany a Teutonic socialism, colonizing and rifling in character. Only the officers of the old battalion remain; the effective force is swollen with young business socialists."

immense territory, the wonderful position of which was equalled by its wealth and fruitfulness. Little by little patriotic groups are formed, which point out that the peaceful penetration of foreign nations is not enough, and that a people which has come to be conscious of its economic and moral worth should regard war as a painful but necessary eventuality; only the might of arms is able to find a complete solution of the problems which feeble diplomats and chattering parliamentarians will never be able to solve. A day comes when this propaganda, wisely organized, converts the hesitating, entices the weak, and paralyzes opponents. On that day, war comes.<sup>1</sup>

And the war has broken out, in fact a war far longer, far more desperate and murderous than the gloomiest forebodings could have imagined. It has left us enfeebled by the loss of the flower of our youth; half-a-million young men have fallen on the battle-field, or died through sickness or accident. Besides these, more than 300,000 others, crippled, or stricken with various diseases, have permanently lost much of their economic and social value. If only we could be sure that the rest, the count-

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting by a social psychological analysis, to show how the German people gradually developed, from 1911 to 1914, the desire for war. The *Lokal Anzeiger*, in an official article reproduced in the *Temps* of 27th August 1911, wrote: "It will be said that Germany is strong enough to cut the knot of the Moroccan controversy with her sword. Undoubtedly, but to what purpose? Even without war Germany will pursue her onward march, and will be in 20 years, even more fully than to-day, the arbiter of the old world. Let us do a little sum: the wealth of Germany will be doubled in 20 years, her population will be 90 millions. What will France be?" Eighteen months later the Crown Prince consented to collaborate in producing a book entitled "Germany in arms," and in that he wrote: "Our country is compelled, more than any other, to place all her trust in her armaments . . . It is only by relying on our good sword that we can keep that place in the sun which we ought to have, but which is not granted us willingly . . . We cannot pretend that, in all political quarrels, anything but the sword will be, to the end of the world, the ultimate deciding factor. One who has made a cavalry attack, in a manœuvre, knows that there is nothing finer in all the world . . . How often, during such an attack, I have heard a comrade galloping by my side, whisper: 'If only we were riding to some purpose this time!' That is the true spirit of the cavalry-officer." Cf. the *French Yellow Book*.

less "poilus" who have come back from the trenches with legs, arms, and eyes intact, have returned more willing to accept moral discipline and to give their sorely wounded country many and healthy children! But is it not said that among them also, as among the civilians and "auxiliaries" in the rear, the war, like all other wars, has multiplied the maladies which waste the body, and stain the progeny, of the wretched victims? Is it not also said that a large number of the strong have made up their minds to have even less children than formerly, since "it is not worth while to have children just to give them over to such butchery." Doubtless, others have thought seriously: they have considered the wonderful questions which surround the problem of the transmission of life, and in the tragic light of the great nights of battle they have caught a vision of the gulf into which France is flinging herself. But will these be numerous enough, brave enough, and sufficiently devoted to the service of the public weal, to open the eyes of the others? Truly, no more tragic question could be put to a nation which feels, and knows with a certainty of knowledge, that, in spite of all miseries and losses, she is still a wonderful nation and deserves to live. Let us proclaim aloud that humanity has need that France should live. She was the nation of Clovis and Charlemagne, of St. Louis and Bayard, of Henri IV and Napoleon; the nation that made the Crusades and the Great Revolution; and now, during the fifty-one months of this most fearful war, she has had the perilous honour of taking her place in the front rank of the nations that have saved civilisation and freedom from barbarism and slavery.

## PART II

THE FIRST REMEDIES:

THEIR NECESSITY AND INSUFFICIENCY





## CHAPTER V

“The mechanical formulas which you throw over the world let the reality pass by as a river flows through the meshes of a net.”

JEAN JAURES.

The evil is so great, and has brought such keen and varied suffering on both individual and social life, that no one any longer disputes the urgent need of remedies. It is literally a question of life or death that faces our French democracy: whether we will to live, or whether we accept death—and what a death! of all kinds the most shameful, a death from cowardice and abandonment of one's true self, a death in utter loneliness. Remedies must therefore be found and applied, but what are they to be?

To this question the usual answer is: “The present evolution of civilisation has led France to adopt, with regard to sexual activity, a certain set of practices and ways of living which result in injury to our whole social progress and are even irreconcilable with it. They are the expression of certain psychological and moral tendencies; with regard to which we can hope for no useful line of action. It is useless to ask ourselves if this evolution and these interior dispositions are good or bad. It is enough to know that they exist and we must look on them at present as beyond reform. But that is not to say that we have no defence against the scourge: far from it. A great issue lies before us: it is possible for us to influence our social customs and our laws so that the French people may tomorrow find it as much to their interest to be prolific as they have hitherto found it to be systematically sterile. We have committed the unpardonable fault of unconsciously arranging all our

institutions to the greater advantage of egotistic celibacy and the neo-malthusian household. Since the French are not idiots, they have at last come to understand the immense absurdity of giving children to such a country. Let us, as soon as possible, modify our customs and our laws; let us establish legislation that protects the child and the family in place of a system that is hostile to the one and destructive to the other; let us honour, encourage, and reward the fathers of a numerous family, and we shall soon see the empty cradles filled. Thus a limited and comparatively easy effort will be enough to ensure the result desired. The Frenchman will not have to change his likings and his interior dispositions, but, in changing the direction of his calculated and self-interested desires, a different result will also be obtained."

Innumerable plans of reform have been launched with this object during the last fifteen years, and there is already a whole library on "natality" and "reproduction."<sup>1</sup>

The former Chamber of Deputies was, we are credibly informed, assailed with more than 250 resolutions on behalf of large families: what will happen in the new Chamber? In 1917 the League *Pour la Vie* drew up, in 35 paragraphs, a legislative programme of interesting reforms, and the other societies on behalf of large families, notably *La plus grande famille*, have also drawn up excellent programmes. More recently, the first *Congrès national de la Natalité*, held at Nancy in September 1919, has also urged a certain number of essential reforms. One cannot doubt that the new Parliament will give all these propositions the very serious attention that they deserve.

These reforms would end an intolerable scandal (the expression is not too strong) which has for long given us a legislation utterly indifferent to the private life of our citizens, and which even amounts in the end to an out-

<sup>1</sup> "It is not," writes M. Rossignol, "a question of taking one measure, but thirty or forty. The ancient Roman Church is threatened with ruin. We do not propose to save her by giving her one buttress only. There are thirty or forty that we would build around her, or rather it is the whole edifice that must be underpinned."

rageous partiality to the advantage of the old profligate and the craftily sterile couple. It truly needs the pharisaism of our modern manners to pretend that the adult is absolutely free to remain single or to marry, to fix the number of his children according to his fancy, and that, to assure more completely his liberty of choice, the law must avoid even the appearance of sympathy or of interference. Such a doctrine contradicts at once elementary justice and the most certain conclusions of social science. To bring up a large family will probably always be, whatever is done, a heavy charge upon the parents who have the moral courage to shoulder it, and the State, which benefits so greatly by their action, commits both a folly and a crime by laying a yet heavier burden upon them; its attitude discourages men of good will, and many are tempted to say with Pierre Hamp that citizens would after all be justified in losing interest in the national duty of the recruiting of the race, since the legislature cares so little about it.

On the contrary, the influence of Parliamentary resolutions, and of the actions and regulations of the municipal authorities,<sup>1</sup> can do much to change the truly incomprehensible line which public opinion has so long taken, and if it is true that laws are of no use without conduct, it is also true that they are a means both to inform and reform conduct. They are a means of teaching and possess an educative force, as M. Gustave Belot, one of the most far-seeing Chiefs of our University, has well

<sup>1</sup> Few persons in France, I believe, realize what a good mayor can do, even in the present state of our customs and laws, when loyally supported by an honest commissary of police and a courageous attorney-general. But where are the mayors who are interested in these questions of sexual morality, and where are the commissaries of police and the solicitors willing to support them? Cf. on these points the interesting studies published since 1912 by the New York Bureau of social hygiene under the title of "Commercialised Prostitution in New York City." The comparison between 1912, '15, and '16 is instructive and very encouraging, but it must be added that during those years New York had the happiness to possess a mayor who was "capable, honest, with an enlightened and lofty mind," and a chief constable possessing the same qualities, and one who knows the municipal history of New York understands to what an extent these officials broke down the choicest traditions of Tammany Hall.

shown. By the very act through which the legislature condemns or encourages it also teaches, and this teaching, coming as it does from above, is not ineffectual.

The direct and precise effect of these measures would not be less beneficial than their teaching value. Side by side with the reform of private morality, in which every citizen ought to collaborate by the improvement of his own conduct, the public authority should also do its proper work in purifying the streets, in prosecuting licentious shows and an immoral stage, in repressing the neo-malthusian propaganda and abortion, in combating prostitution, drunkenness and bad housing. These are the tasks which concern it, tasks which private citizens, however great their good-will, cannot accomplish. When public authority abdicates its duty, society suffers injury, and such abdication makes far more difficult that moral reform of which we stand so urgently in need.

The State is the less justified in resisting the proposed reforms, since many of them do not demand from it any sacrifice, and the others, at the most, belong only to the category of those investments at high interest which bring in enormous profits. Of the first kind would be two supremely beneficial reforms: the introduction of the family vote, and the reduction of the term of military service in time of peace to the advantage of the sons of a large family. The principle of the numerical equality of voting power—"one man, one vote"—is far from being to-day as just as it appeared to our fathers, and the progress of the spirit of justice appears to demand in our days—not to speak of female suffrage—the recognition of a supplementary voting power to the fathers of large families. Whatever may be said, it is not according to justice that the unmarried man or the father of one child, should enjoy a right of suffrage equal to that of the citizen who by the number of his children has established such intimate bonds between his destiny and that of his country that any separation is inconceivable. Putting aside cases of drunkenness, radical disorder of conduct, improvidence, which the very advance of civilization tends to diminish, the acceptance of a large

family is a proof of generosity, courage, confidence in life, vigour and energy in work; and justice unites with the general interest in demanding for these citizens of a higher type a greater share in the affairs of their country. At present the families which number three or more children represent 23,000,000 people, and yet, in a total of 11,000,000 electors, only 3,500,000 possess votes; while 15,000,000 other Frenchmen possess 7,500,000 votes. This inversion of the respective proportions is unquestionably injurious, and as has been said, "we demand the establishment of true universal suffrage, that, namely, by which all French people will be represented, whether by their own personal vote "if they are of age, or by that of their father, mother, or guardian, if they are minors."<sup>1</sup> The adoption of the family vote would have salutary effects on our legislative economy and on the moral tendencies of our high officials. More attention would be given to great national interests, and those of the large family which recruits the nation. Undoubtedly, also, fathers of families would find that among six hundred deputies it was not fitting to choose two hundred unmarried men whose asceticism in this matter was likely to be their least defect, and three hundred other members of the chamber, legally married, but who have often too well preserved the moral standard, the defects and habits, of an adventurous youth.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Of course, I give no opinion here as to the details of the organisation of the family vote. I only observe that it would seem to me difficult to allow, as M. l'abbé Lemire proposed in 1912, two votes to every married man, even if he had no, or only one, child. This is to yield to a tradition, in itself worthy of respect, according to which marriage is by nature good and honourable; but since it has been shown that the reality is far less beautiful than is here taken for granted, and that a great number of spouses have merely intended to establish a concubinage sufficiently unwholesome in spite of its legality, it would be an abuse to grant to every married man, at the outset, such a privilege above the celibate.

<sup>2</sup>"I have been struck," said a physician in an address given at the time when the project of an income tax was being discussed, "to find that the expenses of a family have been completely ignored by the promoters of the project. I have remarked with equal surprise that a man and woman living together, but not married, would pay nothing, if each had an income of 2000 francs. . . . Yet another point was incomprehensible. . . .

In the same way we should, without delay, recognise that the military law which claims every man of twenty-one who is healthy in body and mind, for a service of equal length, far from conforming to justice and equality, violates both. Such a law might seem equitable at a time when the body of electors, possessed by individualism, imagined that the individual only should be considered, as the sole subject of rights and obligations. But this individualist theory can no longer be accepted, and if it were not for the astuteness of our useless political divisions, which forbids all impartial and methodical examination of questions, Parliament would long ago have repudiated the mere formulas. By the side of the young man who fulfils his military service, and before him, stands the family which supplies him, and it is only because, twenty years before, in their complete liberty of choice, husband and wife accepted the responsibility of transmitting life, that society can to-day claim this youth for the service and defence of his country. It is therefore only too obvious that if the military service weighs heavily on the conscript himself, it weighs still more heavily on the elder members of his family, and justice demands that a family which has brought up five sons should not supply fifteen years of such service, while the family with an only son supplies but three.

These two measures would bring just relief to large families, whatever their condition. There are others which would only affect a middle-class family or a peasant family with some property which placed it above the working-class household. We should be wrong to imagine that on this account they are less important, or less deserving of the interest of a democratic

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I have tried to find the reason of these things, which greatly surprised my medical judgment, and I believe I have found it. The minister who is the author of the law is an "unproductive" (unmarried, or having less than three children), the president of the Commission is another, so is the reporter to the Chamber. The result is that the three men who may be called the supporting tripod of this measure are not heads of families, and on this account do not comprehend the moral and material obligations of such." (Address by Dr. Jayle, 27th October, 1910, to the Société de l'Internat des hopitaux de Paris).

country. With our present standard of morals we must give up the hope of the working-class making any effort to raise the birth-rate unless the middle-class first set a generous example. I do not know if there was ever a time when rulers could say to the people: "Do what I teach, not what I do." Even if it were case that time has gone by and will not return. Yet, on the other hand, the anxiety of the bourgeois or peasant family to secure a wider education for their children and adequate material advantages is not wrong, and is even socially beneficial. It is the duty of the Government, therefore, to encourage the efforts of the parents who think that, even in our egotistical and neo-malthusian society, their parental affection does not dispense them from the duty of fecundity, and who strive, by increased work, capacity, and economy to reconcile the obligations which our deplorable social condition makes so difficult to fulfil. A large abatement—which might be graduated according to the number of children up to entire exemption—of direct taxation levied on inherited property or the product of labour, a modification of the taxes which burden transfer of property between living parties which is to constitute a marriage settlement of a transfer *mortis causa*, would be exceedingly advisable measures, and would undoubtedly have beneficial results. The amount payable by unmarried people, and couples without children or with only one child, could be increased in proportion. As has been proved over and over again, the privilege which we solicit would be only a very partial return of the excess for taxation which large families pay in the form of indirect contributions.<sup>1</sup> These contributions were heavy enough before the world-war; they will certainly be much heavier after the reorganization of the public finances, and the State would commit an injustice, and a mistake seriously to the prejudice of its own interests, if it did not set about re-establishing an equilibrium which has been more and

<sup>1</sup> The laws of 17th June, 1913, and 14th July, 1913, as to helping pregnant women and large families, are utterly inadequate.

more disturbed to the disadvantage of its best citizens. It would be a mere bolshevist sophism to assert that the State has no right to exempt families in easy circumstances, who are rich or even opulent, under the pretence that their condition will always be better than that of hundreds of thousands of families who work under conditions of discomfort, or even of misery. The point is, not to compare the lot of the rich large family with that of the sterile or numerous poor family, but with the lot of the sterile rich family or the rich unmarried man. Logic demands that the comparison be made between samples taken from the same social *milieu*, and if this plan is followed, it will soon become evident that, under our present fiscal régime, selfish celibacy and systematic sterility reap substantial advantages. Once more, there is no exaggeration in saying that such a fiscal system is at once an error, an injustice, and a scandal, and it would be impossible to understand how France, notwithstanding the example of other nations, has been able to maintain it for so long, if we did not know how ill prepared our politicians themselves are to carry out the work which is specifically their own.

Most of the other measures suggested concern, as they should, the working-class family, and by various systems of premiums, grants, and insurance policies, assure it the assistance of the State from the birth of the third child. It is truly intolerable, that in a society which suffers so greatly from lack of children, and which the excess of deaths over births lays open to a great and rapidly approaching catastrophe, fruitful and healthy working-class families should be utterly neglected, as they have been, families to whom the husband's weekly wage cannot ensure the barest necessaries. The social injustice is still more crying when the distress strikes a widow with four or five young children. M. Jacques Bertillon has many a time denounced this shameful achievement of our civilization, which we call progressive and founded on "solidarity by consent," and all right-hearted men should join one of the leagues for



the promotion of a higher birth-rate, and should press these perfectly legitimate claims.

Along with these measures, it would be unpardonable if we did not resolutely undertake the struggle against bad housing: too many working-class families live under conditions of insalubrity and stench which are a disgrace to our cities, and many of them cannot even find such lodgment as this. Compelled to lie in order to conceal the number of their children when signing their miserable lease, they have to resort to the dodges of an "apache" to smuggle into their wretched room the children whose existence they have concealed, happy if this clandestine introduction is not a violation of contract, which would expose them to an action for cancellation of the lease under article 1184 of the Civil Code.<sup>1</sup>

All these measures, subject to any modification to which discussion or practical experience may point, are worthy of general approval, and the effect of them will be still more beneficial if only there is a will to remember that the healthy and vigorous child must have precedence over one who is sickly and rickety, that the robust wife of a hard-working and honest labourer, already the mother of several children, merits more sympathy when she brings one into the world than the unhappy wife of a drunkard or consumptive, already worn out by misery and the two pregnancies which she had not the proper vigour to bear. I have already observed—and it is only right to repeat this often—that it is not one of the least results of moral indiscipline and systematic sterility that we have lost the love of strength, the cult of manliness, the appreciation of good health. Our proposed new legislation would restore our interest in healthy and large families, and we ought not to wait to show our sympathy until these families betray signs of weariness or worse still approach death's door.

No doubt one must discount the losses, and it is likely that the proportion is even larger than is generally

<sup>1</sup> An enquiry among the charitable institutions and the commissaries of police in the poor quarters would reveal scandalous facts on this point.

thought of people who will remain indifferent to the public interest, and of couples ("the most thoughtful") who will repel with contempt any call to increase the number of their children. But we must hope, nevertheless, that our kindly attentions will be appreciated as they ought to be by a great number of honest folk, who ask nothing better than to fulfil their social duty, if only society, instead of punishing them, would give them a little help. "Why are there no children in many working-class families?" wrote to me lately a correspondent who has for long been associated with schemes for helping such families. "For manifold reasons. With many women from fear of hunger, of wretchedness, of fatigue; which I completely understand. It requires an excellent stock of health to face maternity, the good management of the household, and the education of the elder children. I am convinced that many women, even many couples, suffer from this restriction, which they *believe* to be necessary, and, while they will not put material advantages before children, they will hail with joy the day when such help will free them from the anxiety for their daily bread because they have brought a child into the world."

A woman who came for the fifth time to the "cantine maternelle" of a little Eastern village, and was complimented on her well-filled nest, replied: "One would gladly have a dozen such, if one was certain there was plenty of food for them." The assurance of adequate meals which would enable her to nurse her child without undue fatigue, was all that she desired. This mother's answer only put into words the common thought of a great number of her companions, and may be compared with the letter of a Breton curé, who lately wrote that "the privileges granted to the soldier fathers of five or six children, during the war, have done more to raise the birth-rate than all my sermons!"

The defenders of tradition and the eternal moral law too often disregard the material side of the due performance of moral duties; far from serving the cause which they have so closely at heart, this indifference is,

on the contrary, extremely fatal to it, by discrediting its preachers and raising doubts as to their clear-sightedness or their sincerity. This was never the line taken by really generous souls, or by the saints; it has, in fact, more to do with hardness of heart or mental laziness than with the defence of outraged morality.

It would be a complete error to oppose these measures for the advantage of the large working-class family by quoting the figures of finance budget or bygone principles of economic orthodoxy. Apart from the fact that these latter are only counting on the mishaps, as their experience of life has led them to do, it is a principle already recognized by Rousseau "that there is no worse dearth than the dearth of men," and every citizen ought to be convinced that the public funds employed to increase our French birth-rate, and to ensure our children healthy conditions of physiological development, intellectual and moral, form an investment, of incalculable value and far superior to any other. When we have spent 150,000 millions of capital, and more than a million and a half of infinitely precious human lives, that France may have the right to live, it would be strange indeed to grudge the few hundred millions needed to restore our life and build up our nation. This would be the reversal of *propter vitam vitæ perdere causas*, and a people who had endured the most terrible sacrifices to maintain itself against the assassin's clutch would then be refusing the comparatively light sacrifices indispensable to its re-establishment in prosperity and power.

Besides, some of the proposed measures, even some of those to which the most objections could be raised are not such a novelty in our French legislation as people generally affect to believe<sup>1</sup> When they have been accepted, when a profound reform of opinions and manners, both of the individual and of the collective psychic attitude, have made their adoption possible,

<sup>1</sup> The French Revolution did not hesitate to lay a super-tax on celibates. The decree of 13 January, 1791 increased their personal quota, and the law of 7 Thermidor, an III, increased by a quarter the taxation of celibates above 30 years of age.

many other reforms, entirely unthought of to-day, will be seen to be necessary, and several among them will go beyond, and far beyond, the field of legislative activity. I am thinking especially of the co-operation of our economic activities and the reform of the principles which govern contracts as to wages and payment of work. We must cherish no illusion: even after the awards and premiums paid by the Treasury, even after the collaboration of the various societies for the public benefit which endeavour to lighten the expenses of the normal working-class family (and among these should be especially mentioned, in the first rank, the societies for providing *large families* with cheap houses), there will still remain an enormous advantage to the egotistical celibate and the sterile couple, so long as our business section of society refuses to take into consideration the domestic situation of the employé. The disproportion is great between the easy circumstances of the regular voluptuary or the neo-malthusian couple who during twenty-five years of married life obstinately take care to have only one or two children, and the heavy burdens upon the shoulders which have ever maintained loyalty in their conjugal relations. Therefore one must give up the hope of even approximately making the one material situation approach the other, so long as our business men will not allow family expenses to count in the fixing of wages. Justice, national interest, and the interest of commerce and industry, unite to claim this reform, and there is no doubt that it will be ranked among the most imperative on the day the good citizens of this country really take in hand the restoration of national strength and the uplifting of the national ideal.

If to these combined efforts of the political and economic sections of society is added the active co-operation of the associations specially directed to the encouragement of the healthy and vigorous family, we can hope for the accomplishment of good work for the households of France and the recruiting of our race. This new triple Entente will be no less necessary

than the other to save our country from the very serious and quickly approaching danger with which she is threatened.

Once more, I would not on any account be looked upon as despising these legislative and economic reforms, on the contrary I believe them to be indispensable; the preceding pages will be enough, I trust, to make such a charge impossible. But in this connection, as in all departments of our social life, it appears to me that there is always a wrong way of presenting the importance of the moral elements of any social phenomenon, either by being determined to deny or to treat with contempt its material or economic elements. Whatever may be said, we are neither angels nor brutes, and there would be a great advance if, by methodical observation, we turned our attention both to the right and left in order to recognize the mixed character of these phenomena.

But having clearly laid this down, I am nevertheless bound to say that the vast majority of publicists and social "regenerators" who, look solely to the problem of the birth-rate and its increase, base their hopes somewhat too exclusively on the reform of a legal code "cleverly arranged for the greater advantage of selfish danger celibates and sterile couples," are pursuing a perilous path and adopting futile tactics. In my judgment, the problem must be approached under a wider scope and viewed from a higher standpoint; its solution is only possible by employing a new system of education, both for young people and for men and women, and *every legislative or economic reform will be useless, if it be not accompanied by a thorough-going reform of manners and moral dispositions.* The reasons which justify this opinion are as follows:

In the first place, even the adoption of the desired legislation presupposes, to a considerable degree, the very reform of manners and opinions which it is the object of that new legislation to inaugurate and promote. If it be obvious, every day, that the practical application of laws already promulgated is next to impossible without the support of manners and opinions to enforce them,

how much more impossible will be the adoption in practice of such novel legislation as is demanded, without the co-operation of a renewed and transformed public opinion.

It is true that laws partly create manners, but it is no less true that manners enforce laws, which are neither possible nor effective without their co-operation. There is a mutual service between the two forces, each of which repays, and with interest, the contribution which it receives. Thus, those who imagine they need trouble themselves about nothing but the votes of our 900 legislators, are drawn by the very force of facts to a far more extensive and interesting work of propaganda and moral action. Under a government ruled by opinion nothing can become law without the assent of opinion.<sup>1</sup>

And what shall we say of the application of the measures we would promote? To vote a useful reform is good; to apply it loyally is still better. Now the information which the leagues and committees of public morality possess is little reassuring. Certainly very few people have any doubt of the great and astonishing work that could be done, even with our present defective laws, towards the restoration of morality and large families. But how can this work be done, since it interests no one, neither electors, nor members of Parliament, nor officials,

<sup>1</sup> "It is to be feared," says M. Gide, "that these legislative remedies can never be applied, for the very simple reason that the laws are made by a majority of celibates and childless men, and *for them*. This is why, during the last few years, when the Chambers have voted hundreds of millions of increased salary to petty officials, we have asked in vain that the augmentation should be confined to officials with families. But just because they are few, they weigh but little in the electoral balance. So that the less children there are, the less regard is paid to them. It is going round in a vicious circle." (*La France sans enfants*, a pamphlet, p. 14.)

<sup>2</sup> *Vide Supra*, p. The instances are countless. The failure to apply the laws against abortion in a country suffering so grievously from a deficit of births, and in which the abortions are probably above 300,000 a year, is a symptom, and it needs a stout confidence to believe that legal punishment of the crime will bring any real improvement. What, again, has become of the law of 14 July 1913, with regard to the help of large families? M. Jacques Bertillon has shown how the more large families there are in a department, the fewer are those which receive the grant, and the result is quite logical; since poverty is a matter for the estimates, and the adminis-

nor the public with the administration of whose interests they are charged? If public opinion is to remain as indifferent as it has hitherto shown itself to the great rules of moral discipline, we must expect the new legislation to be no more effective than the old. When a new measure is proposed in order to combat an old and stubborn evil, people always affect to believe that the persistence of the evil has no other cause but the insufficiency of the law in respect to it. This belief shows an ignorance of sociological analysis which should be corrected; if one takes the trouble to look more closely, we see that the law is simply paralysed by the coalition of many forces, some praiseworthy and others altogether to be reprobated, which exercise every moment their prohibitive power over men's intelligences and wills.

Let us go further: let us suppose that the reforms we ask for meet with sympathy, both in the discussion of them before they become law, and in their application when promulgated. We must not imagine that the problem is solved, by a long way; serious objections, which would arrest their adoption and paralyse their effect could be raised against some of them. For instance, it is easy to formulate the thesis that all celibates, and married people having less than three children, should pay an additional quota in direct taxation, but who does not see the difficulties, perhaps the insuperable difficulties of drawing up an Act that would suit our state of society? Not to mention the grave impropriety of imposing an equal super-tax on all unmarried men, without making any distinction between celibates by selfishness and celibates by devotion, what-

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trators of the public funds must guard them jealously. In a particular commune where a family of three or four is a rare event, it will be put on the list without trouble, because the precedent will not be dangerous. In the districts where large families are numerous, it will be more narrowly watched. The stubborn neglect to apply our law of 1873, for repressing public drunkenness, has become proverbial, and it is not the passing of the law of 1st October 1917 that will suffice by itself to carry on the fight against alcoholic excess.

In the same way, who doubts that art. 334 of the Penal Code would more than suffice to rid us, if we chose to enforce it, of all the private houses of ill-fame which defile our towns and their inhabitants?

ever be the object of the devotion, we should soon be up against objections of which it would be useless to deny the force. Not every adult is fitted for the married state; there are those, even, whose duty it is not to marry, because of some defect capable of transmission. Are these to be liable to the super-tax? If so, will not a law be branded as cruel which adds financial harshness to physical suffering? If not, is it not evident that the law will itself provide a way of evasion which will deprive it of all value? Again, are unmarried women to be taxed? Here we are again exposed to the same dilemmas, for, especially after the war, there must be a great number of women entirely irresponsible for their unmarried state. Besides, has not the war thrown open to them countless lucrative employments, with salaries equal to the best of those of their male competitors?

We might go on to examine in the same way the measures suggested with regard to sterile couples, or the proposals as to the death duties payable on property left by, or to, unmarried people, and it is plain that many danger-points lie between the abstract thesis and the practical realization.

Once more, while it does not seem to us that these obstacles are insurmountable; it is necessary, at least, to recognise that they may easily appear so to a society which is not as yet sensible of the great duties which moral discipline imposes on it, and whose members are not yet genuinely convinced that they must reform their conduct.

Thus, in a round-about way, we are brought back again to the everlasting question of the reform of manners and consciences, of moral education and the training of the will. "There is no way out of this dilemma," writes M. Edouard Jordan. "Really effective reforms would only be accepted and carried out in a country morally transformed, and so convinced of the necessity of having children that it would begin to have them without waiting for the reforms. As for measures which are mere anodynes, which can disappear to-morrow, they will never, for one who reduces everything to interest and



figures, compensate for the sacrifices and the cares of paternity."<sup>1</sup>

We may also consider as perilous and fatal certain efforts to raise the birth-rate, which rely exclusively on the idea of utility and mere personal interest. It is said: "Since motives of interest deter men from paternity, let us give married people such an interest in having children as they have hitherto had in not having them, and the problem will be solved." We must be on the watch, such proposals run the risk of being supremely unwise, and of extending the very evil which they claim to heal.

In the first place, there is a way of demanding advantages for large families, and of pitying their lot, which is in fact a kind of apology on behalf of the limited family: it is a two-edged weapon, and while it is by no means certain that the picture of the injustice and the trials suffered by the large family would suffice to carry the required reforms, it is at least certain that it would recall to the selfish how sensible they are to adopt their tactics of prudence and would only encourage those that came after them to follow the same path.

Besides, in perpetually talking about premiums, reductions, and super-taxes, and of penalising selfishness, the serious imprudence is committed of appealing to the spirit of calculation, without considering how it is thus actually encouraged, and is certain to turn against the end which is being sought. For selfishness is always the supreme enemy of the birth-rate. Its domination always makes for limitation of the family.

Finally, we must not forget that even in our society, which is so deeply impregnated with neo-malthusianism, the number is great, even very great, of families with five, six, eight children, and more, and the minute examination of the demographic table of families placed

<sup>1</sup> *Contre la dépopulation*, p. 12. M. Jordan adds this note, for which we thank him: "We mention in this connection the League, and the journal, *Pour la Vie*, the great merit of which is that they never separate moral propaganda from the demand for legislative reforms."

according to the number of their children, even proves that the proportion is very much the same as in other countries; our inferiority results above all from the great number of childless couples or those with only one or two children. Now, by talking of the normal family, the family that does its duty, the family that fulfils its civic obligations, far greater risk is run of deterring very prolific families from a fecundity which they would almost have the right to consider excessive,<sup>1</sup> than there is probability of drawing into the path of conjugal generosity and loyalty those husbands and wives who are cunningly and obstinately attached to their restrictive practices.

Many of those who oppose neo-malthusianism are, at the bottom, themselves supporters of a kind of neo-malthusianism; they only reject its extreme forms, and are prepared to condone a modified use of it, when the civic duty—or rather what they consider such—has been fulfilled. A truly dangerous doctrine, for in such a matter who will not think his own to be one of those exceptional cases in which a man would be justified in limiting the number of his children? How far we are here from true conjugal morality, and how clearly we see that from the moment we appeal to mere sentiments of self-interest, everyone is the judge of his own personal interest. And it is to be feared that, between these two kinds of interest, those to which the neo-malthusian propagandists appeal will entice more effectively than the interested liberality of the *repopulateurs*.

If instead of shutting ourselves up in figures, statistics, and averages, in calculations of premiums and allocations, of rewards and punishments cleverly administered, we would study social reality, and analyse the moral

<sup>1</sup> It is piquant to notice that the proposers of legislation to encourage the increase of births are sometimes the first to lay stress on this possible excess on the part of certain parents who really do tend to exaggerate. No one has done this more unskillfully than M. Benazet, who proposed to give a premium of 500 francs at the birth of each of the two first children, of 1000 francs at the birth of the third, of 2000 francs at the birth of the fourth. But the children who came after that were not worth more than 1000 francs to their parents at each confinement. What extraordinary social psychology!

dispositions of husbands and wives who have accepted the duty of transmitting life to a large family, we should see that self-interest and calculation have not formed the stay of their married life—a life which has only been possible in proportion as those evils have been ignored, fought against, or restrained. The acceptance of the natural ends of the power of reproduction is connected, in both man and woman, with profound sentiments, bound together, whether by natural instinct or by the most delicate, refined, and noble tendencies of our moral nature ; yet, not content with neglecting their co-operation, we follow a system which, for the sake of having the name of being more in line with the scientific conduct of a mercantile society, risks none the less the discrowning of motherhood by depriving it of all the ornaments which are its charm and beauty, and no doubt, also, of its social worth as well.<sup>1</sup>

The transmission of life, regarded in the fullness of its social reality, is neither in the first physiological act, nor

<sup>1</sup> No one has more wittily criticized these tactics than a merry correspondent of the *Temps*, in an article entitled "Man Power," written on the occasion of the institution by our ever practical English friends of a "Man Power Distribution Board." It is to this utilitarian pre-occupation, to this dull industrial necessity of multiplying citizens in a country like machines in a workshop, that we owe the present campaign in support of an intensive factory of brats and the approaching creation of an under-secretary of State for sucklings.

"Alas ! weep, ye poets ! the war has torn away the lace and the literary gew-gaws with which you have surrounded our cradles ! It has profaned the sweet mysteries of the nest. Renounce, young women, the romantic mirages with which you have been pleased to deck the duty of motherhood, the tender sentimental enchantment of the miracle of love. We no longer speak to you of motherhood, but of repopulation. You are no longer free to indulge in fantastic dreams, you are become the mobilised work-girls in our great national factory of little soldiers, in which—don't forget it ! the girls are paid by piece-work.

"We are at this moment assisting in negotiations, as picturesque as they are ingenious, designed to encourage this decayed industry. The best commercial traditions are applied : a scale of premiums, progressive reductions, prohibitive rights, taxation and proportional remission, compensations, indemnities, gratuities, allowances, pensions, superannuations, distinctions of honour, diplomas, crosses and medals—nothing is forgotten ! The little knots of ribbon hitherto kept for your baby-clothes will be pinned to-morrow on the breasts of prolific mothers. We are entering an epoch in which the 'argument of the family man' will no longer be an empty word."

in the long series of acts necessary to the upbringing of the child, a work which can be conducted according to the rule of deliberately economic motives; no doubt it is connected with our economic state, but in reality it is separate from it, and goes immeasurably beyond it.

In fine, and before everything, in devoting all their attention to the single question of productive marriage, as if the deficient birth-rate of France were owing to one single cause, viz., the deliberate or sudden determination of husband and wife not to have children, the "regenerators" simplify to excess a problem which is really complex, and the methodical study of which will lead them much further *than they think*. No doubt, in this age of gross materialism, when the wages-contract is daily more important owing to the development of industry, it is natural to believe that the suggestion of a pecuniary recompense, under some form or other, is enough to secure, up to a fixed point, the necessary and desirable number of births; but even supposing such a theory was tolerable, the legislature must recognise that the control of the habits, acts, and general behaviour of the population, is a much more complicated question than it seems to think. As M. Gide has shown in a very trenchant article,<sup>2</sup> the question of the natality and future of our race is not only a question of the marriage chamber. "There is certainly no doubt that the birth-rate depends in a great degree upon the meaning and the practice of 'love' in marriage; but it depends also on its meaning and practice before, and on the eve of marriage." The attitude of husband and wife towards the problems which the exercise of the marriage duty sets before their conscience depends really on their conduct and their moral

<sup>2</sup> *Prostitution, Ecole primaire de l'amour stérile*, in *Pour la Vie*, December 1916. In this article the eminent sociologist shows that prostitution contributes in a fourfold manner to the sterilization of the race: (1) by delaying the age of marriage, while all inquiries establish the fact that marriages are prolific in proportion to the youth of the spouses; (2) by increasing the number of celibates; (3) by contaminating a great number of men who sometimes become sterile and too often make their wives the same; (4) finally, by initiating young people to the practices of mere sensual passion and even of abortion.

attitude before marriage. So much so is this the case that the great majority of husbands would never have married if they had not been certain that they could continue the same conduct and moral attitude, after the civil or religious ceremony. Systematic sterility in married couples is closely allied to a licentious youth and prostitution, to adultery and divorce, to pornography and abortion, and every other form of moral indiscipline. Now it does not appear that the statisticians and economists, who are to-day demanding three or four children in a family, ever think of recalling the duty of chastity to young men, or of commending to husbands the duties of faithfulness, loyalty, and conjugal continence. Nevertheless, as the trenchant analysis of Auguste Comte has clearly shown, the various rules of sexual morality are reciprocal and closely knit together, and he is badly equipped to keep one of them who has held the others cheap. Why should the young man, who ten years ago believed himself at liberty to sow his wild oats, suddenly come to regard the marriage duty as a sacred act, destined by nature for the realization of glorious ends which infinitely overpass the individual and his temporary existence? What grace has enlightened him all of a sudden, and how can he make the way to the *mairie* or the church the road to Damascus? Is it not evident, on the contrary, that the husband of to-morrow can be nothing but the young man of yesterday? He will simply adapt the new conditions to his selfish desires; and daily observation tells us that a disorderly way of living in youth "forms the best apprenticeship for conjugal deceits or even for the practice of abortion; it is the primary school of sterile passion. It is there that young men are taught, and they in their turn teach their wives when they marry." We need say no more.

In the same way, if it is true that a husband has the right to demand divorce for incompatibility of temper, and that on his one-sided affirmation that the marriage in which he is involved hinders the expansion of his individuality and makes it impossible for him to gain the happiness to which he is entitled, it is difficult to see on

what grounds one can insist that husbands and wives, who vowed to remain together, shall accept willingly the duty of transmitting life. Similarly, if fidelity of heart is enough, under what obligation can we insist on respect for nature's designs, in the case of married people who have a totally different ideal of conjugal loyalty, but who, from the same motive, reckon that, in marriage at least, everything is permissible? Once more, all these moral disciplines hold together and are strictly bound up with each other; to speak truly, they are but different aspects of one and the same principle.

This close relationship has not escaped certain physicians, who are demi-sociologists in private, and who seem to have noticed it only to plunge us further into the mud in which we are struggling. They propose to supplement the measures for the assistance of pregnant women, nursing mothers, and large families, by a lavish distribution of protective tissues and pomades which may allow young men to "pass their youth" in safety; thus they say security will be gained against venereal diseases. It only remains to crown the whole work by sterilizing the unfit, and according to these blind guides, society will obtain by purely scientific processes, the maximum of protection, and the supreme guarantee for the physiological and moral progress of the race.

It is necessary to be on our guard against hurried judgments and against being equally severe on all these proposals which are of most unequal value; and at various times lately I have warned the "children of tradition" what a serious mistake they make in treating with contempt the first attempts at "eugenics." Charles Darwin's first cousin<sup>1</sup> showed clearly in his great work, "Hereditary genius, its laws and consequences," published in 1869, the necessity of promoting scientifically the improvement of the human race, of which our innumerable charitable institutions, and our vices, are on the contrary achieving the gradual degeneracy. It may be that once started on this road our descendants may find it expedient to sterilize or castrate in certain most exceptional cases, in order to safeguard society

<sup>1</sup> Francis Galton.

against the reproduction of undesirables.<sup>1</sup> But such intervention must only be undertaken with extreme prudence, and there also it will certainly be found that there is a wide gap between the abstract formula and its concrete application. In every case it must be remembered that man is something more than a beautiful animal, and if the eugenic doctrines, such at least as some of their apostles teach,<sup>2</sup> had been known to our fathers, it is probable that humanity would have been deprived of a great number of its best servants.

More scientific, and more truly realistic, is this remark of Foerster, the German pedagogue: "It is not by accident that wisdom from her earliest days directed man's attention rather to regeneration than to generation rather to re-birth than to birth, and forbade him to formulate a scheme in a section of phenomena of which the vital constituent elements will always be hidden from him. It is impossible for us mortals to

<sup>1</sup> Several States of North America have already promulgated laws in this sense. Here is an example: "State of New York, law 445, promulgated 16th April, 1912, relative to 'operations to prevent procreation.' There is constituted, by the nomination of three members—a physician, a surgeon, and a specialist in nervous diseases—chosen by the Government, a bureau for the examination of imbeciles, criminals, and all other degenerates. This bureau is appointed to examine the physical and mental conditions, the individual past and the family antecedents of all imbeciles, epileptics, criminals, and degenerates in the national lunatic asylums, prisons, houses of correction, and other State institutions, penal or charitable. If in the judgment of a majority of the members of the bureau, procreation by any one of these persons would lead to the birth of children with a hereditary tendency to crime, madness, idiocy, or imbecility, and if there is no probability that the person's condition can be ameliorated, the said bureau shall direct one of its members to perform such an operation as will render procreation impossible, in any way that may be considered most efficacious.

"The criminals falling under the application of this law are those who have been convicted of rape, or of such a succession of crimes that, in the judgment of the bureau, it appears sufficiently proved that the convicted party suffers from inveterate criminal tendencies."

<sup>2</sup> In 1906, at the congress held at Toronto, Reid Rentoul advised "the castration of lepers, maniacs, idiots, epileptics, cancer patients, those suffering from kidney and heart disease, syphilis and tuberculosis, prostitutes, criminals, vagabonds, and even those who convey gonorrhœa, that scourge of reckless youth."

know the vital reality which is transmitted by two human beings to a third; we shall never be able to survey our existence by placing ourselves at this or that point of view; we shall merely pass from one hypothesis to another. We should therefore direct all our efforts towards the work of healing, reforming, regenerating—towards the true education.”<sup>1</sup>

If the disciples of Francis Galton persevere in their material representations of individual and social life, there is no doubt that the practical application of their doctrine will only result in multiplying still further the evils which they propose to fight. A fool, as a Scandinavian proverb puts it, can ask more questions in a day than a hundred wise men can answer during their whole lives. In the same way, we may say, licentiousness will always be able to breed more evils than the discoveries of science will ever be able to eliminate or heal. It may be that Schaudinn's bacillus is not invincible, but the series of physiological evils is indefinitely long.

Thus we must not rely on either medicine or bacteriology, or eugenics, to make up for the necessary defects of legislative measures. The reforms proposed will be beneficial if they are the accompaniment, and in some sense the echo in the domain of law, of a profound moral reformation, a cleansing of hearts and a strengthening of wills; if they are not connected with a moral advance which they should, and can, make fruitful, we shall find them ineffective and dangerous.

Must it be said that a certain section of our contemporaries would like to think that some ingenious system can be discovered which will secure to society the abundant increase which it needs, and which will at the same time demand as little change as possible, or even no change at all, in the conduct of private individuals. It is to be feared that the needs of the sexual appetite, as we have been accustomed to define them, will continue to be satisfied as usual, that our young men will continue to spend their

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 98.



youth in the well-known way, and that the social service of prostitution, which is said to be necessary to safeguard wives and girls of good family, will continue; pornography, the licentious novel and the immoral stage will be kept up, and the marriage for money or vanity will flourish as in the past. Even anti-conceptionist practices and abortion will still hold an honourable place, on the condition that they are carried on in a scientific and reasonable scale, as befits intelligent citizens. In a word, nothing will be changed except the judicial administration of our laws and a slight increase in taxation in order to reward the honest folk of modest rank who will consent to give children to the Republic. Thus we are told will be established a wise and altogether restful state of things, which will have the great merit of accommodating all the weaknesses of men, "who have no ambition to be saints."

Such is the avowed or secret plan of many "reformers," who know that in formulating it they are expressing the wishes of a great number of Frenchmen who are scared at the prospect of a true moral reform.

This plan, then, it must be plainly said, is impossible of realization, because it is utterly Utopian in spite of its apparent scientific exactness. We must take our side: the humiliating discomfiture which statistics inflict on us, by informing us that we are no longer succeeding in balancing our death-rate by our birth-rate, can only be remedied if we bravely set about altering our habits and applying ourselves to the great lessons of sexual discipline with as much zeal as we have hitherto shown in breaking away from them. We boast of taking our precautions against nature, but she also takes hers, and it would not be the first time that, thanks to the wonderful flexibility of her mechanism, she would get the better of us even at the moment when we believed ourselves most assured of victory. Face to face as it is with the problem of procreation and the recruiting of the race, our modern society is at the stroke bound to alter all its views on sexual morality, at least in its application. They profess, practically, two

principles : first, that sexual morality is not the same for man as for woman ; and secondly, that, in regard to the man at any rate, the sexual act finds its end in itself and in the pleasure it brings. Now these two principles are in themselves, and through the consequences which result from them, ruinous for both the individual and the state at large, and we have arrived at that stage of social evolution when we can no longer endure them.

It is no use thinking that it will be enough to act momentarily on the will of husband and wife in order to achieve that famous third or fourth child on which our politicians and our social engineers lay so much stress. In vain shall we boast that we even make use of selfishness, and by pressing it into our service draw a profit from it which will dispense us from making an appeal to the spirit of discipline and devotedness. In reality the point on which they are concentrating will count for nothing in economics. Nature has not agreed to be a party to our pickings and choosings of what we want and what we don't want. The implacable logic of an evolution absolutely coherent with itself is bound to produce at a given point—*i.e.* the birth-rate—the consequences of the two pernicious principles upon which our modern society had imagined it could found the economy of the sexual life of its members. The time has come when feminism is driving us from the first, and the urgent need to secure the increase of our nation is compelling us to abandon the second.

We have in vain considered the problem on every side ; only one way of escape is open to us, that of return to a coherent sexual morality, voluntarily accepted by the individual, who would also be the first to experience its immense benefits. This truth, admitted by all the adherents of Christian morality, is every year more fully recognized by a great number of publicists and moralists who profess no religious belief. *L'appel aux éducateurs*, drawn up by the Education Committee of the *Ligue pour la Vie*, expressed this forcibly, and Mme. Jane Misme reminded us of it in the ablest organ of the feminist movement : "It must be

said, and said again, nothing whatever will arrest our depopulation so long as we will not, by moral education, bring back man and woman to a healthy conception of love and life. It is indispensable that the poor family should be helped in every way, but not a child the more will be born for this if the child is not desired and waited for by husband and wife who love it as the complement and perpetuity of their happiness.<sup>1</sup>"

\* \* \* \* \*

The general criticisms which have just been expressed dispense us from examining a very different set of remedies, extolled in socialist and revolutionary circles : which assume that the problem of procreation and the recruiting of the race can only be really solved by the establishment of a collectivist régime, involving the suppression of private property and the holding in common of at least the means of production and exchange. Without entering into the never-ending controversy between the supporters of the capitalist, and the supporters of the collectivist, régime, I will confine myself to saying that it is a bad method, scientifically, to delay the solution of a present and pressing problem until we have solved another of a more general character, that of the inequality of conditions, especially as the solution proposed for this second problem still remains so nebulous and uncertain that even those who recommend it would be quite incapable of formulating the great outlines of its application and practical working.

Here again we must not confuse the issue. It is a false promise to say that the debauchery of young people, and prostitution, pornography and licentiousness, systematic sterility and abortion, adultery and divorce, are only the results of extreme misery on the one hand and idleness on the other, and that these evils will disappear spontaneously the day on which society assures to each individual a just satisfaction of his needs proportioned "to his capacity and his work." It is not ill-paid and despised toil, nor is it idle and

<sup>1</sup> *La Française*, 27th October, 1917.

sated opulence, which is responsible: they have, as accomplices, laziness and coquetry, indiscipline and selfishness, luxury and even a taste for vice; and if there are women, of every social rank, "folles de leur corps," there are also a great number of men always on the hunt for game to satisfy their appetites. To make good all these losses it will not suffice to establish a more just distribution of wealth. When we see the almost exclusive solicitude with which "le parti du ventre" takes care to satisfy man's material needs, the alliances which it has formed with the neo-malthusian groups, and the ease with which it has shaken itself free from the ancient ideal which was once man's glory and the secret of his force, we may even conclude that the establishment of the collectivist regime would have the effect of still further increasing moral indiscipline and licentiousness.

Moreover, if one cannot find the slightest proof that a revolution in the mode of production and distribution of wealth would solve the great problem of sexual morality, it is on the other hand certain that amorous extravagance and moral indiscipline form one of the greatest obstacles to the suppression of the all too real social injustices which we so much deplore.<sup>1</sup>

In any case, to the patriotic and practical socialists who have taken care to remain in touch with facts, and know that a large population is necessary to the France of our days if she is to maintain her rank in the world, we dedicate this page of Mme. Nelly Roussel; her sex and her well-known socialist and revolutionary sentiments give her words a value which cannot be disregarded.

"Too many sociologists, alas! have seemed to see in our desire for an increase of births, as the result of due reflection, only a passing measure to meet a passing need. They keep repeating every day that in the society of the future, when everyone will have his share of bread no less than of air and sunshine; when misery, hunger, cold, anxiety for the morrow, will be no more;

<sup>1</sup> *Vide infra*, chapter x, for the development of this idea.

when children will be no longer a financial burden ; in that ideal society of peace, well-being, and love: fecundity without limit and blind obedience to the laws of nature, will become possible and desirable. Don't believe it, citizens ; it is a monstrous delusion. In their atavistic egotism men do not sufficiently consider that a better social organization, which sets free the father from material anxiety, will scarcely make the weariness, the suffering and danger, of maternity less for us, and that then woman, less resigned than she is to-day, and more conscious of her rights, will only refuse to face the great trial except of her own free will. She will understand that her body is her own and she has the sole right to dispose of it. She will become a mother wisely, according to her strength and at the fitting time ; and then will disappear the type of the exhausted wife, faded before her time by too frequent pregnancies, a martyr to continual suffering, and without even the strength to make a gesture of revolt, and deny her poor, ill-treated body to the brutal and unthinking male.

“And it is not for us to talk of this new religion, the religion of nature, which some strange fanatics, who imagine themselves to be free-thinkers would build upon the ruins of the old dogmas. Nature, comrades, is too often, for us, not the tender mother of which the poets have sung, but a blind and cruel step-mother, against whom we find ourselves bound to fight. The religion of nature ? It is going back to the primitive ages, it is the negation of progress, it is the triumph of instinct over reason and intelligence ! Civilization is only achieved by man's conquests over nature, leading us step by step, slowly but surely, towards the bright horizon where, throwing off his last fetters, man will be seen, according to the poet's words :

“This worm of earth, opening his wings in heaven.”

“It is time that the old doctrine of the Church, which places the human creature between the sufferings of absolute chastity on the one hand and those of unlimited fecundity on the other, which claims to forbid all the

joys of love to those who hesitate for very serious reasons before the work of life-transmission—it is time that this tyrannical and cruel doctrine should wing its way to join the chaos of dead things, the ideas of restraint and servitude which the breath of revolt has swept away!

“Ah! undoubtedly we must extol motherhood, and its sorrowful grandeur. But we must not make it the one reason of our existence, and an excuse for love. Love has its own beauty, and needs no excuse.

“And the free and willing motherhood will be yet more sublime. No one has a right to impose it, as no one has a right to forbid it. Let each woman choose her own destiny. There is much talk about the happiness of mankind; each offers his formula or his system; but happiness is in its essence relative, varying with each individual, and cannot be brought under rules; and its only doctrines are the doctrines of liberty!”

That is clear enough, and needs no comment.

We must now make clear the principles of a coherent sexual morality, such as alone can correspond with the exigencies of a healthy and vigorous social life. In order to accomplish this task, we shall follow scrupulously the lines of sociological observation. As we go we shall show also that these principles, far from being opposed to nature and the true interests of the human personality are on the contrary precisely in accord with the one, and supply the other with a priceless safeguard.

We shall see that the precepts of this morality are five in number: the duty of chastity for the unmarried; the duty of marriage; the duty of conjugal fidelity; the duty of loyalty in the conjugal relations associated with the duty of continence.

# Part III

## A COHERENT SEXUAL MORALITY





## CHAPTER VI

### CHASTITY IN THE UNMARRIED STATE

“To be strong, be pure.” MICHELET, *Les soldats de la Revolution*.

“No one but imbeciles mock at chastity.” Official pamphlet published by M. JUSTIN GODARD, Under Secretary of State in the Ministry of Health.

THE first moral discipline which society claims from the individual, when he reaches adolescence and experiences the solicitations of the sexual instinct in the mysterious depths of his being, is that of Chastity, the total abstention from every sexual act so long as he remains unmarried. Certainly no social prescription has been, all down the ages, more widely violated; and when we contemplate the innumerable number of these violations we understand how unreflecting souls have sometimes come to lose the very sense of the obligation; the common phrases employed to condone the violation, and, in turn, the weakening of the force of the precept, has involved the disorder of the will. But the desire for excuse is itself a homage rendered to the principle; and even those who have most strenuously urged extenuating circumstances have easily recognized that the debauchery of our young men—for the question did not arise with respect to our girls—was a social evil the abolition of which was much to be desired.

All the intellectual disorder which marks our epoch has been required to create a doubt as to the binding character of the principle, and even to lead to its open denial. It is not necessary to insist here on the character and importance of these repudiations after the information that has been supplied. At least they compel us to inquire, by careful observation, what precisely are the

foundations of the rule of chastity, and how far they are able to meet a criticism which every day becomes more destructive and more cunning.

We shall see, perhaps, that this is far from being a superfluous inquiry, at a time when the rapid evolution of our social life is placing us face to face with new conditions, with regard to which the traditional arguments appear to lose their force ; sometimes, even, it happens that the inexperience of the champions compromises the doctrine of which they have undertaken the defence.

## I

To tell the truth, the publicists of every school, who have in our time revolted against the discipline of chastity which is obligatory on the unmarried of both sexes, have never taken the trouble to tell us how a society could maintain itself and prosper in which the young men and girls received public and official instruction on the right of every adult to sexual indulgence, however transient was the occasion, or however temporary the relationship. This very silence is significant, and perhaps we need add nothing to it, since it is impossible to conceive what would become, in such a society, of marriage and the family, conjugal fidelity and paternity ; and when all these institutions had disappeared, the whole of society would itself sink down into a sewer.

But not content with this first proof, which is nevertheless peremptory, let us enquire by means of a positive analysis, why in the long run society is under the necessity of submitting youth to a law, the burden of which seems so heavy to a great number of young people—who, nevertheless, do nothing whatever to make it lighter.

Twenty years ago the proof seemed easy enough, and if I am not mistaken it rested on three chief arguments. In the first place, the physiological dangers of debauchery were insisted on, and the extreme seriousness,

which is only too real, of venereal diseases was described in a way that might have discouraged the most rash, if it were not that young men, in a matter of this sort, have a way of recking little of the counsels of reason. Then, stress was laid on the disloyalty of which the young man was guilty in view of the girl who later on would become his betrothed. What right can he believe himself to have, to bring to married life only a wearied body, and perhaps worse than that, a defiled imagination, a blighted heart, and an emasculated moral vigour, while he requires from his wife virginal integrity of both body and soul? Lastly, and above all, the injustice and cruelty were pictured of a course of conduct which was responsible for the shameful business of prostitution. For who could be the companion of these depraved exploits? Was it a modest girl of irreproachable morals whom the lover had seduced? In that case lying was joined to unchastity, and what must have been the baseness of the seducer who was so degraded as to think himself at liberty, for the mere satisfaction of his sensual appetites, to dishonour and blight the girl whom he had deceived? Most probably, the debauchee sought the aid of one of those dealers in immorality who make their living by the most revolting commerce; but what must not be the responsibility of him who associates himself with prostitution by supporting it with his money and taking advantage of its services? If it is permissible to quote from oneself, I will recall what I wrote in 1911 in the preface to a book by Mrs. Butler. "Everyone who maintains that a young man has a right to 'amuse himself,' at the same time assumes that there must exist in our social life a countless crowd of degraded and fallen women, whose shameful profession is an inexpiable stain on the whole of society. Who are these prostitutes to be? Whence do they recruit their forces? Among our daughters and sisters? Our soul revolts at such a question. But then, by what right shall we say that there exist girls and children, too simple, or too vicious, or too crushed by misery, whose approaching fall will supply a social need? Have they not, like our sisters and our

daughters, a right to dignity and respect? Are they not born of a woman who brought them forth in pain and loved them with maternal tenderness? If their innocence exposes them to danger, let us warn and protect them; if their tendencies are vicious, let us purify their heart and fortify their will; if, lastly, they are in the depths of poverty and labour daily at a task in reality too hard and for a wage too meagre, let us protest against the injustices of competition and remind society, which forgets it, that normal work has a right to normal wages."<sup>1</sup>

Such was once, until the last decade of the nineteenth century, the line of argument usually employed by instructors when exhorting young men to continence. At that period feminism had scarcely begun to protest against the duality of the sexual moral standard, and the triple alliance of neo-malthusianism, revolutionary socialism, and a section of free thought, had not yet invited women to lift the standard of revolt against the ancient moral discipline. One had not yet heard Mme. Nelly Roussel and her comrades declare at a public meeting: "the worst of slaveries, citizens, is for us, sexual slavery; the enfranchisement of the flesh is not less to be desired than that of the spirit."

These arguments are always valid, and will never lose anything of their force while prostitution continues to be a social institution and our young men fail to respect the great duty of chastity in all its plenitude. Most often the point above all insisted on will be their connection with the precepts of individual morality, of man's duty to himself and his neighbour. Their social import is not less clear, and only a very slight adaption will be necessary in order to compel their recognition from the sole standpoint of the interests of society.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Preface to *Avant l'Aurore, Appel aux hommes*, by Josephine E. Butler. New edition. Published by Saint-Blaise, Foyer Solidariste, 1911.

<sup>2</sup> It is to be noticed that it is especially in this matter of voluntary prostitution that the general reaction of contempt and disgust is most violent. How completely it is justified! Let us announce yet again, in passing, the hideousness of this enormous commerce of human flesh to the

Nevertheless, it needs but little critical reflection to see that the line of argument is not so conclusive as many honest folk are induced to believe, and M. Ruysen is correct in saying that the case of private prostitution is less simple. All women who sell their bodies are not forced to this by violence, cunning, or misery; there is a considerable number whom idleness, coquetry, or simply the spirit of licentiousness, a taste for vice, have involved in their ignominious profession. What right have we to blame them, if it is true that the individual has absolute right to dispose of his (or her) sexual powers, and to put them to any purpose that may please him? Why should not the woman who is free to refuse herself be also free "to give herself, sell herself, or let herself out on hire?"

Nor is this all; we must here face a situation still less simple, which we must all the less allow to go by default, because it is precisely with this that the young men who are the most finished adepts in the neo-malthusian doctrine always try to pose us. It is only fair, in fact, to say that the most fervent advocates of the right to love, alike for man and woman, and the theorists who defend free love and free motherhood, never think of attempting to justify the voluntary act of prostitution. Quite the con-

men who obstinately close their eyes, and especially to the young men who are yet ignorant of the hidden things of shame which lie beneath the thin varnish of our civilization. Is our social organization to be for ever condemned to witness in its midst the multiplication of these women who are "maintained" by the vilest of trades, and of whom it may be said that they take their revenge for the contempt and injustice which overwhelm them by sowing, in their turn, disgrace and degradation? Ruined daughters as they are, they are also daughters of perdition, hawking, the length of their sad road, all forms of ruin and loss, even to death itself. Living on the lust which it is their business to develop yet more, they are at once the plague of the individual, the family, and society at large, which they defile unceasingly and in every way. How immense therefore is the responsibility of men who take part, be it ever so little, in the perpetuation of such evil deeds.—Let us quote another fine passage from a sociological philosopher, on prostitution:

"Did there not from the first enter into human society, with regard to prostitution, contempt for a 'work' easier than all others, because it demands neither effort, nor invention, nor production, and is limited to an exchange of voluptuousness? All our ideas as to the reward of work and the joys which crown it are here disordered by the irony of pleasure without toil. Thence comes the grudge and sense of injustice inherent in the indignation

trary ; they announce that they desire to abolish prostitution, declaring that it will disappear spontaneously when their doctrine of liberty shall be really administered and carried into practice, since no one will have any longer need to buy what will be offered in all kindness. They make a boast of this, and if they do so in good faith they deceive us while duping themselves ; I have already shown, that as we were bound to expect, observation establishes the fact that prostitution always increases greatly when the sense of chastity and moral discipline is weakened in men's minds ; but it must be admitted that this contention, however true it may be, does not end the controversy, since the abuse of a practice or of a right is almost always a very poor argument against its use.

We must therefore honestly face the plan which is becoming more and more frequent in our day, and which we proposed calling the "amicable association," by which two persons of different sex, possessed of sufficient and sometimes of abundant means, agree, for their personal advantage and their "convenience," to live together for an indeterminate period, until it pleases one companion to notify the other of the termination of the arrangement.

Embarrassing as the hypothesis is to the free-thinking philosopher,<sup>1</sup> it is not in the least so for the sociologist.

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of the decent work-girl against the companion with whom debauchery has succeeded. From another point of view, and above all, we gauge the abasement to which the woman who traffics in her own flesh descends. There is a whole abridged social philosophy in the popular expression 'file perdue.' Lost indeed they are: lost to the growing family which they abandon in order to escape all control ; lost to the family of the future, because they cast away all maternal hope ; lost to society, on which they live idly, parasites on other people's work ; lost, finally, to themselves, for the habit of easy enjoyment destroys their power of effort, and reduces them to the mentality of dolls. We see them also become fanatics with respect to everything that destroys self-control and dehumanizes—games of hazard, alcohol, ether, opium, morphine. They have no value except to satisfy passing desires during a few brief minutes, during a youth soon blighted by vice. For the rest, they live in an atmosphere of crime, of which they are in turn the instigators, accomplices, or victims." (Th. Ruyssen, *broch. cit.* p. 24).

<sup>1</sup> On this embarrassment, cf. M. Ruyssen, *op. cit.* especially pp. 24, 25.

How could the latter still speak of marriage and conjugal felicity, of creating love and of fertility in marriage, if it were allowable for two young people to set up, merely for their personal and sole advantage, such an establishment? But "we shall not speak of them any more," promptly reply the neo-malthusians, following out their premisses logically. Very well; but don't let us speak any more of society, for society would be engulfed utterly in the moral sewer of debauchery. It would be nothing but that evil place which Taine conjured up in a famous phrase, and the recruiting of the race would not be the only thing compromised; social disorganization and disorder would become universal. Even the production of wealth, and labour, would be arrested, and the few years that society would still survive would drain away in catastrophe, misery, and swift decrepitude of things and men.

No doubt the young man and girl who contract this "amicable association," this mutual hiring of services freely contracted and regularly remunerated, do not reckon on all these consequences, and if this page falls under their notice they will probably be astonished to learn that a sociologist could have drawn such conclusions. It must be constantly repeated, social life does not disturb itself about our desires, our ignorances, and our too often self-interested humours; it follows with an inflexible regularity the course of its evolution, and its unfailing logic supplies the failures of our own.<sup>1</sup>

The principles here invoked are at once so strong and so secure that they supply at the same time an answer to the question that seems so disquieting, asked before the war, and which the frightful carnage of our fine young men makes more distressing than ever—namely, have girls who remain unmarried against their will a right to motherhood?

After the war, there must be in our French social life—and not there alone!—a great crowd of girls condemned

<sup>1</sup> For the development of this argument, drawn from *La Solidarité sociale*, see, several pages further on, the treatment of the subject of Liberty.

by the force of circumstances, and against their desire, to perpetual celibacy. Many of them would make excellent wives and admirable mothers. What have we to say to those who, with no sexual desire, ask of us only the right to be mothers, and to be able to press to their bosom, suckle with their milk, nourish with their substance, and encompass with their caresses, a little being who would be flesh of their flesh? We must say that society can only live and prosper by respecting the essential rules of its constitution, and that, under pretext of remedying an involuntary and transitory disturbance, there would be created another still more serious, because voluntary and lasting. If these candidates for marriage really desire to serve, they could not think lightly of the disturbance which these motherhoods, obtained in contempt of the most essential discipline, would bring into our social life. What sort of man would be the father of such children? If a celibate, why should he refuse to marry the mother? If he is married, do we demand the re-establishment of polygamy, which would be, we must confess, a strange way of co-operating with woman's emancipation?

From whatever side the problem is approached, no other solution appears possible but that which devotion and self-sacrifice can alone supply. Painful self-sacrifice, indeed, but no more than was asked during four long years of thousands of their brothers, and which ought not to be beyond the strength of women who are inspired by a noble and generous conception of life. In a society where sufferings and sorrows are so many, there will not lack opportunities for their maternal devotion; and the punishment of our domestic sins has been severe enough, without adding a fresh scandal to the list.

Thus the social law is as clear as it is surely fixed; no exception can be allowed, no evasion is possible for us; the absolute continence of the unmarried alone responds to the most elementary needs of the social life, and the sexual act can in no case be permitted outside of marriage.



## II

Yet, however unanswerable this argument may be, it does not cover all the ground, and after the consideration of a rule under its social aspect we must always regard it also from the point of view of the individual. The two studies mutually control each other, and while one cannot lay down for the advantage of the individual any right which would hurt society as a whole, (since any collective suffering would be thrown back on the members who compose society) at the same time one cannot postulate for social advantage any rule which contradicts the permanent interests of the individual, since by reaction, the hurt inflicted on individuals would turn in the long run to the hurt of the whole society.

Let us enter upon the question of this mutual control by studying the results of the rule of chastity on the individual who submits to it.

In order to dispute its merit and even its possibility, two arguments are usually advanced: one in the physiological and the other in the moral order. It is maintained that the precept of chastity is against the physiological nature of man and woman, and injurious to the happy equilibrium of their health; it is also alleged to be an intolerable attack on the freedom and autonomy of the individual, his right to happiness and to live his life in his own way. Let us briefly examine both these objections.

There is no need to explain the first at length; it is familiar, and we have also given its essential principle in explaining the neo-malthusian doctrine. It amounts to this. It is said that nature has given each individual certain organs, which, when completely developed should, like all the other physical organs, find their normal opportunities of exercise. What would a stomach become to which no nourishment was given to digest? A lung deprived of air that could be breathed? An eye restrained from all contact with light? In the same way, exercise is indispensable to the organs of generation, first in order to

## 262 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

conserve their own vigour, and still more to maintain the harmonious balance of all the other functions and the general health of the individual. Chastity, in depriving an organ of the exercise which it demands, is therefore hurtful to the health, and leads the person whom it debilitates to lack of balance, neurasthenia, and sometimes to madness.

This pitiable argument has been refuted a hundred times ; it is a pure sophism, and yet has an extraordinary effect on the readers of popular pamphlets, and on audiences at public meetings. How could it be otherwise, since it seems right enough at first sight, and since, especially the doctrine which it maintains is assured beforehand of our sympathetic instinct, always on the quest of easy enjoyments? According to the teaching of eminent medical men who are both physiologists and psychologists, let us expose once again the sophism, of which the falsity is now-a-days so universally admitted that no medical man of approved standing can be found to give the support of his name to either its premisses or its conclusions.

No, it is untrue that the organ of generation is an organ like the rest, and the theory of the physiological necessity of "love" is no longer professed except by some ignorant quacks or, alas! by some majors in our regiments. If it were an organ like the others, how could we explain the absolute inhibitory power which the will possesses over it? or the fact that the awakening of sensuality, which pharisaism calls the sexual necessity, is the result of the innumerable excitements which our civilization provides for young boys and girls several years before normal adult age?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Statistical studies, conducted with strict method, have proved that the adolescence is complete between 20 and 21 years, and that marriage contracted below this age exposes to serious and even fatal dangers. "Marriage," says Dr. Proust, in his fine book *L'Hygiène*, "is for both sexes beneficial to the vitality; nevertheless, when contracted prematurely, marriage becomes a source of danger, and the mortality represented by 14 per thousand men rises to 100 per thousand with men married before 21." And further on: "Below the age of 21 marriage is as harmful as after that age it is beneficial." Here he is speaking of *marriage*: what can be said of the debauchery of so many young men who would consider it an act of weakness to wait until 21 for their first amorous experiences?"

How, finally, could one explain men who have been chaste up to 30 and 35 years giving life to fine children, whose strength and vigour rouse the envy of so many of the pitiful offspring of the obsequious slaves of the "claims of nature?" When these three questions are answered—and it would be easy to put others of the same kind—it will be time to listen to the theorists of the physiological necessity of "love."

But we shall have to wait in vain for an answer, for medical science has long enough been decided upon this question, and there is absolute unanimity between the learned men, the physicians, and the physiologists, of the whole world.<sup>1</sup>

"The sexual instinct," says Cœsterlen, Professor at Tübingen University, "is not so blindly all-powerful that it cannot be controlled, and even subjugated entirely, by moral strength and reason. The young man, like the young woman, should learn to control himself until the proper time. He must know that robust health and ever-renewed vigour will be the reward of this voluntary sacrifice."

"One cannot repeat too often that abstinence and the most absolute purity are perfectly compatible with the laws of physiology and morality, and that sexual indulgence is no more justified by physiology and psychology than by morality and religion."

"The example of the best and noblest among men," says Sir Lionel Beale, Professor at the Royal College in London, "has at all times proved that the most imperious of instincts can be effectively resisted by a strong and serious will, and by sufficient care as to manner of life and occupation. Sexual abstinence has never yet hurt any man when it has been observed, not only through exterior restrictive causes, but as a voluntary rule of conduct. Virginity, in fine, is not too hard to observe, provided that it is the physical expression of a certain state of mind . . . Chastity implies, not only

<sup>1</sup> Several of the following quotations are taken from an excellent work by M. Franck Escande, *Le problème de la chastité masculine au point de vue scientifique*. Paris: Bailliére et Fils. New Ed. 1919.

continence, but also purity of sentiments, the energy which is the result of deep convictions."

"Every kind of nervous activity," says the Swiss psychologist Forel, who discusses sexual anomalies with a moderation equal to his knowledge, "is increased and strengthened by exercise. On the other hand, inactivity in a particular region reduces the effects of the exciting causes which correspond to it."

"All causes of sexual disturbance increase the intensity of desire. By avoiding these provocations it becomes less sensitive, and the desire gradually diminishes. The idea is current among young people that continence is something abnormal and impossible, and yet the many who observe it prove that chastity can be practised without prejudice to the health."<sup>1</sup>

"I know," says Ribbing, "a number of men of 25, 30, and older than that, who have observed perfect continence, or who when they married had done so up to that time. Such cases are not rare; only they don't advertise themselves."

"I have received many confidences from students, healthy both in body and mind, who have remonstrated with me for not having sufficiently insisted on the ease with which sensual desires can be ruled."<sup>2</sup>

"Before marriage, absolute continence can and ought to be observed by young men," says Dr. Acton.<sup>3</sup> "Chastity no more injures the body than the soul," declares Sir James Paget, physician to the English Court; "Discipline is better than any other line of conduct."

"It is a singularly false notion," writes Dr. E. Périer, "and one which must be fought against, since it besets not only the children's mind, but that of the fathers as well: the notion of imaginary dangers in absolute con-

<sup>1</sup> A. Forel, *La Question sexuelle exposée aux adultes*, Paris, 1906.

<sup>2</sup> *L'hygiène sexuelle et ses conséquences morales*, by Dr. Seved Ribbing, Professor at Lund University (Sweden). A translation is published by Félix Alcan.

<sup>3</sup> *On the Organs of Reproduction* (London).

tinence. Virginitv is a physical, moral, and intellectual safe-guard to young men."

"Continnence," says Sir Andrew Clarke, "does no harm, it does not hinder development, it increases energy and enlivens perception. Incontinence weakens self-control, creates habits of slackness, dulls and degrades the whole being, and lays it open to diseases which can be transmitted to several generations. To say that incontinence is necessary to the health of young men is not only an error, but a cruelty. It is at once false and hurtful."

"The evils of incontinence are well-known and undisputed," writes Dr. Surbled; "those produced by continence are imaginary; what proves this is the fact of the many learned and voluminous works devoted to the explanation of the former, while the latter still await their historian. As to these latter there are but vague assertions, which hide themselves, for very shame, in mere talk, but which will not endure the daylight."<sup>1</sup>

"I have never seen," writes Dr. Montegazza in *La Physiologie de l'amour*. "a disease produced by chastity . . . . All men, and especially young men, can experience the immediate benefits of chastity."

Dr. Dubois, the famous professor of neuropathology at Berne, affirms that "there are more victims of neurasthenia among those who give free rein to their sensuality than among those who know how to escape from the yoke of mere animalism;" and his witness is fully confirmed by that of Dr. Féré, physician at the Bicêtre Hospital, who testifies that those who are capable of psychic chastity can maintain their continence without any fear for their health, which does not depend on the satisfaction of the sexual instinct.

"There has been unfitting and light talk," writes Professor Alfred Fournier, "about 'the dangers of continence for the young man.' I can assure you that if these dangers exist I know nothing about them, and that as a physician I am still without proof of their existence,

<sup>1</sup> *Celibat et Marriage* (Published by Retaux).

though I have had every opportunity in the way of subjects under my professional observation.

"Besides this, as a physiologist I will add that true virility is not attained before the age of twenty-one, or thereabouts, and the sexual necessity does not obtrude itself before that period, especially if unhealthy excitements have not aroused it prematurely. Sexual precocity is merely artificial, and is most often the result of ill-directed up-bringing.

"In any case, be sure that danger of this kind lies far less in restraining than in anticipating the natural tendency; you know what I mean."<sup>1</sup>

Lastly, after these most authoritative testimonies, to which it would be easy to add many others,<sup>2</sup> let us quote the resolution unanimously voted at Brussels in 1902 by the 102 members present at the second General Congress of the International Conference of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis, a congress which assembled together the most competent authorities on the subject throughout the world: "Young men must above all be taught that chastity and continence are not only not harmful, but also that these virtues are among those to be most earnestly recommended from the purely medical and hygienic standpoint."

There was also a unanimous declaration issued by the professors of the Medical Faculty of Christiania University, a few years ago: "The assertion that a chaste life will be prejudicial to the health rests, according to our unanimous experience, on no foundation. We have no knowledge of any harm resulting from a pure and moral life."

<sup>1</sup> *Pour nos fils quand ils auront 18 ans*, a pamphlet, 69th thousand (Paris Tancrede), p. 45. This brochure of 48 pages, and those not less known and not less commendable of Dr. Paul Good, *Hygiène et Morale*, and Dr. Paul Goy, *De la pureté nationale* (Paris: Maloine), and *Tu seras père de famille* (Maloine), cannot be too widely circulated among teachers, ministers of religion, physicians, parents, and young men.

<sup>2</sup> Many others are to be found in M. Franck Escande's book already quoted, especially pp. 122-136; all witness to the physiological benefits of chastity.

The case has therefore been heard, and sociologists and moralists can repeat with M. Ruysen this elementary physiological truth, "that the sexual appetite does not need, like the requirements of aliment and exercise, a minimum of necessary satisfaction. It is a fact that man or woman can lead a chaste life without experiencing, except in the case of a few abnormal subjects, serious disturbance or even painful inconvenience. It has been said—and cannot be too often repeated, since such an elementary truth can be so widely disregarded—that no disease ever comes through continence to normal subjects, who form the immense majority, while many diseases, very well known and very serious, are the results of incontinence. Nature has provided in the most simple and infallible way, for the excess of nutrition which is represented by the seminal fluid and the menstrual flux."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Viry is therefore right in denying that the question is one of a true instinct or a real need. "Everyone knows what it would cost him not to satisfy the need of nourishment or to suppress respiration, but no one quotes any pathological consequences, either acute or chronic, as having followed either temporary or absolute continence . . . In normal life we see the example of chaste men who are neither less virile in character, nor less energetic in will, nor less robust, than others, nor less fitted to become fathers if they marry . . . A need which can be subject to such variations, an instinct which accommodates itself so well to lack of satisfaction, is neither a need nor an instinct."

Sexual relationship is far from answering to any physio-

<sup>1</sup> Even with regard to abnormal cases, it is necessary to examine carefully if the abnormality affects the organs of generation, and if this is so, to ask if respect for the social moral law is not by far the best régime for the patient's health. Young men are only too much inclined to class themselves as abnormal cases, on whom care for their health confers all rights, and they find, only too readily, ignorant or criminal practitioners to compound with their "malady." This is but too real, but it is not the physiological system, it is the will and moral sense that are affected by a chronic disease. "Among the many neurotic and hypochondriac people who come to consult me on the subject of immoral relations," writes the illustrious specialist in nervous diseases, Paget, "I have not heard a single one tell me that he found himself better or happier because of them."

logical need of the growing boy ; quite the contrary, it is perfect chastity which is sternly required by the exigencies of his normal growth and development, and those who violate it cause irreparable injury to their health. "The attainment of puberty is accompanied by great changes, a veritable disturbance of various functions, and a general development. The adolescent boy needs all his vital strength, for during this period there is often a weakening of the resistance to sickness : disease and mortality are higher than in the earlier period . . . The long work of general growth, of organic evolution, that whole series of physical and psychic changes, at the end of which the child becomes a man, involves a toilsome effort of nature. At that moment, all over-driving is dangerous, but especially the premature exercise of the sexual function."

Such are the physiological benefits of chastity : what shall we say of the moral and intellectual advantages ? "All men," writes Professor Montegazza, "and young men in particular, can experience the immediate benefit of chastity. The memory is quiet and tenacious, the brain, lively and fertile, the will energetic, the whole character gains a strength of which libertines have no conception ; no prism shows us our surroundings under such heavenly colours as that of chastity, which lights up with its rays the least objects in the universe, and transports us into the purest joys of an abiding happiness that knows neither shadow nor decline."

These last lines will doubtless appear idyllic to more than one reader, and yet they exactly convey a most certain reality. The joy, the cordial merriment, the sunny confidence of vigorous young men who have remained chaste are characteristic traits which each of us have often seen for ourselves ; they are an eloquent contrast to the restless obsessions and feverish excitement of their companions who are slaves to the demands of sensuality.

How would it be if after the proof we proceed to the counter-proof, and if after having shown the benefits of chastity we enumerate the miserable consequences of



lust and debauchery? No disease could ever be quoted as the result of continence; who is not aware of the frightful diseases of which moral indiscipline is the source? Physicians are accustomed to class them in three categories: simple chancre, gonorrhœa, and syphilis. If the first is, usually, only a local accident, without infection of the blood, the second and third produce, on the contrary, diseases of an extremely serious kind. Gonorrhœa, which consists essentially in a purulent inflammation of the urethra, produced by a microscopic germ, often develops into a chronic discharge extremely difficult to cure. Sometimes, too, it affects the liver, the bladder, or testicles; or it is complicated by arthritis, and purulent ophthalmia—serious, often incurable diseases, which leave terrible consequences behind them, among which permanent sterility, with all its bitter humiliations, is not the least distressing.

Syphilis is a still more terrible venereal disease; everyone knows that this "leprosy" or "modern plague," as it has been called, is produced by contagion from without, of which the spirochaeta of Schaudinn is the agent, and creates an infectious impregnation, a veritable poisoning of the whole organism. "Not one of our organs, not a corner or nook in our body is there into which it has not penetrated and shown its mastery in some form or other. From head to foot, the whole body is at its mercy. Above all, it is an all-pervading disease; above all, also, it is a chronic, we might even say an ultra-chronic disease. It often betrays itself by some manifestation five, ten, or fifteen years after the original infection. It not infrequently reappears after a more extended period of latency, for instance 20 or 25 years later."<sup>1</sup>

In its last, or tertiary, stage, syphilis brings great disasters which have given it a sinister notoriety: these consist of infiltrations, deposits, and obstructions, which form in the various organs, and these infiltrations can only end in two ways, gummatous softening or

<sup>1</sup> Professor Alfred Fournier, *op cit.*

sclerosis. Gummatous softening is the local death of the tissues, with ulcerations, gangrene, decay, mutilation ; and sclerosis is the functional death of the organ, which indeed survives, but becomes useless, degenerate, and bereft of its rightful powers." Locomotor-ataxy, general paralysis, and degeneration of nerves are its most common forms.

Thus the body, which must it seems satisfy its needs, finds itself converted into an indescribable state of rottenness. Nor is the damage to the guilty person only, the activity of the virulent bacillus which seems jealous of being outbid by the evils of the coccus of gonorrhœa may be inexhaustible. Who has not heard of girls whose robust health we lately admired, who now languish in pain on their couches, which they quit no more? The years roll by and the sickness is not cured. The unhappy girl is condemned to incurable suffering and to sterility. We could scarcely complain of this last, for too often the child, affected by the hereditary taint, would also be condemned to a wretched life through disease of the organs: blindness, and diseases of the eyes, idiocy, deprivation of speech and hearing, are the rear-guard of the embraces which the father found so natural in the days of his youth ; under pretext of spending his own youth naturally he has poisoned and stolen that of his child ! Beside the cradle, the mother in tears, watches the horrible torture without comprehending the cause of it. She asks the doctor how it can be that so innocent a little angel should be the victim of such a trial. The doctor answers that he does not know ; what would be gained by adding to the mother's anguish the supreme grief of the atrocious revelation ?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Shortly before the war a physician gave, in Paris, a public lecture on venereal diseases. The standing of the lecturer had attracted a select audience, and some gentlemen of high social position had brought their wives. The speaker could not finish his lecture ; three ladies became faint ; for the first time things had been explained to them, and they had understood their unutterable distress.

And the wife is not the only victim. In 1915 the Prefecture of the Police published a memorandum on the sanitary condition of girls and children temporarily confined in the refuge in the Rue Saint-Maur : out of 27 present, aged from 14 to 17, 15 were contaminated.

Sometimes the son appears to have escaped the father's fate, but that is merely a refinement of the subtle plague; Professor Gaucher has proved that hereditary syphilis may descend to the third generation.

Such is the defilement of the body. As is natural at materialistic epochs, it is to this side of the question that attention is chiefly given, and yet how can we forget the worse defilement of imagination, of heart, and understanding? On every side we hear complaint of the lowering of character, the unbridled lust of youth, the overflowing of selfishness: can we believe that the young man who for ten years has accustomed himself to all the licence of uncontrolled desire will be fitted to preserve in his soul the flame of the ideal, the sense of a generous, and noble life, of love and beauty?

### III

The second objection is more subtle and more involved. It professes to rest on the right of the individual to freedom, or at least to that primordial and irreducible freedom, antecedent to all others and the basal support of them all—freedom to dispose of one's own body. How, we are asked, can society have the right to control such an intimate and secret act as that of sexual relation which it pleases me to contract with another person, so long as I cause no public scandal, and am guilty of neither violence nor deception; in fact, how can freedom any longer be talked of in a society which arrogates to itself the right to interfere to such a degree in the private life of its members?

This objection is not new, and moral discipline has not a monopoly of its attentions; we meet it also with regard to the "right" to commit suicide. It was long ago refuted, but since it chooses to set itself up against moral discipline, and since in the long journey of life we shall come across it at all turnings of the road, it is necessary to bring forward here, once for all, a refutation

of some length, which will, however, be confined, as is fitting, to our own specific ground—that of sociology and social psychology.

Let us at once avoid a possible misunderstanding. When we speak of social prescription, of control exercised by society on individual action, we do not mean by that to assert that such prescription should take the form of an article of the Penal Code or an administrative order. No one dreams of such external constraint, which would, besides, certainly be ineffective, and distinctly unwise. But happily the inhibitions of the Penal Code and of administrative regulations have never claimed to cover the whole of the moral law ; and on the other hand it is not true, but very much the reverse, that the penalties inflicted by the criminal courts are the sole sanctions under which society orders its life.

The question we are concerned with is altogether different. It is, whether social and individual morality acknowledges that the individual, on the strength of his right to freedom and autonomy, is at liberty to do as he pleases with his sexual activity ; especially, whether the growing youth is at liberty to disregard the law of chastity which applies to all unmarried persons. Thus reduced to its real terms, the question seems to involve but little difficulty in view of the present state of sociological science, and especially on the morrow of a world-war, in which the attacks made upon what our fathers of the 18th century called “the rights of man and of the citizen” exceeded all imaginable bounds. We shall confine ourselves to two replies : one in the name of social solidarity, the other is that of individual psychology.

I have remarked elsewhere how in the 18th century, the philosophers, encyclopædists, and physiocrats were simultaneously aroused to an extremely peculiar view of the idea of liberty. They lived at a time when society was conscious of a universal need of reform and rejuvenation ; once more the pressure of life demanded new moulds from which it could spring forth more easily, and yet everywhere it encountered unyielding bonds, institutions with

no flexibility, inexorable rules as troublesome as they were out of date. Routine, entrenched behind traditional positions, arrested progress and gagged initiative. A superficial analysis would soon conclude that the social code was the root of all the mischief, since by its senseless prescriptions it involved the individual in inextricable contradictions. Man in his natural state must be, it was thought, incomparably superior to social man spoilt by an evil society. So the first duty of government is to secure to each individual his complete freedom, the power to perform, *separately* and at his fancy, the actions which please him the most.

The physiocrats and philosophers had no idea that there was, among the members of the human race, a solidarity of nature which is a fact like weight or heat, and that men are no more at liberty to go outside this solidarity than they are free to settle themselves outside the atmosphere which envelopes them; society was represented as a heterogeneous collection of pigeon-holes hermetically closed, inside which each individual should have full freedom to move about, while the State had only to regulate their co-ordination.

At the dawn of the 20th century this conception of liberty makes us smile, and one would naturally criticize it somewhat impolitely, if we did not remember that it was accepted by the greatest minds of the latter half of the 18th century, and that it was no doubt a necessary halting-place, in order to escape from the huge network of regulations which paralysed all energy and stayed all progress. Work and property, credit and contract, the army and the public finances, the religious and political institutions, all seemed conducted so as to destroy the profitable result of the labour of the most capable and the best; and the stratification was so rigid that it resisted the wisest and most peaceful efforts of social evolution. A day came when the union of suffering and revolt overturned the whole social fabric; a great work of liberation was accomplished, and the horror with which the too frequent excesses that accompanied it inspires us must not make us forget its benefit.

After rendering this homage to the men and at the same time to their work, we can all the more readily affirm that seldom has a more erroneous conception of liberty been chosen as the corner-stone of the great social edifice which it was proposed to build. Little by little, as 125 years have rolled by, in proportion as they brought more clearly to light the logical consequences of this anarchical conception, we have been forced to repudiate the theories of our eminent ancestors, and while public opinion has scarcely made up its mind to abandon a doctrine so convenient for everybody, the idea of solidarity, of interdependence, and of an undefined relationship across all time and space, has become one of the most fertile conceptions which the various departments of modern science have, each more vigorously than the other, set themselves to disengage and to establish on a solid basis.

In order to remain on sociological ground<sup>1</sup> let us limit ourselves to remembering that in the eyes of sociologists social life is nothing but a network of multiform relations, nothing but an interlacing of actions and reactions, in the midst of which an activity, isolated and really separated from the rest, is unthinkable. On whatever step we resolve, whatever action we attempt, solidarity unites our resolution and our action to those of our brothers ; and not even our most secret thought or most fugitive wish fails of an echo so distant that the mind is for ever incapable of measuring the distance. The social quality is not, in man, an adventitious or merely accessory quality : it is immanent, part of his humanity itself ; he is a social being because he is a man. There is no other field of our activity so truly our own : physiology and morality, economics and politics, the intellectual and æsthetic domains, the religious and the social, are all conditioned by a universal system of mysterious bonds

<sup>1</sup>To avoid all mistake, I would say that the ideas here set forth have nothing to do with the moral aspect of solidarity, which by an inadmissible juggling with words passes from the social of solidarity itself, to a fact, to a solidarity of will and consent, without which it is impossible to prove that the second is postulated by the first.

and undefined relations. The bond is so firm, the net so closely meshed, that sometimes the sociologist stands in real trouble before this immensity which unfolds itself before him, across all time and space; he measures in one glance how great, under certain circumstances, is the responsibility of the individual, and how he risks becoming petty by a liberty which some social circles might be tempted to grant him.

But then, if these conclusions are true—and what sociologist would think of disputing them?—how can the individual assert that the exercise of his physiological energy concerns nobody but himself? If we can say that under certain circumstances I am not at liberty to spit in the street, or to bring my child, who is recovering from whooping-cough or measles, into a public garden, though a little fresh air would do him so much good, any more than I am at liberty to open my shop on Sunday or to work for a wage less than that of my fellow-workers; if, in the name of solidarity, all these things, and countless others, are forbidden, how can I claim the much more important right of disposing of my sexual energy as I like? Does that energy by a unique privilege escape the universal law of solidarity? Who does not see, on the contrary, that the sovereign importance of the function only increases the social reaction of the individual acts? Look at this young man and this girl who have just established that false union of which the reader knows the character; they are persuaded that the agreement concerns nobody but themselves. They shut themselves up in their independence, and pretend to believe that their intimate and secret action has no interest for society and is altogether beyond its control. A childish illusion! The social solidarity which unites the people of one nation, and, beyond the individual nations, all humanity, finds no difficulty in passing through all walls, even those of the secret chambers, and a terrible interrelation joins that supposed private action to the most distant series of actions in that social life which it helps to disorganize. Whether he wills it or not, every individual who asserts his right to temporary or sterile

sexual relations, who claims the liberty to use the reproductive energy with which he is endowed merely for his own enjoyment, spreads in society the germs of division and disorder. All deformed as they are by our selfishness and our disloyalties, our social institutions still take for granted that the individual will accept with good will the obligations inherent in the satisfaction of the reproductive appetite. It is by discounting this acceptance that society has built up its countless mechanisms of labour and property, of wages and inheritance, of taxation and military service, of the right of parliamentary suffrage and civil liberties. By his refusal to take his share the individual disorganizes everything at one stroke, he violates the social pact in its very essence, and while he makes the burden heavier on others' shoulder, he is no better than an exploiter and a parasite, a thief and a swindler.

We are responsible in the face of society for our physiological energy, as for all our other energies, and, it might be said, even more than for all the others, since a society unarmed and almost wholly without external pressure is obliged to remit to our good will the care to use that energy judiciously, and conformably, to the social good. If the function of all our organs is to develop life, what shall we say of the organ which is *par excellence* the agent and the minister of life? Mysteriously bound up with all the rest by bonds of which the strength is not less than their wonderful flexibility, it is charged with the sublime mission of transmitting across the ages this extinguishable flame within itself, which nevertheless is so quickly extinguished in each individual. To divert to our mere personal enjoyment this current of life which circulates within us and which ought through us, to call into existence other beings, called in their turn to be better, stronger, more vigorous and more beautiful than ourselves, because they have the right to benefit by our efforts and our growth, is to commit, to the social detriment, a veritable abuse of trust, a robbery and embezzlement; it is to foul at its source that spring of life which sprang up in ourselves only that we might,



in our turn, cause it to spring up in our progeny ; it is the turning into an instrument of abasement and perdition of a power which has been granted us only for the realization of high and glorious ends.

Once more : the fickle lovers or " friends," either deliberately or ignorantly, do not discern all these consequences, all this perversity ; besides, so long as their exploit is exceptional they can deceive themselves as to its social import, and ignore the evil-doing ; but they cannot hinder the act which they have committed in their ignorant selfishness from being a disturbance of the social life ; little by little their evil example will tend to enervate the courage, and to make a mock of the purity, of young men, to deride the fecundity of mothers, to insult the fidelity of husband and wife, and a justification of unnatural practices and abortion will even be found in it. A day comes when their conduct finds many imitators, and then it is seen that the whole of society is shaken to its very foundations. The first masters have found disciples who in their turn add new developments to the lessons they have received, and no doubt the original initiators, whom these developments alarm, would wish to disown their pupils ; but social life does not admit of these repudiations, and the evil principle continues to produce, even to infinity, its fearful results. The work of division and destruction does not only traverse every rule of moral discipline. Precisely because this discipline has a share in all the departments of social life, there is not one of these departments that does not feel the repercussion of the disorder of which the individual has been guilty. The *doctrinaires* of free love always pretend to reason as if the sexual appetite, moderate and calm in its nature, were one of those which it is easy to regulate conveniently, at least so as to leave to the individual freedom to respect the other obligations of social life. But the reality is far from corresponding to this confidence, and, in advance novelists, moralists and religious systems had given warning of the singular violence of amorous passion, which can lead, as we shall see in a moment, to forgetfulness of the most sacred duties.

From time to time the Press reveals the most scandalous cases of licence: allied to other vices, licentiousness of manners corrupts our times of leisure and our amusements, our art and our literature, and sometimes its splashes defile the approaches to our altars and the anti-chambers of our ministers, even, it is said, of our chancelleries. Nowhere, as we have seen, is its action more fatal than in the domain of labour, in which the prostitution of women and the lust of men, workmen and employers alike, make the organization of a normal régime of work impossible.

We are far, therefore, from the idea of liberty conceived as something exercising itself in autonomous isolation. Social solidarity holds us fast on every side, and never fails to cause, as the result of each evil deed, repercussions which are deeper and more remote in proportion as the energy concerned fulfils a more important function. In this case the function is of sovereign importance, since the mission of the reproductive energy is to secure the continuance of the human race itself; it is therefore only to be expected that the consequences of every transgression will be serious in the highest degree.

It is now possible to formulate more briefly the second part of our reply to the objection which the champions of individual liberty have imagined they could raise against the law of chastity; the ground here has been so often explored by psychologists that some brief reference will be sufficient.

To say the truth, if the matter were not so serious, we might ask if our opponents do not go beyond the usual limits of a joke by contesting, in the name of individual freedom, a disciplinary rule which is the first condition of that freedom, and the neglect of which has always led the unhappy wanderers to the most humiliating and tyrannical of slaveries.

It was said long ago that liberty is in appearance an alleviation, in reality a burden. That is precisely its grandeur. Liberty binds and compels; it increases the sum of the efforts which each is bound to make. The individual desires to be free, he is all inflamed with the

longing to realize himself in the expansion of his autonomy. The programme seems simple enough, and yet his first experiences are enough to show him its painful complexity. It is in vain that unity is the dominating characteristic of our nature and our moral life; we feel within us various and contradictory impulses; in each of them we are conscious of ourselves, and yet everything proves to us that we must choose between them. You say, young man, that you wish to live your own life, to realize yourself; but what part of yourself do you wish to realize, we ask with the great pedagogue, Foerster? Which is the better part, that which has its seat in the centre of your intellectual force, or that which occupies the lowest, the sensual, part of your nature?<sup>1</sup> If it is true that progress in the individual and in society consists in a growing spiritualisation and in the ever more complete mastery of spirit over matter, the choice cannot be doubtful, but there must still be energy to act, and the undertaking is not an easy one. Perhaps you will reply: But I do not choose, I wish to realize my being in one harmonious and organized whole. Very well; but take care, this very resolution is a choice, for harmony is only established at the cost of strife. *Sterbe und Werde*, die and become, said Goethe, and the words are but the echo of others spoken nineteen centuries ago by Christ, "Amen, I say to you, unless the grain of wheat falling into the ground die, it remaineth alone; but if it die, it bringeth forth much fruit."

"We wish to be men—an easy thing to say," writes M. Gabriel Séailles, "but the right turns into duty, stern duty, in which no one does not fail more or less; we wish

<sup>1</sup> The celebrated pedagogue, F. W. Foerster, wrote, when he was Professor of Psychology and Morale at Zurich University, a work (*Sexualethik und Sexualpedagogik*) in which most of the questions which we are about to treat are touched upon. This book, which is simply a masterpiece, will be some day, we hope, translated into French, as it has already been into English. It avoids that puerile sentimentality and shortsighted outlook which is truly one of the plagues of contemporary social life. I shall make numerous quotations, referring preferably to the English edition: *Marriage and Sex Problem*, translated by Meyrick Booth. London: Wells Gardner, Darton and Co., 1913.

to be free, we announce it with a menacing air: if we call liberty doing as we like, the slavery of instinct, we need not be so proud of it; if we are speaking of the true liberty, let us gird up our loins and prepare ourselves for the unending fight. We talk about our unity, our identity, our liberty, and proudly conclude that we are immortal and sons of God. Alas! if we only try to seize this *Self*, it escapes our grasp, it resolves itself into a multitude of incoherent beings which deny each other, it is rent by contradictory desires which in turn constitute itself; it is wholly (its own essential being excepted) the prejudices to which it submits, the objects which tempt it; its pretended liberty is nothing but a slavery which it does not feel, so does not resist."<sup>1</sup>

This fine passage should especially be dwelt upon by young men who are beginning to feel the sting of the sexual appetite, the most tyrannical of all desires, because it is the best able to take advantage of the first defeats of the will so as to reduce it to the most humiliating state of bondage. Moreover, in contradiction to our modern adepts of free love, the real pedagogues, the ministers of all religions, the moralists, have at all times laid stress on the peculiar gravity of the first fall. "While continence is a virtue full of repose, incontinence opens the door to an unknown guest who may become formidable. The revelation of passion, which is troublesome at any age, may become in youth the signal of a radical perversion, we would say of an irreparable disturbance of the balance of the will and the senses. The boy who has contact for the first time with any woman whatsoever, as a passing encounter, is really playing with his physical, intellectual, and moral life; he does not know but it will be the same to-morrow in the family, at work, in social life; he does not know how the sensual revelation will come back to haunt him, what servitude without hope may represent the too exact term of "mastery"; and we know of more than one life ruined

<sup>1</sup> *Les affections de la conscience moderne.* Paris: Armand Golin, p. 133.

after a beginning of richest promise, the first disappointments of which dated from the first moral fall."<sup>1</sup>

The celebrated verses of the poet echo these remarks of the philosopher :

Man's virgin soul is as a vessel deep ;  
If the first drops inpoured should tainted be,  
Across the soul all ocean's waves may sweep,  
Yet fail that vast abyss from stain to free.

And, not less, this advice of the great British physiologist, John G. M. Kendrick, Professor of Physiology at Glasgow University :

"The illicit satisfaction of nascent passion is not only a moral fault, it is a terrible injury to the body. The new need becomes a tyrant if yielded to ; a guilty complacency will listen to it, and make it more imperious ; every fresh act will forge a new link in the chain of habit.

"Many have no longer strength to break it, and helplessly end in physical and intellectual ruin, slaves of a habit contracted often through ignorance rather than perversity. The best safeguard consists in cultivating within oneself purity of thought and discipline of one's whole being."<sup>2</sup>

We have come a far distance from that conception of liberty in the name of which rebellion is declared against the law of continence!<sup>3</sup> Spiritual in its very essence, liberty can only conquer through a good moral hygiene,

<sup>1</sup> Ruysen, *op. cit.* p. 19.

<sup>2</sup> Quoted in Good's *Hygiène et Morale*, p. 49.

<sup>3</sup> This question of individual liberty could also be approached from another angle, and it could be shown that, under pretence of respecting the liberty of one individual one ends by violating that of another, who claims our interest, and is as much worthy of respect as the first. By a strange contradiction which, far from being the result of chance, is on the contrary immanent in the system itself, every doctrine of anarchic liberty invariably ends in the oppression of a great number of people. The achievements of economic liberalism under Louis Philippe are well known ; those of sexual liberalism are comparable at every point, and lead straight to the shameful slavery of public and private prostitution, "close" houses, and the white slave traffic. There is no worse chimeia than the individualistic conception of liberty !

of which the first condition is precisely the submission of the sexual instinct to the dominion of reason and conscience. Who amongst us has not met these miserable slaves, trailing their overmastering passion behind them like a cannon-ball, from which they can no longer free themselves? They, too, a few years earlier, boasted of their liberty, and filled with the pride of their "emancipation," went forward smiling to conquer life; alas! they had forgotten to conquer themselves, and the impetuosity of their passion only made shorter their road to slavery. Now they are prisoners of material things and of women, and doubly slaves because under the sway of use and their degraded imagination, they have come to persuade themselves that their conduct merely corresponds to a real need of their nature.<sup>1</sup> When this point is reached there is no longer any struggle, only a gradual sinking into the ruts of inveterate habit. At the most, there is an occasional backward look to the time when they were yet chaste. At the time of their first fall they believed that they would find themselves, on the morrow of their transgression, the same as they were upon its eve. A vain illusion; the evil corrupts him who commits it, and the guilty one can but enthrone at the centre of his inward being a tyrant whose demands continually grow more exacting.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>"As to sexual desire, we assert that the intelligence and the will have absolute control over it. It is necessary to employ the term sexual *desire*, not *need*, for there is no question of a function, the non-accomplishment of which is incompatible with existence. Really, it is not a need at all; but many men are persuaded that it is. The interpretation they give to the desire makes them look on co-habitation as absolutely necessary. Now we cannot look on the sexual act as resulting from senile and passive obedience to natural laws; we are, on the contrary, concerned with a voluntary act, following on a determination or an acquiescence, often pre-meditated and prepared for." (Dr. Franck Escande, *op. cit.* p. 51). In this book there is also to be found, along with a very copious bibliography, a most interesting study of the physiological mechanism of the sexual desire. The genito-spinal centre in the lumbar marrow is in direct relation with the higher regions of the cerebro-spinal system. Cf. pp. 205qq.

<sup>2</sup>It can never be sufficiently asserted how much the materialistic conceptions which dominate minds in our time, even those who profess opposite principles, pervert the greater part of our social studies, and deprive them, if we are not careful, of all scientific value. The harm thus

Thus nothing remains of the objections urged against the essential social law of continence for the unmarried. It could even be said that in refuting them we have scarcely done more, and that in illustrious company than force an open door, which we always pretend, in our malice and selfishness, is shut.

Far from being inconsistent with the care of health and respect for liberty, the discipline of chastity is, on the contrary, for the unmarried the first condition of both; it answers exactly to the best and noblest aspirations of our nature, our true needs, and our harmonious development. Young people of both sexes would find no serious difficulty in observing it, if they would watch more closely over the management of their moral health, and if the public authorities were more conscious of the duty of education and protection that lies upon them. We know what our state is with regard to both of these. We have forgotten the precept of the Latin poet: *Maxima debetur puero reverentia*; to compare our social life with this ideal, we should say it had no other care but to secure for the child the most precocious and most extensive development possible of the spirit of debauch and lust. School-mistresses and tutors give information, as to the vicious precocity of the children of our great towns, which makes one shudder, and which one dare not describe. What can be the moral responsibility of these children who, too often, are still little boys and girls? But, on the other hand, how heavy is the responsibility of their elders, especially of grown-up men. After all it is they who manage the city and the public affairs of State; they could accomplish a great work of regeneration if only they had the will. It does not interest them. Now and then, their perspicacity and

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caused to our national education is irreparable. They give us, especially, a view of our needs which is as unscientific as it is mischievous. It is easy to say: I feel the need of (whatever it may be), but what do we really wish to say? Even with regard to such needs as nourishment, clothing, and habitation, which obviously correspond to certain demands of our nature, we must beware of arguing as if our physiological nature itself, determined and could not change the extent of the need and the method of its satisfaction.

their courage uplift them to a verbal declaration which scarcely compromises them but is enough to quiet their civic conscience. No doubt the way in which they but lately spent their youth has emasculated their moral energy and atrophied the sense of civic, as of every other duty. Electors and elected prefer to remain inert spectators of the deeds of shame that go on. And yet, those who have survived, *know*; they have plumbed the abyss of decrepitude, of physiological sterility, of economic disorganization, of intellectual failure and moral wretchedness into which every year thousands and tens of thousands of young people of both sexes fall, and they know well enough that at the bottom of this abyss are tears and blood.

What should we think of a young farmer who on an impulse, and with the warm co-operation of his neighbours, men of age and experience, were to bring up in his sheepfold the cubs of a wolf or hyena, on the double plea of the liberty of farming and of his own personal tastes, which compelled him to reach his development and realize himself by devoting himself to the rearing of such animals? This comparison almost exactly expresses our attitude with regard to our young people, and the misfortunes in store for the farmer I have imagined, and his neighbours, when the little wolf and hyena cubs have grown up, give scarcely an idea of the miseries which in our epoch are the lot of individuals and of all society. After all, when the wolves and hyenas ravage the country-side, one can at least shoot them; lust and debauch are not so easily exterminated.

In any case, we take no effective steps to fight against them; we prefer to warble the familiar songs about "La France éternelle," as if it were not proved, on the contrary, that the licentiousness of our youth is one of the most active causes of our depopulation.<sup>1</sup>

Thus, through this inaction on the part of their elders, the young people of the new generation are left to all evil solicitations, and, corrupted even before the age of

<sup>1</sup> *Vide supra.*



responsibility, they become in their turn corrupters and agents of social disorganization. An infernal circle of iron, from which no way of escape can be seen but that which in every age has always been alone found strong enough to break the chains and shatter the evil solidarities—I mean the vigorous, energetic initiative of young men, of apostles and saints, who while they experience within themselves, even as others do, the sting of the flesh and the thrust of sexual desire, will assert once more the dominion of spirit over matter, of the soul over the body, of spiritual freedom over animal slavery.

## CHAPTER VII

### PERPETUAL CONTINENCE

“The vow of the voluntary celibate is the best support of the sanctity of the conjugal union.” (FOERSTER).

IN the first rank of these liberators, these heroes of the true sexual emancipation, it is only right to name the young men and women who, the better to devote themselves to the service of a great cause, choose to remain all their life in chastity, and renounce the joys of marriage. The reasons for their resolve vary according to circumstances: one feels it a duty to remain with an infirm father or mother; another takes the place, to orphaned brothers and sisters, of the departed parents; another desires to devote himself or herself entirely to the service of science or art, of the poor or the sick, or to a work of moral education or of prayer. Similarly, the merit of the voluntary sacrifice may be greater or less; some, thanks to the benefits of a wise protective education and the practice of a good moral hygiene, are almost without sensual temptations; others, more advanced in the path of virtue, have succeeded, it may be at the cost of sharp conflicts of which they alone know the hardness, in mastering the beast and taming the flesh. On any supposition, the final resolve is the same: these men and women have been led to think that the best way for them to serve is not to marry; and they have entered into an engagement, it may be with themselves, it may be with God, to remain in the perfect chastity of the celibate life. However definite and undoubted may be the duty of marriage, as we shall see,

under certain circumstances, all these resolutions are legitimate, because they are inspired by a noble and generous purpose. "Painting is a jealous mistress who suffers no rival," replied Michael Angelo when marriage was suggested to him; and how many after him have had a like experience!

Since the service of God has always been, from the most remote ages, the chief reason of these exceptional vocations, we shall have religious celibacy, especially, in view in these pages; but it must be understood that what we are about to say will apply, *mutatis mutandis*, to all other forms of voluntary celibacy.

There was a time in France—we have only just emerged from it—when it was the fashion to attack sharply, and sometimes even to revile, religious celibacy. People were never weary of pointing out the mischief of this institution which condemned to sterility "more than a hundred thousand nuns lost to society and cloistered in their convents." And a writer of this description, who for twenty years has been in the front rank of the apostles of the re-establishment of French natality, did not omit to indulge himself in a virulent attack on the Catholic Religion, of which the anti-human and anti-social doctrines of personal salvation end in the glorification of a monstrous egotism.<sup>1</sup> His criticism was not new, and since Luther, who maintained "that it was no more possible to keep the vow of chastity than to cast off one's sex," passing by way of Montesquieu,<sup>2</sup> the philosophers of the 18th century and the economists, it has been the fashion to consider the vow of perpetual chastity as one of the most certain signs of the contradiction between the Catholic Religion and the demands of nature and of reason.

Modern sociology fails to ratify these summary judgments; on the contrary, in proportion as it follows the

<sup>1</sup> In his 2nd edition the author, better informed, suppressed this chapter.

<sup>2</sup> Every religious house is an eternal family into which no one is born, and which maintains itself at the cost of others. These houses are always open, like gulfs in which are swallowed up the generations of the future. (*Lettres persanes*, lettre 128).

evolution of our manners, and as methodical study digs more deeply the soil of social realities, the better is the value perceived of the help which the practice of perpetual chastity brings to the great work of the discipline of the senses. However ready we may be to praise the immense social services and the unutterable beauty of marriage, monogamic, indissoluble, and fruitful, it is necessary all the same to state two facts which are absolutely established: first, that we meet in every society, especially those with a high birth-rate, a great number of unmarried people; also, that the married state is exposed to irregularities and distortions which easily make it sink into the régime of luxurious selfishness which we have seen fall upon France these last sixty years. On these two points, therefore, religious celibacy renders services which no well-informed sociologist can any longer disregard.

It is manifest, in the first place, that if marriage is the normal state of life for the immense majority of people—and the most resolute champions of the superiority of religious celibacy have never disputed this—all the same it cannot be that all can, or ought to, marry. Even putting aside the exceptional vocations of which we have just spoken, it must not be forgotten that there are at least three classes of celibates who cannot be blamed for not being married: the young people of both sexes who for professional or economic reasons think it a duty to defer their marriage; the people who are involuntarily condemned to celibacy because they cannot find a suitable partner; finally, those who ought to abstain from marriage in consequence of their physiological defects that could be transmitted, and who are in some cases strictly bound to renounce all idea of it. Is it not evident, then, that the renunciation made by these people, doubly necessary both for their own happiness and the interests of society, will be rendered so much the less painful, and so much the more cheerful, because they will find beside them others who, in full possession of their physical and intellectual vigour, and sometimes with abundant means, have declared their firm resolution

to remain celibate all their lives. These voluntary and choice celibates, who have willed to consecrate themselves to God without reserve, to prayer and to the training of souls, declare that in their eyes celibacy, far from being a reduced condition of life, is on the contrary a superior state, in which man asserts, in its plenitude, the mastery of will over instinct. It is often said of them that they leave the world and social life, but is it not equally true to say that they only leave the world to serve society better, if it is true that to maintain the common heritage of purity and generous self-sacrifice is in the first rank of social service?

It is indeed possible, it is even certain, that too many of these voluntary celibates fall short of the noble ideal which they have conceived; all the same, it would be an error and an injustice not to acknowledge, in this connection, the service rendered to the other celibates, who are so in spite of themselves, by these generous volunteers of perpetual celibacy, the spontaneity of which like a spiritual tonic, gives courage and confidence, by raising in their own eyes this great multitude, of every condition, whom loneliness and sense of abandonment might easily lead to discouragement and bitterness. Such a noble example strengthens them, by showing them that a life can be magnificently fruitful even in the case of one lacking the joys of conjugal happiness; and who would think of regretting that a St. Jerome, a St. Francis of Assisi, or a St. Vincent de Paul did not choose the way of marriage? Is it not obvious, on the contrary, that the absolute vow of chastity which they took was the first condition of the extraordinary fruitfulness of their apostolate?<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>After the medical testimonies quoted above as to the possibility of young men remaining chaste until marriage, it is unnecessary to quote others as to the physiological possibility of perpetual celibacy. It would be easy to multiply them. Some will be found in Franck Escande, *op. cit.* p. 69. "Man can make a vow of chastity," (Montegazza). "Those who are capable of psychical chastity are capable of a vow of continence," (Féré). "Serious minds consider religious abstinence as infinitely more common than some people suppose," (Mirachi). "At all times and in all countries, men are found who profess absolute continence: among the Greeks, the Pythagoreans, among the Jews, the Essenes."

But to state all this is still not enough, and religious celibacy, which renders such valuable services to the large army of celibates of every kind, renders no less to the family and to marriage itself. Not to mention the opportunities which it offers to the children of large families, there must be no hesitation in going so far as to say that the co-operation of those who are celibates by chastity and devotion is indispensable to maintain the religious and purifying atmosphere without which there can be no strong and healthy family. We shall here encounter—and certainly not for the last time—the popular and stubborn error, according to which marriage—every marriage—is in itself a good, honourable, and socially beneficent thing; and as, in proportion to its degradation the number of those who sing its praises is always increasing, one would say that according to them society wins a victory every time a marriage is registered. This idea is too convenient for the interests of a crowd of people, who cheerfully hide behind the respected curtains of the marriage chamber their cunning selfishness and lust, to be abandoned for a long while yet, but it is none the less an imposture which it is the sociologist's duty to unmask. It is his business to recall unceasingly that marriage is not a socially beneficial institution except in proportion as it can maintain itself on a certain level of purity, generosity, and noble ideal. Now experience proves that to maintain this level is almost impossible without the co-operation of other members of the body social, who have extended yet further the dominion of the will over the senses, and whose complete detachment proves that the man of good will can rise above those vulgar pre-occupations of interest and ambition which beset, even to the point of a degrading obsession, so great a number of married people.

To young people of both sexes, who are still too young to marry, perpetual celibacy shows that it is possible to pass one's youth chastely; to the married it recalls the duty which lies upon them to maintain exact discipline in their conjugal relations, and never to allow a consideration of self-interest, however legitimate it may be in itself,

to prevail over the higher demands of moral generosity and loyalty. He who has well understood these demands, so lofty in their nature, will be little inclined to call the vow of chastity contrary to nature. Truly a miserable argument, which it is time to leave to the Homais of the 20th century if any of them still exist, and to the veterinary surgeons of whom Auguste Comte speaks. Do people really believe that chastity should be natural to the celibate who has to wait to marry for some years, and that conjugal fidelity and monogamy should be even more natural? Why do they not see that the same arguments that are urged against the vow of chastity are equally valid against all other sexual discipline, and that all must be abandoned if we refuse to acknowledge the splendid beauty of the religious celibacy of chastity and devotion?

“The vow of the voluntary celibate,” says Foerster, far from degrading marriage, is on the contrary the best support of the sanctity of the conjugal bond, since it represents in a concrete form man’s freedom in the face of the pressure of his nature. It acts like a conscience with regard to passing whims and sensual assaults. Celibacy is also a protection to marriage in the sense that its existence prevents married people from looking upon themselves in their mutual relations as mere slaves to obscure natural forces, and it leads them to take openly in the face of nature, the position of free beings who are capable of mastery. Those who scoff at perpetual celibacy as unnatural or impossible, do not know really what they are doing. They fail to see that the line of thought which makes them talk as they do must necessarily lead, by strict logic, to prostitution and polygamy. If the demand of nature is irresistible, how can a chaste life be required of married people? And, lastly, they forget the great number of marriages in which, it may be for several months or years, or even for life, one of the spouses is condemned to a real celibacy by the sickness or other disability of the partner. For this reason alone, true monogamy rises or falls with the esteem that is paid to celibacy.”

It is far from being a mere coincidence that Luther, the great enemy of ecclesiastical celibacy, was compelled, logically, to permit polygamy and polyandry, in case the physiological condition of husband and wife did not allow of the accomplishment of the conjugal act.<sup>1</sup> Similarly, in our days, the growth of licentiousness among young men, the increase of adultery and divorce, of abortion and anti-conceptionist practices, the scarcely veiled attempts to restore polygamy and polyandry, are the logical corollary of the contempt for perpetual celibacy professed by too many of our fellow-citizens.

We are so accustomed to bestow the beautiful name of marriage to conjugal practices which are merely mischievous and perverse caricatures, that we no longer see clearly ; yet this connection cannot fail to be evident to every mind that can reflect, and the relations between voluntary celibacy and true marriage are so important and so numerous that every attempt to depreciate perpetual celibacy must of necessity be an attack, in manifold ways on marriage itself. Especially, if we must once more consider the one point on which public attention, quite mistakenly, is centred, that of natality and fertility in marriage, we shall perceive that this fertility is closely bound up with the continence which the couple have maintained previous to their union, and with that which they must still maintain in married life,

<sup>1</sup> It is of course well known how Luther, Melancthon, and Bucer gave permission to the Landgrave of Hesse to contract a second marriage while still bound by his first : in the notarial deed the noble polygamist declares expressly that he marries Marguerite de Saal "not out of lightness, or curiosity, or any contempt of law or authority, but because he is compelled by certain grave and inevitable necessities, physical and moral, (*aliquibus gravibus et inevitabilibus necessitatibus conscientie et corporis*), so that he cannot live his life in a godly manner except by adding a second wife to his first." Luther also allowed the same privilege to the wife : "If a woman is married to an impotent husband, she can say to him : 'See, dear husband, you cannot claim my virginity, and you have defrauded me of the best years of my youth. Also your honour and your hope of happiness are imperilled, and there is no marriage between us in the sight of God. Let me then contract a secret marriage with your brother or your nearest relative ; thus your name will be continued and your property will not pass to strangers ; allow me to deceive you in my turn, as you have yourself deceived me.'" Quoted by Foerster, p. 152.



since *continence is essential to every rightly regulated married life*. The example, then, of those who have embraced voluntary celibacy is a constant lesson of courage, a victory every day renewed, the social value and importance of which it is impossible to extol too highly.

By the persevering warfare which they wage against all forms of sensuality and selfishness, these volunteer troops of perpetual celibacy contribute notably, in an indirect but most effective way, to restore the fertility of our marriages. Since the middle of the 18th century the advance of civilization has tended to develop individual needs and their supply, and it would be unfair not to recognise the services thus rendered to the progress of social life; at the same time, we can no longer ignore the dangers of the indefinite development of needs and desires, especially when the individual no longer finds in the reserves of his interior and spiritual life reasons strong enough to keep him sober and self-restrained. There is no doubt that mortification and asceticism will take once more, in the prepossession of our teachers of to-morrow, the place which they ought always to have held. "Humanity," writes a free-thinking philosopher, "finds itself, with its characteristic faculties, amid conditions which are doubtless common to many kinds of animals: to give itself a strong and beautiful life it must not accept itself as it actually is, but must to a great extent remake, and in a sense create, itself. This kind of self-creation is imposed on everyone of us: since the ideal man whom our reason conceives, and whom in our best moments we wish to be, does not exist in his perfection, he must be brought into existence by toil and pain, by a thousand acts of violence against all that would hinder his growth."

It is, then, the peculiar function of men and women who have taken the vow of chastity to recall to their brethren of the human family this necessity of asceticism and mortification—mortification which should rather be called vivification, since we combat nature only to strengthen her, since we prune and dock only to make ourselves more capable of fertility and active life.

Finally, if it be true, as we shall prove further on, that the exact observance of the various obligations of moral discipline is not possible except in a society all imbued with the spirit of religion, it must be allowed that perpetual celibacy seems able, more than any other human institution, to promote and extend that spirit. Not long ago French people loved to discuss the possibility of setting up a natural religion, and quite lately M. Durkheim has thought himself authorised, after placing at the threshold of his sociological studies a wholly gratuitous assumption, to revive this naturalistic theory under another form, by demonstrating that the divinity adored by the faithful of the various religions is, always, nothing but society itself magnified and deified; but these strange speculations cannot prevail against the social reality which they ought to respect scrupulously before they undertake to explain it. Therefore, as Foerster remarks,<sup>1</sup> all the great religions have always set before believers an ideal of asceticism and the conquest of nature, and it is just so far as they have taught men to rise above nature to self-liberation that they have arrested their minds, influenced their wills, and filled their hearts with a generous enthusiasm.

Among the forms which this asceticism takes, none corresponds better to the unchanging and profound need

<sup>1</sup> "The people itself demands a religious basis higher than the world; it has nothing to say to a form of belief which leaves it too close to the level of its natural and economical life. It is precisely those who live and work in the midst of material things who demand, consciously or unconsciously, an idea of supernatural liberty. Thus it is well understood that Christianity would never have become a universal religion but for its enormous power of resistance to the world. For the material life pure and simple there is, indeed, no need of a religion. The estrangement of the younger generation is not only the result of religious indifference; it too often signifies the rejection of a kind of faith which seems no longer to profess any real belief in the supernatural, or in any case gives the impression that Christ lived a super-human life only to sanction our remaining on a purely human level." Foerster, p. 156. This profound analyst of the human heart also remarks that, alone among the great religions, Protestantism has shown itself hostile to asceticism, and that this hostility (which Schopenhauer has also observed), "is absolutely incompatible with the fundamental essentials of an intellectual religion. From this standpoint, Protestantism will be forced to change its position, or to perish."

of human nature than that which wages war on the brutal demands of the sexual appetite. Far from seeing in ecclesiastical celibacy merely an administrative institution established by a church with the design of securing more easily the submission of a multitude of isolated agents to her supreme authority, we should rather acknowledge that celibacy lies at the root of every wide-spread movement of religious thought, and that we find it afresh, held in honour and generously flourishing, at all epochs of intense religious life or revival. So long as Roman paganism was a living religion it surrounded with a mystical reverence the Vestals whose immaculate chastity pleased the gods (*casta placent deis*). Without seeking for other instances which it would be easy to recall, it is well enough known that all the efforts at ecclesiastical reform attempted during the last century among the Protestant churches of the United States and Great Britain have resulted in an ever-growing appreciation of the religious value of celibacy. These facts have nothing to do with coincidence or chance, and deserve the constant attention of sociologists and moralists.<sup>1</sup>

For all these reasons, and many others which cannot

<sup>1</sup> Is it known, for instance, that love, in the lofty sense of the infinitely respectful and devoted tenderness of one who gives himself at the same time that he attracts, tenderness which no doubt includes body as well as spirit, "but which also often ignores it, and in any case only directs its devotion to the body in passing to the soul"—is it known that this sentiment has its root in the Christian reverence for chastity and virginity? M. Thamin has seen this clearly: "When the ancients talk of love," he remarks, "sensuality must be usually understood, and this is why philosophers could never show enough sternness and contempt in speaking of love. The sentiment of love is born of modesty, which is itself a Christian sentiment. It blends within itself a hope, a desire of self-sacrifice, a mysticism which approaches a religious sentiment . . . If there had been no virgins vowed to the Lord, there would have been no lovers like Rodrigue and Chimène. Since then, our literature in which love plays such a part is Christian even as love itself is Christian." (*Saint Ambroise et la société chrétienne au IV<sup>me</sup> siècle*), Chateaubriand said the same: *Gènie du Christianisme* 2<sup>e</sup> parti, livre III, chap. 2): "What we rightly call love is a sentiment of which antiquity did not even know the name; it is only in later ages that there has evolved this mingling of sense and soul, this kind of love in which friendship forms the moral part. It is still to Christianity that we owe this perfected sentiment; it is Christianity which, ever tending to purify the heart, comes at last to spiritualize the propensity which seemed the least susceptible to such influence."

be noticed in this place, we should wish public opinion to render to perpetual celibacy the singular honour which is its due in a healthy society, and this new sympathy must be part and parcel of the restoration of right conjugal morality. It is inevitable that at a period in which, under pretence of better conformity to nature, so many men take up an attitude and adopt doctrines utterly opposed to the best and deepest aspirations of their nature, that this light esteem of celibacy should become general among "the children of the new spirit," and one may the more excuse their mistake since it is not uncommon to find, among the volunteers of religious celibacy, men and women who are partially unconscious of the services which their religious state renders to society. But this mistake and this unconsciousness should not lead us astray, and the sociologist who is most careful to confine himself exclusively to the field of methodical study cannot but admire the clear vision of the Catholic Church which from her first days has been led to assert the pre-eminence of religious celibacy, by the very logic of her endeavours to secure the perfect purity and the indissolubility of marriage. St. Paul, after extolling virginity, says, in speaking of marriage: "This is a great Sacrament; but I speak concerning Christ and the Church." Similarly, nineteen centuries later, the same logical impulse led the most ardent apostles of fertility in marriage and the raising of natality in France to esteem, ever more highly, the social value of virginity and perpetual celibacy, and even the most unreligious amateurs of eugenics recognise that the practical success of their efforts is connected with the ever-growing diffusion of the principles which lie at the very root of the sublime promise of perpetual celibacy.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>I have already noticed the folly of publicists who, in the midst of a society which includes so great a number of involuntary celibates, widows, and persons unfit for marriage for various reasons, make it their business to proclaim the vital necessity of the sexual act, from both the physiological and the moral standpoint. To speak only of the eugenic aspect, how is it that they do not see that the practical application of the only part of their doctrine of human culture that can be realized is impossible except in a society that can comprehend man's spiritual vocation and the need of subjecting to it the brutal propensities of instinct.

In the 16th century, to save the state of monogamic marriage from the shipwreck by which it was threatened by the actively offensive return of paganism, the Council of Trent loudly affirmed the pre-eminence of Religious celibacy, embraced for the love of God and our neighbour.<sup>1</sup> The peril is not less to-day, and it can only be exorcised by a like renewal of opinion under the direction of men whose moral delicacy only makes their sight still keener. It pleases us to think that the easy-going remedies, the petty contrivances which are in accordance with "nature," are enough to cure our ills. But impartial observation contradicts these self-interested hopes, and in every grade of society the actions which seem to claim but an ordinary measure of morality and devotion can only be obtained by the great majority in proportion as they have before them pioneers who are capable of extending to a heroic degree the perfect observance of the entire principle. With respect to moral discipline, the volunteers of perpetual chastity play the splendid part of leaders, and on this account they merit, by the side of the parents of large families, the title of fathers of their country.

When their services and virtues attain the highest summits, they are no longer only the fathers of their country, but the fathers of the whole human race, which to an unknown degree and through all the ages lives by their example and their sublime teaching.

It is strange indeed that our contemporaries, who exhaust their stock of eulogy when it is a question of extolling great men of learning and great artists, make so little of the more important services rendered by these wonderful masters of the moral life in which saintliness consists. Nevertheless it is their power which sustains our weakness, and we have a share in their overflowing spiritual life. Their example shows us, along with our duty, the extent of our power, and behind these pioneers, these conquerors of spiritual freedom, marches the in-

<sup>1</sup> Those are condemned who maintain that "the married state ought to be preferred to the state of celibacy and virginity, and that it is not better to remain celibate than to contract marriage." Conc. Trid., Sess. xxiv canon 10.

numerable host of men and women, not indeed free with a perfect freedom, but all the same somewhat less in bondage, somewhat less slaves of their selfishness and their evil desires.

The better to approach their ideal, these saints have usually directed special effort towards the attainment of some particular virtue, and our society, so keen on advising division of labour and specialization, ought to take a lively interest in the magnificent specializations of the higher moral life. They, too, are a necessity, and they have contributed much to the progress of our race. No doubt in this effort to attain an ideal, some have allowed themselves to be drawn into eccentricities and exaggerations, but let us beware of taxing too readily with eccentricity and exaggeration practices and postures which are a vigorous and needful reaction against the deadly excesses of a gross sensuality on which we freely spend the treasures of our indulgence. These men would not have fought so sharply against the demands of both flesh and spirit, which seem the most legitimate, if they did not know that we fight so little and so badly against the worst excesses, and thanks to them, it has been given to us, the beneficiaries of their courage, to avoid the reefs which lie hidden beside the most normal tendencies.

We ignore too much the fact that "behind the purest and sweetest gifts of nature are hidden the greatest dangers for the moral character of the individual, and these dangers are so close at hand that we very easily become slaves of the gifts themselves, instead of maintaining our freedom with regard to them." A profound saying this, against which no mind will protest that takes care to free itself from empty phrases, and is capable of observing facts and men in their true relations. How easily do domestic sentiments, intended to serve the interests of society and of all the race, turn one after another to selfish advantage; does not even maternal love itself too often become the teacher of selfishness and meanness for the child whom the mother surrounds with an idolatrous adoration? The saints have perceived,

with the far-reaching gaze of their purified souls, all these deformities ; " They know that children thus loved and brought up, in spite of exterior baptism, have never possessed the true baptism, because they have been brought up according to the flesh, not according to the spirit. Thus the separation of St. Elisabeth of Hungary from her children was an extraordinary step. It was the heroic act of a soul entirely consecrated to God, a soul who by this example, in view of the blind adoration of family life and of children, would signalize the lofty ends which can never be lost sight of without family life itself losing its ideal, nor without the soul's own life growing weaker. Nothing debases children, nothing so effectually separates them from all higher life, than the fact of being placed in an atmosphere of domestic selfishness, of being brought up by a mother who knows nothing higher than her child. And conversely, nothing so develops and enobles children's souls so effectively as the example of a mother all on fire with a love higher than that of her natural instinct of motherhood. The rare examples of a love which, in its complete forgetfulness of self, approaches the Divine love, far from lowering, or being inimical to, the family, are on the contrary the wonderful and inexhaustible source of sacrificial energy and spiritual dignity, and thus increase the strength and worth of all earthly ties. Characters like St. Elisabeth, although, in their enthusiasm of love for Our Saviour they have crossed the limits of ordinary domestic life, *are nevertheless the guardian spirits of the family* ; they introduce into domestic life sentiments of more complete loyalty, more utter self-abnegation, more lively pre-occupation with spiritual interests ; thus they protect it from contact with interests which lower and disgrace it, and thus assure its continuance."<sup>1</sup>

Nothing need be added to this extract from the profound German pedagogue. I like to think that we have on this side of the Rhine many sociologists and

<sup>1</sup> Forester, *op. cit.*, p. 139.

pedagogues who would be capable of writing it ;<sup>1</sup> in any case, let us compel ourselves to understand and consider it, and let us conceive a great desire for the opportunity, which so many Religious saints give us as we contemplate them, of recording our own thought as admirably as he has done.

<sup>1</sup>After this explicit recognition of the services rendered by religious celibacy, the author of this work has no difficulty in proving that the ecclesiastical establishments which organize and shelter this celibacy, can, in the course of ages, undergo strange distortion. Nothing that is human can indefinitely escape human weakness, and the innumerable reforms of the religious houses and the clergy, both secular and regular, which have been carried out during these nineteen centuries in the bosom of the Catholic Church, are enough to prove the frequency and the gravity of these distortions. "In old days the solitaries of the East and of Egypt not only lived by the labour of their hands, but also gave immense alms. Vessels laden with their charitable offerings sailed the seas: now a community needs great revenues to maintain itself. Families used to poverty spare in every way and live on little: but communities cannot do without abundance. How many hundreds of families would live honestly on what scarcely covers the expenses of a single community which professes to renounce worldly goods in order to embrace poverty! What mockery and inconsistency! In these communities the expenses of the sick often exceed those of the sick in a whole town. It is because they have time to nurse their ailments, to watch for them and to be always taken up with one's self and one's delicacy; it is because they are not really living a life of simplicity, poverty, energy and courage. Thence we find in houses which should be poor, a scandalous keenness in seeking worldly interest; the phantom of community life serves to cover this eagerness; as if the community were anything else than a company of individuals who have renounced everything, and as if the disinterestedness of the individuals should not make the community disinterested. If you have business with poor people who have a large family, you will often find them upright, moderate, able to yield a point for the sake of an amicable arrangement. If you have business with a Regular community, it makes a point of conscience of treating you with rigour. I am ashamed to say it, I only say it secretly and with pain, I only say it privately that I may help the spouses of Jesus Christ; but yet it must be said, because unhappily it is true. One never sees people more suspicious, more difficult, more tenacious, more eager in law-suits, than these people who should not even have any business. Debased and narrowed hearts, is it in Christ's school that you have been brought up? Is it thus that you have learnt Jesus Christ, He Who had not where to lay His head, and Who said, as St. Paul tells us: 'It is more blessed to give than to receive.' Who speaks thus of religious communities? No doubt one of our wild anti-clericals? Not at all, it is our great Bossuet, whose witness—to which others might be added—cannot be gainsaid. (From *Les Obligations de l'Etat Religieux*, a sermon preached before the Religious of St. Cyr. Cf. also the *Panegyrique de Saint Sulpice*). If the holy Bishop of Meaux were to return to the world, he would have the consolation of finding the immense advance that has been made. Twenty years ago one of our



## CHAPTER VIII

### THE DUTY OF MARRIAGE

“Outside the family it is impossible, really, to form men.” DR. GRASSET.

HOWEVER highly we should esteem the manly resolution of those who voluntarily embrace perpetual celibacy, it is obvious that the part they choose can only be suitable for certain chosen natures and can only be a very exceptional vocation. Its very social value implies that the vast majority of people should follow another way, that of marriage, and that for them this will be the better part, the best suited to their vocation and their mission in life.

The first need of any society is, in fact, the need of recruiting its membership, and it is precisely with the view of preparing itself to fulfil this need in the best way that, as we have seen, society has been compelled to formulate the first prescription of sexual morality, that of unmarried chastity. We have now to consider the second law, the duty of marriage.

Among the five precepts of sexual morality, none is more ignored than this. There are, relatively speaking, very few among the six hundred thousand people who

Presidents of Council started popular avarice in pursuit of the 1,000,000,000 francs supposed to be the property of the congregations, and the result was pitiable for the reputation of the orator ; our premier had hopelessly missed his mark. He missed it also when he castigated the activities of a few dozen monks whom he called “leaguers” and “business monks,” and forgot to extol the wonderful devotion of so many thousands of Religious of both sexes, scarcely occupied at all in business, and still less in politics, and for whom the love of God and their neighbour is the one business in life.

contract matrimony in France during the course of a year, who have the intention, or are even conscious of the obligation, to fulfil a duty; to inform oneself of their psychological condition, it is enough to talk for a few minutes with a young man of 28 or 30, still unmarried, and belonging to the decent and serious part of the population. In his eyes, as in those of his parents, marriage is entirely optional and is merely a matter of the free choice of the interested parties. One marries if one thinks it advantageous to do so, and if the weight of advantages sends the beam the other way one remains unmarried. On the other hand, countless voices that pretend to authority warn us that marriage has come to a crisis, and if people want to be in the fashion they add that this crisis is the sign of an irremediable decline. As long ago as the end of the 18th century, Rivarol wrote "that marriage is a worn-out custom, which will soon disappear." For 120 years the attempt has been made to convince us of the truth of his words, and the time has now come to rid ourselves, at last, of this mischievous and superannuated maxim which can only produce suffering and disorder by the contradiction which it offers to the most profound tendencies of our modern temperament.

Happily for future generations, this opinion of pseudo-moralists and of writers who are often utterly lacking in moral sense, and equally so sometimes in the real literary spirit, is very far from being that of the true psychologists and sociologists of our time; and in nothing is the rupture more complete between the noisy world of the press, the novel, and the stage, and that other world where thought is cultivated, and the mysterious elements of our psychological and social life are studied in detail.

Far from associating themselves with the prophets who proclaim the end of this great institution of the past, these men who study and who know, reckon that the near evolution of human society in the near future will bring them back to an increasingly sincere appreciation of the admirable institution of monogamic marriage, and

many who are by no means Catholics—far from it—hail even joyfully the not very distant time when, thanks to the advance of manners in a better informed society, it will be possible to re-establish by law the indissolubility of the marriage bond, or at least to make the cases of dissolubility less frequent. We find ourselves then as we see, and as we shall see still more clearly in the course of this chapter and those which follow, in the best of intellectual company when we study the second precept of sexual morality, and we shall find that the subject under discussion will reveal such fruitful and beautiful realities, so indispensable and so marvellously ordered for both the collective and the individual good, that the mere recital will suffice to show its inestimable value.

Human society did not wait for the advance of sociology to be taught to recognize the value of the marriage bond; they all expressed it, in their own way, by making marriage a contract that could be classed with no other, included in no list, different in nature to all other contracts, and subject, in its inception, its sanctions, and its dissolution, to special rules. They felt that if marriage is first of all a contract, it is also very much something else, which goes beyond, infinitely and in all directions, the ordinary conventions, and that the only way to interpret in some small degree the wonderful fertiities of which it is the guardian, empire of conscience and religion is by connecting it with the religious consciousness. "Marriage," says Modestin, "is the union of man and woman, the association of all life, the communication of divine and human rights of law."<sup>1</sup> Christianity elevated marriage to the dignity of a Sacrament. According to Christian doctrine, early defined, the spouses are for each other, at the moment when they exchange their mutual consent, the ministers of this Sacrament which is "great" indeed, "in Christ and in the Church."

Protestantism in the 16th century struck some severe blows at marriage, and the philosophers of the 18th,

<sup>1</sup> *Nuptiae sunt conjunctis maris et feminae, consortium omnis vitae, divini et humani juris communicatio.*

bringing to its logical term the evolution to which Gallicanism had lent active aid, asserted that in their eyes marriage was nothing more than a contract like any other contract, purely civil and secular in character, and therefore to be treated like other contracts; and, to the extent to which it was possible, this work of complete assimilation was carried out by the revolutionary legislation and the Civil Code of 1804. These reformers had no doubt that they were putting their hand to the coping-stone of the whole frame-work of the social edifice, and that their innovations would arouse, both in depth and extent, the most distant echoes. Often in our days really well-meaning men, who think they are showing their sociological knowledge, like to repeat that the family is the social cell; and if they are conservative by temperament they accompany their testimony with a trembling of the voice which betrays their emotion. In reality, this blessed formula is nothing but one of those trifles from which it will take time to disengage our rhetorical literature: the legitimate family, marriage itself, are far more than the social cell, they are, so to say, the matrix of humanity, they are the sacred laboratory in which every hour all human society is prepared, organized, and maintained, and in so far as this laboratory is disorganized or chaotic, the most serious disorders in social life must be expected; there is no longer *any* part of the social mechanism which can function normally, because every part receives from the family its norm and the origin of its energy.

Regarded from this sociological point of view, marriage, it seems, could be defined thus: A solemn contract *sui generis*, at once civil and religious, by which two persons of different sex agree to establish between themselves, in mutual love and fidelity, an intimate association that shall last through life, in order to transmit life and to promote the development of their faculties and opportunities.

Sociological science, fettered in its development by the extraordinary disorganization of manners which prevails in our time, is not yet in a position to set forth in their

fulness the wonderful social services rendered by the institution of marriage ; let us endeavour, nevertheless, to present here a brief summary, while warning the reader that it must be considered as the stammering of a child who stands before the unsuspected treasures of an inexhaustible mine.

## I

The first service which the family renders to society is that of the maintenance and recruiting of the race. It is a truism to recall that, according to nature, human life is short, and shorter still is the time of productivity. Full age is preceded by a long period of formation and preparation, during which the child, then the growing boy or girl, even the young man and woman in our civilized societies, demand the most unremitting, enlightened, and costly attentions ; and is followed by another period in which the individual, wearied by long labour, can only put forth a diminished effort, until, returning in some sense to the weakness of childhood, he is only a consumer, not a producer, of wealth. The advance of civilization, far from abridging these two extreme periods of life, tends on the contrary to lengthen their duration, to the loss of the intermediate period of profit and net product. And this is not all. During the period of productive labour, how many chances, how many mortal or mutilating accidents, how many diseases, come to diminish the number of workers in the great workshop of collective labour.

Thus at every moment with a bewildering swiftness which Frenchmen seem to forget, a society of grown-up people becomes weak and breaks up ; if deprived of the wonderful revivification of countless births, it sinks in a few years into the last stage of exhaustion and weakness, in proportion to the biological wear-and-tear of its members. As the moralists of ancient Rome had

already remarked, death is not only the ultimate precipice towards which we are all journeying : it is from our first day of life installed in the very centre of our organism. Every morning adults are potentially less strong than the day before, happy if some accident during the night has not roughly snatched away all hope of carrying on their work. Who then to-morrow, or a few months, or a few years, hence, will replace this labourer or this artisan, this engineer or this professor, this artist or this financier? Scarcely have they been several years at their posts before their powers decrease ; to whom are they to hand on the torch, to whose hands commit the treasure of which for so brief a while they have been in charge? Their existence lasts but a day, and yet human society must not come to an end.

We know the solution of this tragic yet splendid problem. Since man's far-away beginning, it is the family that takes up the noble and heavy task of providing for the recruiting of the race, and which, by the superabundant transmission of life, combats and surpasses the work of death. Certainly it was no slight task to lead young people of both sexes to accept moral discipline ; they were only too prone to abandon themselves without control to the too impetuous demands of mere desire, and to unrestrained imagination. To ensure the submission of the woman, to whom nature had, in unequal though just division of the functions of reproduction, assigned the hardest part, it was long found that force was sufficient. Her frailty and physiological delicacy delivered her only too completely into man's domination, and by the clever system of dull and wearisome education and the institution of the harem she was successfully kept in servitude. But this achievement of brute force, which seemed to ensure the impossibility of one sex, at least, refusing the service which society expected of her, only encouraged the anarchical rebellions of the other. How was the consent of man, naturally brutal, gross and fickle, to be obtained to the disciplining of his instinct, and how was he to be brought to recognize his

duties towards the woman whom he had rendered pregnant, and towards the child that was born of their passion? Will not the desire which yesterday urged him to court the virgin, turn him away, to-day, from the unshapely expectant mother, who for months of pregnancy and suckling will be unable to respond to his amorous advances, and who to-morrow will bring forth in pain a child, amid all the scene of the confinement, of which the least that can be said is that, so far as appearances are concerned it is certainly the scene least capable of satisfying the most elementary sentiments of moral delicacy and æsthetic beauty? And then, what has he, in his strength and freedom, in love with joy and glory, to do with this little morsel of human flesh that has been born of this suffering woman, and whose plaintive cries announce its utter weakness? for it also demands the most exacting and least romantic cares. This weakness is not, as with the young of animals, a matter of a few weeks or months, but stretches over long years. Even when the child has acquired some physical strength and some power to know and to will, neither its family nor society have yet gained anything, they appear rather to have lost, since the child, naturally undisciplined and destructive, detesting all steady effort, obstinately inclined to self-centredness and the satisfaction of the most capricious desires, is by nature an anti-social and anarchic creature, "the little barbarian," according to Frédéric Le Play's just definition. And yet, what society demands is not only strong bodies with vigorous muscles, to support the manifold fatigues, physiological or moral, of life; spiritual endurance is as necessary as physical. But what social service could the young man or woman render, if their souls were not as vigorous and healthy as their members and their organs, if their understanding was not upright and sufficiently informed, if their hearts were not pure and prepared for sacrifice and devotion, if their wills were not trained to curb the perpetual demands of selfishness and animalism!

Such is a brief summary of the problem. When we examine the inextricable difficulties, it is not surprising

to learn the many vicissitudes through which human nature has had to pass in order to establish, during the long course of ages, the first elements of marriage and of the family. The miracle is that it has succeeded in "making the gorilla stand erect," and to submit to the indispensable demands of family life. What sociologist could ever tell the tale of those age-long combats in which society, forced continually to demand more in proportion as it developed, made war on the ever-renewed revolts of the masculine desire? Who could tell the happenings of that tremendous duel, the victories and recoils, the entreaties and compulsions, the artifices and the *ultimata*? No doubt nature, to give us help in this great undertaking, worked with us in some degree, giving to the woman her beauty and her power of seduction, patience and sweetness, and surrounding the child with the fascinating charm that captivates the most indifferent. But how little these aids counted in comparison with the immensity and the difficulties of the task, and how easily we comprehend that society had to mobilize all its powers in order to accomplish it. Among these, none was more effective than religion, and we know what value religions of every epoch have attached to the domestic life. Must it be added that at the very periods when the individual appeared most docile and most amenable to social requirements, the collective success always remained precarious, and its victory insecure? The enemy, ever established in the fortress of man's very heart, renews his offensive in every generation, and our contemporary experience, like that of the Italian Renaissance, tells us sufficiently to what attacks the results, which we should like to think most securely won, are continually exposed. <sup>1</sup>

Men's evil deeds make no difference to the problem and to the inflexible demand of society: the recruiting of the race must be assured, and this is impossible unless

<sup>1</sup> It goes without saying that in this paragraph we have no intention of taking any side as to the nature of the domestic institutions in primitive times. Sociology is wholly powerless, without information, to pronounce upon this question.



there are to be found every year, and in great numbers, young people of both sexes, with strong bodies and brave souls, who agree to unite themselves in the bonds of marriage and to found a home. The destinies of our country are in their charge, and according to the response they make society renews itself and grows in power and expansive vigour, or on the contrary it becomes anaemic, atrophied, and at last, exhausted, it dies of sheer decrepitude. Perhaps, as has often happened, society, ignorant of its own first need, confines itself to concentrating all its attention on the enormous consumption of food and merchandise, of iron and coal, of petrol and cotton, which must be provided for; but soon, if fewer, or smaller families no longer fulfil their office, it perceives that something far beyond material products is being consumed every day, namely human flesh and human lives, the personality that works and thinks, that combines and foresees. And as formerly, at the thought of those who direct the huge social machine, the question was asked: *Quis custodiet custodes?* so now the question is: Who shall produce the producers? A distressing question indeed, and one to which, in spite of all revolts and all empty dreams, there has never been but one answer, the answer which is given to each other by the man and woman who, drawn to each other by mutual love, agree to establish between them an association so mighty and so intimate, that a sacred text could say of them that henceforth they would be no more two, each having control of their body, but two activities joined in one: "They twain shall be one flesh." A sublime utterance, which expresses perfectly the splendid reality. There needed nothing less than this for the recruiting of our race. How, in fact, outside of the marriage state and the family, firm and secure against the man's whims, could the woman consent to become a mother? Does not motherhood, which so enormously adds to her burdens, also rightly deprive her of the means of satisfying them? To the unmarried woman as to her lover, pregnancy seems nothing but an accident, an awkwardness, and an unhappy in-

## 810 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

cident; and, as we have seen, these awkward affairs are among those which are no longer risked in our modern society. And even supposing that children are occasionally born in this way, what will be their social value when they reach man's estate? There is no guarantee for their education and development of character, and it is not only their physiological powers that are threatened. Exposed to all the hereditary defects of the chance connection to which he owes his existence, the natural child runs the risk of being deprived also of the care needed to make at least a fine animal of him. Certainly, that would be little enough. Again, this result, itself quite inadequate both for himself and for society, is far from being a certainty; and how could it be so, since the mere production of a fine human animal pre-supposes so many moral conditions, of which the circumstances of his birth imply the negation or forgetfulness?

Let us, once more, beware of being the dupes of a formula. Dismayed as we are at our systematic sterility, we keep on repeating: More children, more children, just as in 1916 we said: More cannon, more ammunition; but the formula is too short. What society claims, what it feels to be its pressing need, is not children, but men and women—which is quite another thing—and only the family, endowed with the wonderful gifts of fertility, stability, and devotion, can provide them.

In spite of all the chatter, marriage and the family are still, to-day as they ever were, the only possible way of recruiting the human race, and that for innumerable reasons, of which it will be enough to recall briefly a few.

The first reason which, but for the obstinate amorous prejudices which rule in this matter, should strike all minds at a time when the Darwinian doctrines of natural selection justly obtain so much credit, is that marriage alone ensures that selection of progenitors which is so desirable for the indefinite progress of our race. The marriage union, just because it creates between the spouses a community of bodies and souls, which extends

to the extreme limit humanly conceivable, is by itself a powerful and ever active reason for the selection of the most suitable, and the choice of the most capable partners. It constantly tends to the elimination of those with physiological, economical, and intellectual defects, and those moral deformities, and thus delivers society from an undesirable progeny which would be a dead weight and a cause of retrogression.

In the second place, monogamic marriage, associating the parents for their whole life and for a vast common task, offers the child the best chances of training, education, and culture. Surrounded from life's first moment by an infinite tenderness, the wonders of which art and literature will never be weary of celebrating, the new-born babe is assured of finding during the long years of infancy and adolescence, which will leave their indelible impress on his character, the shelter most helpful to his progress and development. The family is, in fact, among all human groupings, the only one which can love the child not only with an incomparable affection, but with a love unweariedly directed towards his progress and his rise to a higher level than even that on which he was born. This characteristic which, it is needless to say, is like all others susceptible of perversion and corruption, is nevertheless extremely conspicuous, and it would be impossible to appraise at too high a rate the services it has rendered to humanity since time began. Other social groupings can testify their sympathy and good-will, but this sympathy is a disinterested one, founded on the estimate of services rendered or discounted, and is indifferent to the progress of the individual in so far as that progress can only profit himself.

It is the wonderful originality of the monogamic family, such as it has been definitely organized by Christianity, that it is an association framed in the interests of the child, and that by the natural motion of the tenderness which nature has put into their hearts, the parents devote themselves with unwearied perseverance, and all the ability which they possess, to the task which fulfils supremely the most pressing need of society, and best en-

sure its progress. Thus each generation, placed in its earliest youth in possession of the gains already secured by the race, is effectively pushed forward to realize yet greater ones, since by the mechanism, as marvellous as it is simple, of the monogamic family, the parents are drawn to conceive the highest ambitions for their children, and to resort to the most ingenious means to realize their wish. By a unique privilege, this constant and energetic influence over the parents' will is absolutely disinterested ; under the régime of monogamic marriage, transformed by Christianity, and combined with the establishment of one home, the father and mother expect nothing of the child whom their love surrounds with such precious attentions. Thus their endeavours for his education and culture can be easily directed to the best advantage of their child, that is to say, of his future,<sup>1</sup> and therefore to the future of the race, and, by an exquisite refinement of delicacy and beauty, it rightly comes to pass that the success of this child when he is grown up, the realization of all the progress that his parents hoped for, is the best and only reward for which they seek. Thus for once, and to the greater advantage of our kind, there is realised the most astonishing paradox that our social life can show : that of people in full possession of bodily vigour and their means of production and labour, who take up, without any recompense, the most splendid yet the hardest of tasks, and seek no return but the greater advantage that will come to him who will reap the fruit of their endeavours. We may search elsewhere for

<sup>1</sup> Georges Fonsegrive, in his beautiful book : *Marriage et Union libre*, p. 82, has well set forth this direction of the ends of marriage, which was the work of Christianity, and which must be of such vast importance to the progress of the human race : " With Christianity, it is no longer the part of the children to work for the parents, but the duty of parents to work for their children. *Nec enim debent filii parentibus thesaurizare, sed parentes filiis*, says St. Paul. The child is more than a means ; by the one fact that he is called to share in the Divine Society, to enter into the Kingdom, to become a son of God, he becomes an end, the chief end of marriage and paternity. He is born therefore less for his father's sake than his father exists for him. The future is not made for the past, but the past for the future ; it is not for the dead that the living are born, it is for the generations present and future that the dead have lived ; it is for life that they have laboured, and it is not life's work to labour for death."

labourers and sowers who will feel themselves fully paid by the joy of beholding the immense gain of the reaper ; outside of the very small elect phalanx of the celibates of whom we have spoken, we shall not find them : and yet it is to the reproduction, by hundreds of millions, of instances of this incomparable wonder that the institution of the monogamic family is directed.

## II

Although it is impossible to give in this place even a summary of the wonderful processes of family education, a brief allusion must be made to them.

Let us first consider the tender affection of the parents for the new-born infant. Already, it may be, before its birth it has brought fatigue and privations of all sorts upon its mother, and yet with what joy it is welcomed what care is lavished on it, no account being taken of the fatigues by day and night, and the constant attention it requires.

Then the little one smiles, takes notice, shows desire and impatience : it relentlessly attracts attention, it makes itself the centre of all ! What ability the parents then bring to bear in order to check the excess of this selfish, impetuously exacting will, to regulate nourishment, to make the babe submit to the discipline of sleeping at night, and of general good behaviour ; with what cleverness they teach the impatient little creature to restrain both his desires and his temper !

Soon the child begins to grow up, and then there commences another apprenticeship, that of work, of continuous and prolonged effort, done in view of advantages which the child does not understand—an apprenticeship often longer and more painful than all the rest.

And then what artifices are employed, according to the child's temperament : sometimes a slight reproof from the mother, or perhaps even less, the refusal to embrace the child on going to bed, to give him a kiss

on meeting him, or show special tenderness : now a word of praise or a reward for some good action, for an effort made, or a success won ; or else a heavy scolding from the father, even a manual correction, or a severe punishment.

With what perspicacity and flexibility all this is arranged and modified according to the character, tendencies, and age of the child ! This wonderful work of adaptation of means to the end, of training the character through the great process of education, goes on for long years. If you would know how long it lasts, simply look at this mother who is nursing her child, pressing him lovingly to her breast ; you see how already she seeks to give him some idea of the moral life, by her attentive love inspiring him with sweetness and goodness and control of his impatience. And on the other hand listen to this father talking to his soldier-son at the barracks : ask if he considers his educative work to be at an end : " No, indeed," he will answer you, " it is only become infinitely more delicate, and has taken another form." The boy now finds himself face to face with a freedom which must be respected ; with what clear-sighted ability the father lovingly multiplies the ways of influencing this new activity, over which he has greater hold through reason and example, than through authority, through the sentiment of duty than through a word of command.

It is the fashion of our time to disparage the educative worth of this parental training, since it does not depend upon a learned pedagogy of which the schools of psychology have alone, it would seem, the secret. If we are to believe our modern reformers, before founding a family adults of both sexes must follow a course of study and take degrees. I am far from despising the contributions which pedagogy can supply towards the better education of children. Yet we must acknowledge that its progress is slight enough if we compare it with the losses which the ever-growing disorganization of our families brings upon our national education. Never did so many parents study the art of education, and never were children so badly brought up. The parents of St. Louis and Sully, of Turenne and St. Vincent de Paul had never won

diplomas from any school of pedagogy and yet history bears witness that they knew how to bring up their children.

Such is the right *rôle* and function, such are the services, of the monogamic family; but since an inconceivable ignorance, working along with erotic passions, has multiplied the most wicked and unjust attacks upon it, we must proceed to describe one of its most beneficent characteristics.

For a century marriage has been greatly attacked in the interests of individualism, and from south to north, from the Russian steppes to the coasts of California, the leaders of the multitude who assert the right to happiness, the right of every individual to realise his powers of action and development, never cease their assaults on monogamic marriage, which they look upon as the greatest obstacle to the expansion of individual genius. Now it is impossible to doubt that these thoughtless attacks are directly opposed to the end desired, and that on the contrary it is the protecting shelter of the family that offers the best chances of individual specialization and fruitful originality. By the elasticity of its mechanism it eases, to the child's advantage, the rough and recurrent constraints which would not fail to ruin the most original tendencies he possesses, if the precious intermediary of the family did not deaden the shocks, and diminish the roughness, for him.

“Nothing could be more extraordinary than the ease with which those who desire to loosen the marriage bond disregard the most fundamental right of the child—to have a father and a mother.<sup>1</sup> Here especially we grasp in its

<sup>1</sup> It is truly strange that at a time when people pretend to be so much pre-occupied with the rights of the child—which does not however hinder anti-conceptionist trades from preventing the birth of several hundred thousand French babies every year, and abortion from killing 250,000 others—such obstinate silence is kept upon this first right of the child, on his right to find in the first hour of his life an atmosphere whose purity and sweetness help the harmonious growth of his various powers. The child needs food and clothing, but he has many other needs besides, and how can these be satisfied, if the act that called him into being is an act of lust and brutality, or, at the least, of indiscipline and selfish improvidence?

fulness the inconsistency of these arm-chair reformers. They declare themselves in favour of a national system of children's upbringing and education, so that men and women may be more free in their sexual relations and more able to respond to the claims of their individuality. That means that it is the *parents* for whom this individualism and development of personality are demanded, while for the children these reformers extol a system of state education which tends in the highest degree to uniformity and lack of personal development, thus injuring, in the most serious way that can be conceived, the very cause on behalf of which their whole theory is put forward. Only people whose minds are quite out of touch with the realities of life can fail to know that the small, intimate family circle—which preserves and develops such varied and deep-reaching sentiments and is thus a preparation, as simple as it is natural, for social life—must provide the human personality with a far richer and safer development than the best system of national education could ever furnish. For, after all, such a system is powerless to set in motion those incomparable formative influences which are bound up with the most intimate of all natural relationships, with all their wealth of motive power and experience. Those who attack the family in the name of free love and the supposed freer development of personality should learn that it is precisely upon the solid basis of the family that the education of men and women of original character rests, not indeed because all parents are good teachers, but because family life, as such, liberates and brings into action spiritual forces which would remain buried or unemployed in any system whatever of State education.”<sup>1</sup>

One can scarcely add anything to this admirable quotation, to meditate on which is a rest and refreshment to the soul after reading the unhealthy rubbish in which the psychologists of our stage and contemporary fiction delight. It is certain that humanity would have everything to lose if men were produced by the gross and in

<sup>1</sup> Foerster, *op. cit.*, p. 48.



systematic series instead of in the little studio of the family. The moulding of a child is a true work of art, and on this account is repugnant to any kind of production in a great factory.<sup>1</sup>

The mistake of the adepts of every system of national education will appear still more clear to those who, ever distrusting mere talk and the illusion of words, endeavour to press close to the social reality, the knowledge and analysis of which is the real point in question. It is easy to talk at large and in the abstract of a system of national education for our children which should release the parents from all responsibility, and leave every adult entire freedom to carry out the sexual experiences which suit his temperament. But, besides the fact that this pretended freedom would lead to nothing but the most degrading licentiousness, it is obvious that what is adorned with the pompous and impressive name of a system of national education is nothing but a crowd of men and women who, in their capacity of public functionaries, would be responsible for giving and directing this education. Now it has long ago been proved that only those teachers can be worthy of their noble function who, either in temporary or perpetual celibacy, or in married life, have proved themselves able to rule their senses and to submit to exact moral discipline. So we come to the same point again, and in that future society of which we dream none could be entrusted with the national education of our children but teachers who had begun by forbidding themselves that sexual liberty which, it appears would be the chief advantage of the "reform" so ardently desired.

Thus in every way, and from whatever angle this capital problem of the moulding of the new generation and the recruiting, both in quality and quantity, of our

<sup>1</sup> Artists, who do not err by over-docility to social discipline, have no doubt as to what they owe to the monogamic family. Thus, when they despise or attack it, one can only compare them to children who strike their mother. The Saints, on the contrary, have scarcely ever failed to acknowledge the greatness of the debt they owe to their parents: the deep-reaching analysis of their interior life revealed to them how greatly the warm atmosphere of the family hearth had favoured the development of their moral character and the advance of their spiritual growth.

race is approached, the same conclusion is always reached: the monogamic family is the matchless workshop in which life develops under conditions of the most harmonious equilibrium between the demands of an exaggerated individualism and those of an exaggerated social progress.

### III

It is not enough to mould and prepare life: its expansion and maximum production must be assured. What would be thought of a farmer who, after completing his tilling and sowing, did not reap the harvest? Nothing would be gained by securing for the child family surroundings favourable to his best development, if these very surroundings were to turn against him when he was grown up, and when placed "on the other side of the barricade" he becomes a father himself in his turn. What figure will the family make here, and are we not about to find the reverse side of the medal? Let us reassure ourselves; nature is not so wicked as to lay such snares for us, and monogamic marriage will provide husband and wife with many precious opportunities of new development and indefinite progress.

How would it be possible, first of all, to omit that which is, chronologically, the first, and one of the best? If it is true, as we have proved with the psychologists and the moralists, that the sexual emotion is, for the neophyte, an incomparable experience, and, in the strongest sense of the term, a revelation; if it is true that it is like a new sense awaking to life, how can we be grateful enough for an institution which joins so soul shocking an initiation to profound sentiments of affection, goodness, sweetness, self-abnegation, and to solemn promises which bind the whole life? However ready we may be to appreciate the value of the sexual instinct to mankind, we cannot, all the same, ignore

either its impetuosity or its natural instability, and the daily press witnesses only too much to its anarchic and anti-social character. It is, then, no small advantage to succeed in hiring, if I may venture to use the term, this instinct which is by nature selfish, brutal, unstable, and irresponsible, to the service of a social institution which demands for the greatest length of time—the whole life—and intensity, the development of feelings of kindness, love, sacrifice and responsibility. Thus individuals incapable of experiencing these sentiments in an adequate degree are excluded from the field of procreative activity, and, equally, those who already experience them are invited in an urgent manner to develop them still further and to make them produce all their fruits.

Unspeakable wonder! By the institution of monogamic marriage, the sexual instinct, instead of being the agent of violence, disorder and anarchy, which it threatened to be, and which it invariably is when not under strict discipline, has become, among western nations, the very active collaborator in the development of the qualities of discipline, sympathy, self-control, and mutual tolerance, without which all social progress would have been impossible. In demanding from husband and wife the culture and development of these precious moral qualities, the monogamic family works precisely in the way that best suits the vocation of the couple, and does not serve the interests of the child and of society at large without serving, and that with interest, their own as well. If it is granted—and who would not grant it?—that man's mission *par excellence* is to secure, by continually increasing spiritualization, the primacy of the spiritual elements of his nature over those that are carnal and animal, it seems impossible to deny or to overestimate the value of the services rendered by the family. One may even be certain—and contemporary retrograde experience only too surely confirms the assertion—that this increasing spiritualization would have been altogether impossible if mankind had not discovered monogamic marriage, since this institution alone restrains individuals from the ever-renewed dangers of mere

animalism, to which the frenzy of the sexual appetite lays them open. By the judicious satisfaction which it secures for a profound instinct of the human being, by the equilibrium which it establishes between tendencies of very unequal moral value, especially by the support which it gives to the constant culture of qualities indispensable to the maintenance of all social life, marriage has been, along with religion, the agent of the most effective moral training of mankind.

For the vast majority of people, the lasting union with one person of the other sex is the only means within their reach to realize themselves and assure the harmonious expansion of their faculties and their energies. It alone gives to their interior life, which is of itself incomplete, that complement and right ordering without which that life remains exposed to the worst contradictions and the most blameworthy irregularities.

It is natural that young people should fail to perceive the menace of these contradictions and irregularities; but as the years go on the grown-up man or woman understands them better, and when we come to mature age, we appreciate what precious resources of moral and intellectual equilibrium we have found in the tutelary discipline of marriage. The selfish or undisciplined celibate is condemned to suffer through the years of old age the feeling of isolation and the gaps in his crippled psychic nature, which is unduly deprived of the wealth and treasures which long years of married life would have put at his disposal. In him is verified the profound saying: "He that findeth his life shall lose it, and he that shall lose his life for My sake shall find it." We only find ourselves if we give ourselves, and we can only become rich by spending freely.

To him who knows, through having thought at length

<sup>1</sup> Matt. x. 39.—We see how completely astray are those who recommend a prudish delicacy which recommends young girls not to marry and to fly from men. This feeling is sometimes the result of lofty pre-occupations, but in this case even, there needs a very powerful interior life to keep sourness, envy, and selfishness from changing into cheap lead the pure gold of youth's beautiful hours.

on the abundant fertility and the inestimable services rendered to the individual, child or adult, and to society as a whole, by marriage and the monogamic family, it matters little to learn that the monogamic ideal is utterly condemned because of the radical contradiction which it offers to our modern idea of liberty and personal autonomy. We have already, once for all, considered this objection, and if those who put it forward were anything but arm-chair reformers, ignorant of the most elementary realities of psychological life, both individual and collective, they would long ago have given up such pitiable equivocation. We will say once more, since it is necessary to repeat incessantly the essential truths on which mankind's whole ultimate destiny depends, that one must know what kind of liberty is intended, and what particular part of the ego it is proposed to set free. If it is a question of liberty of the flesh and mere caprice, of securing new facilities for escaping the consequences of the most serious offences, of taking no further care for the one, be it man or woman, with whom one has been through the most important experience, nor for the child whom perhaps one may have called into being; if it is a question of the right to be disloyal to the most sacred obligations which are inevitably contracted by the attitude one adopts or the initiatives one takes; if it is, in a word, and to speak plainly, a question of the liberty to be an unstable, brutal, licentious and irresponsible being, it is obvious that the disappearance of monogamic marriage is the first condition of the victory and of the expansion of these "liberties." But if on the contrary we believe that liberty is for each one of us not a standard to raise against the rest, but a toilsome and painful conquest over self, to be realized step by step, which in its very essence means effort, docility, discipline, submission of the flesh to the spirit, of animalism to reason, of fugitive caprice to reflecting and steadfast will, in fine and above all, if it be a victory gained by generosity and courage over egotism and self-seeking, then we must acknowledge that monogamic marriage, far from being less advantageous than free love to man's true enfran-

chisement, is on the contrary the first and most actively co-operating condition of his freedom.

It would be well also to repeat here what has already been stated as to the beneficent influence of unmarried chastity upon the development of love, and to show that the protecting shelter and the warm atmosphere of the hearth of the monogamic family are not less necessary to the upspringing and the growth of this infinitely delicate feeling. So many men in our days have come to confuse love "with the contact of two epiderms," that they have even lost the power to understand how impoverished and degraded in their souls has become the very idea of a sentiment whose refined culture has required from human nature so much endeavour and so many sacrifices. But their inability to understand does not in the least alter the reality of things. If it is a fact that at the base of true love lies the sense of the absolute: "absolute in degree, for the gift of one's whole self goes beyond all notion of less or more; absolute in duration, for it is impossible to imagine that one could cease to love; absolute in its object, on which one sets a value beyond all compare"; if it is true, besides, "that there enters into love, whether illusory or clear-sighted, the indefectible belief in a perfection worthy of being sought for, possessed wholly in return for an equal abnegation of self, in a word, a will for perfect justice on either side," how could anyone refuse to acknowledge that the sanction and the consecration of marriage are indispensable to the full expansion of the sense of love? To tell the truth, is not this sense, which, (purified and spiritualized by the highest moral ideas, demands the institution of the monogamic family); alone capable of translating and expressing it? Love cannot escape instability and the emptiness of the sensual world except by submitting to the universal order and the control of spiritual forces. "It may be truly said," writes Foerster, "that the responsibility which religion has laid upon the sexual relations between man and woman has been transformed into a new affection, and the abnegation of uncon-

trolled passion which it has demanded has become a new capacity for love and devotion."

It is remarkable that in free love the freedom always ends by triumphing over the love, and the love in its turn sinks into the most humiliating slavery. Slave of his carnal appetites the man who rejects marriage rejects at one stroke the help of his love's best friend. His wish for freedom has taken the wrong road. What we have to set free is not our love, but ourselves, from our wretchedness, our selfishness, from this evil pressure which entices us towards animalism, instability and irresponsibility. These are the three great enemies of love, and from their grasp the persevering discipline of the monogamic family can alone deliver us.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Many times, and always in the happiest way, M. le pasteur Wagner has shown, in his sermons and his writings, the splendour of the love which is protected and defended by the delightful intimacy of the domestic hearth. In 1913, at the congrès national de l'Étoile blanche, after having shown that love never develops in the long run except as the two who are joined together have mutual interest in a work beyond their own powers, and that "many delightful little passages of love are killed"—drowned in the pot-au-feu—"because they did not sufficiently understand each other, or were too busy for this, he cried: "If I had the soul and harp of Homer, I would sing of love. I would sing the holy mothers, the holy women, the good women who loved their husbands, in every condition of life: I would sing them in the fields, in the shops, in the poor hovels, the good women who can comfort men in their misfortunes, and in the sadness and injustice of life, and who bear, aloft and firmly, the torch of hope. I would sing the good young men and the good girls who believe in love, respect it above all things and say to themselves, 'Here is humanity's best treasure.'"

In a different tone, MM. Marius and Ary Leblond wrote several years ago, "Almost everyone in these days is ignorant of the fact that there is more pleasure in the performance of duties than in the vindication of rights. Youth has usually the folly to fear that loyalty in marriage will be wearisome; then to think that it is a very pathetic element in life; but it is not only the sum of felicity, but also the safeguard of pleasure just as, for a Leconte de Lisle, supreme art co-unites in purity of form. The intelligent girl has not the same fear, but she often fears losing her independence, not realizing that it is in marriage that the woman most certainly attains it, if she enters it knowing what it is, and if she secures her husband's happiness over the development of, and in reverence for, that character. To-day, for women as for men, one must be able to *will* this happiness. But how few have the will!"

## IV

Thus in every way and in all directions the radiant superiority of monogamic marriage is proved: body and soul, the individual and society, the child, the adult, and the old man, the declining as well as the rising generation, and that which is at the height of its strength and power, the present, future, and past of our race, all are safeguarded, maintained, defended, protected, by the wonderful social institution of the family.

We understand how rigorous and imperative is the duty of marriage, the duty of the individual towards himself, of the citizen towards society. Marriage is very far from being optional and a matter of our free choice, as some people who ought to know better profess to think it, and assuredly the day is near when public opinion will regard as parasites, as profiteers, as traitors to civilised society, those who without adequate reason refuse the burdens and responsibilities of marriage. The strange freedom accorded by public opinion, to marry or not, is certainly one of the most extraordinary paradoxes of our social life, especially as this opinion is so strong and rigorous with regard to the duty of military service. The obligation to co-operate in the maintenance and progress of the race is not less strict nor less unquestionable than that of co-operating in the defence of the frontier, and the injustice which the selfish or indolent celibate commits and every day renews, is so crying, that we may wonder why it does not arouse universal condemnation.

Without insisting here on the phenomena of social solidarity already mentioned, it is obvious that each of us benefits during the years of childhood and adolescence by the immense capital stored up by the preceding generations, and it needed all the ideological craziness of the 18th century philosophers and moralists to divorce man as he is by nature from man as a social being. We enter life only as members of human society, and only under the protection of its provisions and its in-



stitutions do we develop. During many years we are almost exclusively occupied in getting what we want, in amassing and concentrating to our own profit, and we scarcely think of restitution and exchange, and this innocent egotism must not be too much blamed, since it is no doubt the condition most favourable to our organic and intellectual development, as biologists and psychologists have long noticed. It can even be said that nature has a share in it, and in some sense encourages it, by endowing children with a quite insufficient sense of gratitude and affection for the parents who have ever lavished on them tender and unceasing care. But this continual making use of men and things to our advantage is legitimate and good precisely because it prepares us to serve in our turn, and if, when the hour of service in return for all we have received has sounded, we steal away and shut ourselves up in a deliberate and self-centred celibacy, we are guilty of actually stealing from society. All the arrangement of the wonderful social scheme is disturbed, disorder takes the place of order, and every minute of our existence becomes literally an act of injustice and a scandal. In a society that was healthy, and conscious of the true conditions of its prosperity, the mere sight of this crime would arouse such violent reprobation that custom, much more than law, would be enough to deter people from an attitude so worthy of condemnation.

Whether we will it or not we are, for the moment, the representatives of our race, the depositaries of her traditions, of her energies, of her material and moral wealth, accountable to her for the destiny that will be hers through us and beyond us. How can we then have the right to choose between staying in our corner or taking our share in the ceaseless effort of moral development?

Besides, as I have shown, in defrauding others we also defraud ourselves, by depriving ourselves of many opportunities of development which the discipline of family life would have offered us. In disregarding our social duty we are traitors to ourselves, and make our-

selves the first victims of our wilfulness and egotism. A rapid glance around us is enough to convince us of this truth. Who of us does not know, by the dozen, these formless beings, almost without personality, who have their little happinesses, but who have no interests? When they were young, it was perhaps neither debauchery nor selfishness that deterred them from marriage, they did not get married, merely because marriage did not interest them, or because opportunities did not present themselves, and they would not create them. Then the years rolled by, and they see too late that they have missed their life, because their life has missed its duties; deprived of the bracing duties of family discipline, their existence is narrowed to the measure of their too diminished demands.

Far be it from me to maintain that every adult in good health is bound to marry; on the contrary, as I am entirely convinced of the necessity for every organized society to moderate its excessive fecundity, I consider that on this point alone, celibates render a signal service to the society which is wise enough to be loyal to the precepts of a really coherent sexual morality. What I wish to say, and what ought to be said, is, THAT EVERY ADULT IS UNDER THE IMPERIOUS AND STRICT OBLIGATION TO CONTRIBUTE SUBSTANTIALLY AND WILLINGLY TO THE MAINTENANCE AND PROGRESS OF THE COLLECTIVE LIFE. For some, this contribution is not incompatible with the celibate state, and it may even happen, as has been shown, that celibacy is the condition and best auxiliary of that contribution; for the immense majority marriage is the normal path which they ought to follow, and along which in the long run they will find ever-renewed opportunities to pay their share to the common chest, to which their childhood and adolescence has made them debtors. Let them not repudiate their debt and make themselves insolvent: by doing this they would be themselves the greatest losers. Marriage is not an optional matter, it is a duty from which one can only be discharged by accepting another, that of celibacy for some reason of self-devotion; the duty of marriage already

obvious before the war to those willing to see, has become yet more so after the late frightful hecatomb, and we pity the Frenchmen who do not recognize it.

## V

The explanations given in the course of this chapter excuse me from insisting at length on the social inferiority of the illegitimate family and motherhood. The new morality asserts now-a-days that all motherhood is equally honourable, and ought to confer the same rights on the mother; and this teaching, by the help of the sentiment of pity, receives the support of some men whom traditionalism, often ill-instructed, seemed likely to keep from such dangerous company. More than this, some "armchair sociologists," as Foerster calls them, go the length of teaching that to abandon the unfavourable attitude which we adopt towards the mother of an illegitimate child is the best way to raise our birth-rate.

These elaborations were inevitable, and, in the present declining state of our conjugal customs, and the indefinite extension of abortion and anti-conceptionist practices, it was certain that we should come to think almost gratefully of the unwedded mother whose moral scruples or whose innocence have led her to accept a motherhood which she could so easily have escaped. But none the less the fact remains that this opinion will only aggravate still further the moral disorganization of which it is the result, and if it has been well that there should be a reaction against an ostracism, often cruel and truly inhuman, a little methodical reflection is enough to show the dangers of the moral sympathy which we nowadays grant so readily to the unmarried mother. Far from being able to maintain, as Forel has done, that it is immoral to differentiate between legitimate and illegitimate maternity, or, as Ellen Key would have it, that all mother-

hood is honourable which evokes in the woman a real sense of duty, it must, on the contrary, be maintained that illegitimate maternity destroys, to its very foundations, all sexual morality, and that, because the manifold rules of this morality are so inter-dependent, as has been so often recalled in these pages, it is a direct attack on every one of those disciplinary prescriptions. Nowhere else do we appreciate so clearly the extent of social disorganisation to which the selfishness of brutal passion on the one hand, working along with puerile sentimentality on the other, can attain. Were it not for this alliance, it would be easily seen that the only true protection of motherhood is to be found in a powerful and vigorous institution, which compels and prepares the man to protect the mother and her child; and this institution can be nothing but monogamic marriage itself. Therefore, everything that tends to relax the bond of marriage, to depreciate its sacred character and sovereign dignity is a direct attack on the protection of motherhood: "The morality," says Foerster, "which looks on all illegitimate maternity as a sin does not take its rise in mere conventional strictness or Philistine morality; it is much more the ripe fruit of a concrete observation of human nature, and is perfectly adapted to that nature, as it really is. No doubt it is possible to see here a lack of trust in the constancy and chivalry of man's sexual nature; such an attitude may annoy him, but it is only too well justified by the facts. It rests upon the world's experience that, however we may regret it, the chivalrous spirit of man usually needs inviolable customs to stimulate him and make him able to conquer his tendency to slackness. All the chatter of those who are still children of both sexes will not in the slightest degree change his real nature; thus the ancient morality remains the only practical method of dealing with practical life and its rigorous realities."

How refreshing these admirable words are, after the insipid chatter to which Frenchmen have become so deplorably accustomed; and how impossible it is not to see that the pretended equality which some people wish to

establish between legitimate and illegitimate maternity, is at once illogical, an injustice and an impossibility in fact. One must ignore the most elementary conditions of the maintenance of social life to imagine that it can be lawful to put on the same level the foreseeing and judicious woman, who only consents to become a mother after taking care that her child shall have the best conditions of physical development and of moral and intellectual culture which monogamic marriage and the family afford, and the woman who in a moment of passionate impulse, or at least of unforeseeing thoughtlessness, gives herself to a chance motherhood, without any assurance that her child will be brought up well or properly educated. Can levity and carelessness ever be put on the same level as reflection and the sense of responsibility?

On the other hand, the equality sought to be established between the two maternities happily, finds itself up against an insurmountable social impossibility. The legislature can certainly, as ours did by the law of November 30, 1906, ordain that the abstracts of births shall be so drawn up that it is impossible in reading them to know if any birth is legitimate or illegitimate; this is all that this wretched expedient can do; it cannot make the conditions of upbringing and instruction as favourable for the illegitimate child as for the legitimate.

It is of no use to urge that "tout comprendre c'est tout pardonner," because it is just because people understand so little that they pardon so easily. If they would think more, they would see that the consideration of the subjective motives which have urged the illegitimate mother is far from including "everything" in the question with which we are dealing, and that the very principle which is put forward compels us to take account of the repercussions of her action, and of all the persons who will suffer the consequences of it. The real understanding of a phenomenon supposes the ability to establish, with regard to the subject, the relations of cause and effect, not only for the past, but for the future as well. From this point of view, therefore, true charity and pity demand that with heartfelt commiseration for the woman who has

sinned we associate an inflexible severity with regard to the act because only by this attitude can we erect a protecting rampart around the thousands of weak souls, whose temperament exposes them to most grievous disasters. Our puerile and unwilling sympathy will not save them from the serious consequences which in the very nature of things are the inevitable result of illegitimate motherhood. If the question is looked at closely, it will be found that the compassion of which we are so lavish with regard to those who are guilty of this weakness is inspired far less by a sentiment of charity and humility than by a serious obliteration of the moral sense, which has lost its power to distinguish good from ill, and to lay down the rule in all its luminous and invigorating strictness. Thus, in corrupting ourselves, we increase the misfortune of society, and the misfortune of the very ones to whom we accord so thoughtlessly by our compassion, and, as Foerster again remarks, it is a misfortune that the grand ancient idea of penance has vanished from the minds of the great majority of our contemporaries. No one should now suffer the consequences of his actions: all must be excused and covered up, and one never remembers that "only he who feels the greatness of his fault can become as great as it."

Pestalozzi, whose affecting work on "Legislation and Infanticide" is nevertheless but one long cry of pity on behalf of the unmarried mother, wrote: "I am too old, or have experienced too much, to have a moment's hesitation as to the point to which rash talk and opinions, with regard to the offences against good morals, will lead men on the day that they yield to temptation. Our natural horror of evil grows less when we are too ready with excuses, and we prepare ourselves unconsciously but most effectively for the very fault which we excuse too lightly in others."

With boundless compassion for those who have sinned, let us at the same time maintain the sound principles without which the safety of mankind is impossible. The sociologist cannot but endorse without reserve Dr. Grasset's words: "In order to carry on

his kind, man must not only produce children, but *men*; to this end, it is not enough for male and female to be united for a moment; they must, if they are to fulfil their duty to the race, found a family, for outside the family it is impossible really to produce men."

In concluding this chapter, we must offer some short observations on a controversy raised by some of our contemporaries whose high moral delicacy is wounded by the exterior solemnities that surround the celebration of marriage. It is in fact remarkable that almost all societies demand the observance of fixed formalities, and even those which permit marriage *solo consensu* only consent to this because they know that custom will be more exacting than law, and will insist on the practice of nuptial solemnities. Even in the revolutionary epoch, when "philosophy" had, people thought, created a new man, able at last to establish "the reign of virtue," even during that period when unrestrained individualism had pushed to an extreme the doctrine that marriage is a mere civil contract, people were obliged to yield on this point to the very teaching which they had most categorically denied. Not only do we refuse to make marriage a mere sensual agreement, but the solemnity which it still demands goes far beyond that of other serious contracts, such as a mortgage or deed or gift, in order to be valid. It is not only a question of better securing the reality and freedom of the mutual consent: "It is not," says the deputy Gohier, "simple judicial formalities that must be introduced, slight legal proceedings that must be prescribed, but ceremonies of a really civic kind must be ordained . . . Would that in every parish of the empire there were erected to the honour of the fatherland an altar of stone on which was incised the Declaration of the Rights of Man . . . Would that before this altar every citizen were led at each interesting epoch of his life; that, when arrived at man's estate, he might there contract the sweet bond which should unite him more closely to society; that he

<sup>1</sup> *Devoirs et périls biologiques*, Alcan, p. 304.

might there gain the name of husband and the hope of gaining that of father . . . It is before the altar of the fatherland that the bans should be published, that the marriage of husband and wife should be contracted, to show that marriage is one of the citizen's first duties; that the definition of marriage may be drawn from the constitutional act, and not from Roman Law, and that the form in which the betrothal consists may express the happy union of two free beings. Would that the spouses, at this interesting moment, might themselves declare that the sweetest natural feelings do not make them forget that before belonging to one another they belong to the fatherland, and that the marriage-vow were sealed to the cry of 'Live free or die.'"

Altars are not built in a day, and consciences were not so deeply impregnated with "philosophy" that every parish in France was prepared to accept the celebration of the new religion. But the idea was taken up by the Convention, and "la fête des époux" is one of the seven national fêtes instituted by the law on the organization of Public Instruction, voted 3 Brumaire an IV (October 25, 1795).

Moderating this flight of fancy, the Civil Code of 1804 is satisfied with requiring the presence and co-operation of the State official.

Now this requirement of solemnity wounds certain delicate consciences; they deny that the administrative authority has any right to mix itself up in an agreement which is so unlike other contracts, since it does not concern property, and since the union of bodies, souls, and hearts, is its sole object. This was the theory lately maintained by Élisée Reclus who officiated herself at her children's marriages, and took care to exclude all co-operation on the part of the public authority.

Such is the theory of the defenders of free union, which, it must be said, has nothing in common with the theory of free love. It has enticed some generous souls, and nothing is more displeasing than the sly jests

<sup>1</sup> *Le mariage civil* by René Lemaire ("Questions actuelles,") 5 Rue Bayard, Paris, *passim*.



with which certain *salons* think they must season the discussions which they open on the subject ; as if such unions, contracted between young people sincerely determined to create a true conjugal association, could lightly be compared with certain other unions, the baseness of which can never be concealed by the most sumptuous civil or religious solemnities.

This being acknowledged, it must nevertheless be asserted that these marriages without any form, without registration by either the civil or religious authority, are extremely dangerous for the spouses themselves, and through their example to the whole of society, and the harangue of the learned man we have just quoted only proves that his psychological and sociological knowledge were not on a level with his geographical. Certainly it looks very beautiful, to enter into no contract but in one's own heart and only under the eye of her who participates in it, but nothing assures us that this beauty can ever be accessible to the humanity of the future, and it is certainly out of the reach of the humanity of to-day.

The champions of free union always argue as if the formal betrothal, surrounded by publicity and exterior solemnity, were nothing but an outward veneer, added to no purpose, like those extremely fine sheets of precious wood which cabinet-makers glue on wood of mediocre quality for cheap furniture ; the veneer adds nothing to the solidity or usefulness of the piece of furniture, and only saves the appearance. But the principle which lies at the base of their system is clearly contradicted by the most certain witness of psychology. Certainly the licentious egoist who, before going to the *mairie* or the church, makes the shameful compact with his fiancée never to have a child, or not to have one for three years, gains nothing by going to get his union sanctioned by civil or religious authority ; but, on the other hand, a noble and pure heart is right to ask society, on both its civil and religious side, to witness to the solemnity of his contract. Solemnity and publicity offer very valuable advantages to the individual

himself, and we cannot but once again admire the wonderful perspicacity of the men who established these wise prescriptions.

In the first place, in a matter as to which man is exposed to most dangerous illusions, and is apt to take for absolute and eternal what is merely the passing whim of passion—or, still worse, of mere desire—formal rules are a protection against impulse, recklessness, and seduction, and in so serious a matter it is essential to make people reflect so far as one can.

In the second place, the formal rule makes it easy to distinguish, without further examination, between unions contracted with the intention of living the conjugal life (at least the contracting parties assert this intention!) and those in which only a temporary association is desired; and with regard to an act which produces such manifold and profound repercussions on both the individual and the social life, the distinction is important.

Finally, and above all, the solemnity and publicity of the engagement form a powerful element of strength and stability to the good will of the parties concerned, an element whose co-operation is necessary in order to assure more completely the loyal fulfilment of engagements that must have no termination but with the life of one or other of the parties concerned. Those who fail to recognise these services commit the same mistake as catholics or protestants whose ardent piety reaches the pitch of no longer recognizing the utility of the religious observances which, on special days and at fixed hours, call the faithful to prayer and adoration. Under the pretence of adoring God in spirit and truth, they do not see that they are going the way to deprive society, on its religious side, of a valuable aid. In the same way the marriage ceremonial helps to give men and women the sense of the serious nature of the engagements entered into, and the recollection of it keeps alive the thought of how engagements so solemnly contracted must be honoured. In a matter where the mind so easily lends itself to the influence of fallacious reasonings, to theories which fit in with its own inclinations, and

specious arguments, it was necessary that the interested party should not be able, later on, to find any way of escape which might allow him to repudiate the contract, its import and provisions; and the clarity of the engagement, if it is painful to rebels and perjurers, is a help in keeping it, to others. It is, in exact terms, a power-producing element. It may be that for some very exceptional natures this help is unnecessary; all the same they would make a grave mistake in protesting against the rule, and in doing so would show that, however exceptional they may be, there is at least one primordial sense which they lack—that of social solidarity. They would forget that the prescription of solemnity in the celebration of marriage, like all other social rules, is decreed for usual and customary conditions, and that a social rule is amply justified whenever its ordinary advantageous effects are evident. They would forget, above all, that this very victory, in their own case, of spirituality over animalism, of the loyal and unwavering spirit over the inconstant and feeble flesh, has not been found possible except under the shelter of an indispensable social regulation. Thus we see again how the children turn and rend those who begot them.

Sometimes we come across young people of very noble character and lofty soul who take pleasure in protesting against formalities and external control; they feel so keenly the attraction of beautiful actions, viewed as incomparable works of art, that the tenderest fibres of their being are bruised and grieved at the thought that administrative regulations should be mixed up in the management of such lovely things: so they rise in revolt, without a thought that this anarchist attitude compromises the very order that ravishes their souls. Then, as they advance in age and experience, their rebellion weakens, and a day comes when they appear as the most assiduous in submitting to this external discipline, which they have come to understand is the symbol and the support of the rest. The moral progress which they have attained, far from tending to isolate them from their fellows, leads them always, and in greater measure, to

solidarity in the spiritual society of those feebler, perhaps fallen, brethren, whose very wretchedness can only be redeemed by themselves associating with them and accepting their burden as their own.<sup>1</sup>

Let us be careful, however ; it may sometimes happen that unjust and worn-out social regulations may be an obstacle to freedom, but how rarely this happens in comparison with the services that such regulations have rendered ; and if there still exist oppressive regulations, how far more numerous are those which make for liberty and the disappearance of which would result in gross slavery : " Prescribed formulæ and personal liberty are not opposed to each other, but, on the contrary, closely associated. Formula is the rampart behind which our interior personality obtains the full satisfaction of its demands and its ideal. Let us take care that we do not, under pretence of setting free true love, merely slacken the rein on the trifling love affair, on the intoxication of the senses, on our mad desire for change, our inconstancy, our passions of a day, our disloyal egotism."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is not from outside that humanity can be redeemed, not by contemplating it from our ivory tower, or by prescribing from afar the observance of determined regulations, but in mixing deeply with its life, in clothing oneself with its miseries. This is the wonderful meaning of the great Christian mystery of the Incarnation.

<sup>2</sup> Foerster, *op. cit.* p. 135.

## CHAPTER IX

### CONJUGAL FIDELITY. THE INDISSOLUBILITY OF MARRIAGE

Erunt duo in carne una. They twain shall be one flesh.

WE have seen that marriage is a strict moral obligation for the vast majority of adults. Marriage must, besides, in order to acquire its social value, be something more than the merely formal union of two persons who think it enough to have declared, in the course of a religious or civil ceremony, that they take each other for man and wife. If statisticians, forgetful of the true scientific spirit, if worldly opinion, which always honours tranquilizing hypocrisies, are content to reckon, as a manifestation of good social discipline, every marriage duly celebrated at the *mairie*, at a church or meeting-house, that is their affair; but the well-being of society demands more than this; appearances are not enough, there must be stern facts; actions and convictions must correspond with exterior forms. The only unions that are of any value in this respect are those entered into by spouses sincerely determined to accept the responsibilities of marriage, and animated with a loyal desire to do their best to honour the social obligations which flow from it.

The first obligation is that of its consummation, which theologians and moralists term the marriage duty. It will be enough, as to this, to recall that if this duty is in fact obligatory, it is also of obligation to demand nothing beyond it, or which may even, more or less directly, be inconsistent with it. It is a great mistake to imagine that everything is permissible to those lawfully married, and, even supposing that husband and wife ordinarily

respect the moral law as to the transmission of life, it is untrue that it is lawful for them to *add* other modes of sexual intercourse which please them. This prohibition is as much in their interest as in that of the society of which their marriage ought to be the maintenance and development; since we shall return to this in the chapter on the fertility of marriage, we confine ourselves here to stating that respect for this exact discipline is indispensable for husbands and wives who desire the ever-growing supremacy of their spiritual activity over their sensual appetites, and the progress of the love which they have given to each other.

There is a great deal of talk about love in marriage, and everyone agrees in condemning marriages that are made without it; but it would be wise to ask ourselves also under what conditions conjugal love is maintained and developed. Now if we look into the matter it will be found that this is only possible when love is pure, and that the ever-renewed opportunities of deviation from strict discipline which marriage affords to the sexual instinct are a constant menace to true love. This peril can only be exercised by watchfulness to keep the satisfaction of the sensual appetite within the limits defined by the very ends of marriage. "It is always dangerous," says St. Francis of Sales, "to take violent medicines, since if one takes more than should be taken, or if they are not well made up, much harm is done; marriage has been blessed and ordained partly as a remedy for concupiscence, and it is undoubtedly a very good remedy, but all the same a violent one, and consequently very dangerous if not discreetly used."<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction à la vie dévote*, Part III, chap. xii, p. 181 of Nelson's edition. The saintly moralist adds: "It is true that the holy freedom of marriage has a peculiar power to extinguish the fire of concupiscence, but the weakness of those who delight in it easily passes from what is permitted into dissoluteness, from the use into the abuse. And as we see great wealth disappear, not through poverty, but through avarice, so we see many married people sink down simply through lack of self-control and lasciviousness, careless of the legitimate term at which they ought to, and could, stop; their concupiscence resembling an unchecked fire which goes burning here and there without ever dying down."

The wisdom of this advice is obvious, and it must be definitely recognized when there is once more the loyal resolution to return to a coherent and prescribed sexual discipline.

This discipline with regard to the marriage duty is also essential to the accomplishment of the second obligation which results from marriage, that of absolute and indefectible loyalty, which rejects the slightest inclinations to debauchery. One man for one woman. As up to the present people have not yet *theoretically* maintained the right to adultery, polygamy, or polyandry, and as, at least theoretically, we live, or think we live, under the régime of monogamy, it is needless to dwell on the social value of this second obligation; but it is not superfluous to recall to what essential moral conditions the honour due to it is subordinated.

Before the war certain theoretical free thinkers were fond of continually saying that the duty of fidelity could have no other foundation or guarantee but love. People no longer asserted, as in the days of romanticism, that love had all rights, and could lay down all duties, but they affirmed that it was enough to safeguard conjugal fidelity. It was superfluous to talk about the moral duty of faithfulness to a couple who, in the plenitude of their affection and freedom had given themselves irrevocably to each other. Besides, does not love make all tasks easy? It is enough for all.

It is, doubtless, no longer necessary to refute these sophisms. The swift evolution which sweeps our modern societies onwards has no pity for doctrines which have lost contact with the profound realities of psychological and social life, and daily experience reveals to us the quarrels, the infidelities and divorces, of innumerable couples who had professed to claim for love alone the origin and the only measure of eternal fidelity. Sometimes a few weeks, sometimes a few days have been enough to change a love which believed itself eternal into tepidity or even into discord, and people are astonished at these sudden changes. Yet these alternations are only too much in conformity with the logic of facts. The love

which does not purify, which does not arouse a lofty sense of duty, is helplessly exposed to the rough attacks of combined instability and disorganization, and if it is true that the observance of the moral law is not sufficient to engender or maintain love, one cannot deny the inestimable helps which that law supplies both to love's beginning and to its maintenance. "Love is the child of Bohemia." and satiety, with desire of change, are also tendencies of the human heart, which operate unceasingly to detach us from the beloved one. It is right to note "that at the base of love lies the sense of the absolute: absolute in kind, for one believes oneself alone to experience veritable love: absolute in degree, for one's whole self does not admit of less or more; absolute in duration, for one imagines that one can never cease to love: absolute in its object, for our love is bestowed on a unique being to whom incomparable worth is attributed." And it is also true, according to Stendhal's expressive remark, that there is produced in love a kind of crystallization, that is, the organization, in definite shape, of the entire consciousness round a single centre. But independently of the fact that few men and women are capable of this love, and that by its side there are many other degrees of love, dim or incomplete, which must nevertheless be turned to the welfare of the individual and of the community, it is only too certain that conjugal love that feels itself capable of rising to such sublime devotion is yet helpless, left to its own powers, to safeguard itself against the disintegrating elements that are bent upon its ruin. If the sense of the absolute lies in love, this love is not an absolute that escapes the renewed threats of chance circumstances, of questioning and doubt. The young couple, you say, love each other with an infinite affection, and that is enough. But take care: for what end have they given themselves to each other, and what is it that they love in each other? A formidable question which one would rather not ask, but which the very first night, that of their wedding day, asks. According to the answer they make, conjugal fidelity will be for them both



relatively light, or, on the contrary, it will soon seem to them an intolerable burden.<sup>4</sup> True love, like true liberty, is an incessant victory of the will over the forces of evil that would destroy it by abasing it. This grand domain of our psychic energy is no less subject than all the rest to the great law of sacrifice, and conjugal fidelity is only secure from failure in so far as the love of husband and wife is associated with the loftiest moral aims and to a constant endeavour after increasing spirituality and self-sacrifice.

The advance of feminism relieves me of the necessity of insisting on the distinction which accommodating moralists lately believed could be made between the husband and wife with regard to the duty of fidelity. The reasons of the obligation are not exactly identical, because the social function of each spouse is not the same; but the duty is equal, and if our legislation persists in maintaining a distinction which our customs no longer ratify, it is but a survival of "man's law," bound to disappear shortly. "How can you dare," said St. Gregory of Nazianzum, "to exact chastity from your wives if you are yourselves unchaste? How can you demand of them what you do not give them?" The argument is peremptory and bars all controversy.

## I

If everyone agrees to condemn adultery which violates the twofold obligation of sincerity and justice, there is yet entire lack of agreement as to whether a lawful marriage is for ever indissoluble. Most modern legislatures permit divorce for specified reasons, and if we are to believe the theorists who announce themselves as heralds of the new

<sup>4</sup> "Love, a rag of purple and gold which youth hangs on the nakedness of life," said Goethe finely. "Alas, Monsieur," said Mme. de Blionne to a distracted lover, "do you not fear to put the reality to the test?"

## 842 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

order, this solution is merely an intermediate stage on the road which will lead to divorce by mutual consent, and even to divorce at the will of only one of the parties concerned.

Let us try to analyse this threefold question methodically.

It is, in the first place, a fact which the sociologist should note carefully, that no legislation and no society of men has ever allowed that the marriage bond could be broken, either at the will of one or by the consent of both, spouses. Even at the times when the legislature most loudly asserted that it held marriage to be nothing but a civil contract, the deep-rooted exigencies of social reality, stronger than those of an abstract logic which boasted that it ruled society, compelled the legislature to abandon the first deduction from the principle which it had just affirmed: while all civil contracts could be cancelled by the mutual consent of the parties who had made them, the contract of marriage was always excepted from this rule. During the short time of its full expansion, revolutionary thought believed for a moment that this ideal limit of free dissolubility might be reached, but approached it only to discover the insurmountable resistance of the barriers that proved it impossible.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is worthy of note that the French Revolution, which in spite of its formal resolution to consider marriage as a mere civil contract (Art. VIII., section II of the Constitution of 3-14 September 1791) could not succeed in placing it under the general rules as to the cancellation of contracts, succeeded no better in including it under the common law as to processes of cancellation and rupture of contracts. No doubt the decree of 20-25 September 1792 sanctioned divorce by mutual consent, but it also prescribed numerous formalities which mark the wide distinction that must separate the cancellation of marriage by mutual consent from the similar cancellation of a sale or a lease. It prescribed the meeting of a family council composed of six near relations, to be convoked at least a month before it was held, and even after this attempt at reconciliation the husband and wife must still wait a month before their divorce could be registered by the civil functionary. If there were children of the marriage, each of these delays was doubled.

The decrees of 8-14 Nivôse, an II, and 4-9 Floréal, an II, attempted to come even nearer to free divorce by consent; but while the legislature, following its absurd ideology, thought to attain this end, social reality took its revenge, a revenge as striking as it was terrible. For several months free union could go all lengths, and its exploits were such that the Conven-

And yet at this epoch of "philosophy" its first principles were known; people were aware, as Sédilly reminded them, "that it is of the essence of contracts that they must be cancelled according to the mode in which they were entered into."<sup>1</sup>

But marriage is far from being a civil contract like the rest. Divorce by mutual consent is the same as free union, and no society, unless it was composed entirely of heroes and saints, could ever endure such a régime.

By the nature of the promises to which it binds, by the emotions which it stirs throughout the most secret departments of our psychic energy, by the sentiments of affection which it presupposes and ought to cherish, by the heavy responsibilities which it involves, notably with regard to the children whom it is its mission to call into being and to rear, marriage stands more apart than can be expressed from all other civil contracts.

tion itself was forced (a supreme humiliation), on the report of Mailhe, entreating it "to arrest as soon as possible the torrent of immorality which these disastrous laws have produced," to vote the decree of 15 Thermidor, an III, which suspended the operation of the decrees of the preceding year.

The lesson was not thrown away. The Civil Code of 1804 took good care not to lay down the principle that marriage, as a mere civil contract, could be like all others cancelled by the free consent of the parties; and if it seemed to admit of divorce by mutual consent, this was merely to safeguard, in certain ticklish cases, family secrets, and to suit the interested plans of Napoleon, who already was planning his divorce from Josephine de Beauharnais. When, in 1876, M. Naquet opened his vigorous campaign in support of divorce, he also meant that mutual consent should be a sufficient cause. But it was soon discovered that his logic compromised the desired reform, his friends did not follow him on this point, and in the documents proposing the law of 1884, the question of divorce by mutual consent was scarcely mentioned.

It only needed the extreme disorganization of our contemporary manners and the incompetence of our reformers in the Chamber, for it to be possible to bring it up afresh.

<sup>1</sup> "These are the principles upon which I think a very simple and very short Divorce Law could be made: marriage is a civil contract. It is of the essence of contracts that they must be cancelled according to the mode in which they were entered into. Therefore . . ." (Speech by Sédilly, 13th Sept., 1793). It certainly was very simple and very short; but it would have been wise to have followed this law with another, not less simple and short, lately proposed by Henri Rochefort and worded thus: Article I: "There is no more anything." Art II: "No one is charged with the execution of this law."

It is untrue that the individual is at liberty to contract marriage or to remain in selfish celibacy, as he pleases; still less are duly married people free to agree together to the rupture of their union. Their freedom is shown when they choose each other, and each is bound to choose only with full knowledge, after careful thought, the one with whom he believes he can assume the responsibilities of the new life he is entering. But as soon as the marriage has been accomplished and consummated, the act performed involves, far away and in all directions, incalculable consequences which extend infinitely beyond the two persons who have brought them about. These consequences may be unperceived, in a time of anarchic individualism such as ours, by the spouses themselves, but their importance is certified by the grave sufferings which come upon the whole body social, as soon as the stability of the home is shaken, as soon as the variable caprice of the sensual appetite takes the place of the beneficent discipline of the positive monogamic union. To one who is conscious of these indefinitely extended repercussions and these subtle connections, it matters little to know that, since all human institutions are subject to the universal law of evolution, that of marriage must certainly, like all the rest, undergo in its turn necessary transformations, since there can be no doubt that progress in this direction can only take the form of eventually drawing more closely the marriage bond. The attacks now made on the rule of the indissolubility of marriage, when divorce is asked for by mutual consent, will only bring into more prominent relief the social value of a rule against which protest is made, and as the years roll by this rule, which for some centuries, when its social value could not yet be appreciated, was simply a prescription of religious discipline, will appear more and more as a principle as beneficial to the individual as it is salutary for society at large.

The rule of indissolubility is not an arbitrary adornment; on the contrary, it is bound up with the most delicate mechanism of the individual and collective social life; and since people talk about evolution, they should ask

on what condition this indefinite progress of the race which all agree to desire, is possible. "The deepening of the sense of responsibility, the training of the individual towards autonomous discipline willingly consented to, the growth of patience and charity, the control of selfishness, the maintenance of the emotional life against the elements that make for dissolution and the impulse of passing caprice—all these are elements in man's interior life which we are entitled to consider the absolute and permanent conditions of all higher social culture, and on this account exempt from all such disorder as might result from a serious change in economic conditions. To tell the truth, economic progress is itself closely bound up with general social progress, for economic security and success depends in the long run on the sincerity and loyalty of our social co-operation. Every economic modification which ignores these fundamental conditions is self-condemned. If we wish, therefore, to take up the study, at once both moral and social, of the absolute value of the various methods of sexual relations, the following question is decisive: What method is the best adapted to the deepening and strengthening of our whole social life? Which is the most capable, at the different periods of life, of developing to the utmost the sense of responsibility, self-abnegation and sacrifice, of most effectively restraining undisciplined selfishness and capricious frivolity? When the matter is viewed from this standpoint, there is not the slightest doubt that monogamy, because of its social and educative value, must form part of the permanent heritage of all more advanced civilization; and true progress will draw more closely, rather than relax, the marriage bond . . . The family is the centre of all human preparation for the social life, that is to say all preparation for responsibility, sympathy, self-control, mutual tolerance, and reciprocal training. And the family only fills this central place because it lasts all through life and is indissoluble, and because, thanks to this permanence, the common family life becomes deeper, more stable, more adapted to men's mutual intercourse

than any other. It may be said that monogamic marriage is the conscience of all human social life."<sup>1</sup>

This indissolubility of the conjugal bond is also alone able to supply love with that deepening and that purification which secure its full expansion and its permanence. "Christianity," writes Foerster once more, "in developing man's power of self-devotion and self-forgetfulness has in every respect enriched and deepened the sexual emotions. What was love in the pagan world compared with the love of Dante, of Petrarch, and innumerable others? The soul that has reached its full development, which respects the bounds of loyalty and responsibility which it knows to be necessary to it, and which forbids passion to gain anything at the cost of character, receives in return, and far more than a hundredfold, all that it has seemed to lose; it secures the complete fructification of its true personal life, and escapes the emptiness and vanity of the sensual world. It can be truly affirmed that the responsibility which religion has undertaken with respect to the sexual relations between man and woman has created a new affection, and the self-abnegation which it demands of undisciplined passion has engendered a fresh capacity of love and devotion.

"Love cannot shake itself free from the sacred order of life with impunity; that order, the constancy of which is demanded with such insistence by those who have eyes to see and look forward, is, one may say, but love crystallized; it expresses for our guidance the deepest essence of true love; those who infringe this order deprive their love of that seriousness and depth, that highest *caritas*, without which sexual passion can in a day become the most brutal selfishness."

Undisciplined liberty destroys love and, as we have seen, destroys itself as well; for is there a worse slavery than that of so many unhappy people who are subject to the capricious tyranny of their sexual appetites? In order to remain free, they refuse to enter into the bonds of an

<sup>1</sup> Foerster, *op. cit.* p. 50.

indissoluble marriage, or, having entered them, refuse to honour the obligations; and it is here that outraged order takes its revenge. The humiliating tyranny of animalism is more formidable than that of monogamic and indissoluble marriage.

These arguments—and many others which might be added on this subject which our ignorance usually treats with such blameworthy lightness—make it unnecessary for me to urge the reasons which make equally inadmissible divorce at the will of only one of the parties, since those reasons are precisely the same. If, in fact, this second method of divorce cannot be tolerated, it is not, as many believe, because marriage is a contract, and because it is of the essence of a voluntary agreement between two parties that it cannot be cancelled at the will of only one of them. This mode of argument is doubly vicious; in the first place it would inevitably lead, by application of the general theory of contracts, to the admission that marriage can be cancelled by mutual consent, which no legislation has ever admitted, and no sociologist worthy of the name has ever held; in the second place, the very premiss on which this argument rests is inaccurate.

Modern law no longer recognizes the validity of any bond of service for life,<sup>1</sup> and a debtor is forbidden to engage himself for an indefinite period to till the field or prune the vine of his neighbour, year by year. This rule of law, unanimously approved by jurists, should then be, it must be honestly recognized, entirely in favour of the theory of the reformers who demand the extension of divorce by the will of one alone; since if one party is never allowed to repudiate, by his sole will, a contract

<sup>1</sup>“Every man can hire out his service and his time; but he cannot sell himself or be sold; his personality is an inalienable possession.” (Declaration des Droits, 24th June, 1793, art. 18).

“The law recognizes neither religious vows nor any engagement contrary to man's natural rights.” Constitution de l'an III, art. 352).

“No one can hire out his services except for a time, or for some specified undertaking. The hire of services without settlement of their duration can cease at any time at the will of one of the contracting parties.” (Art. 1780 of the Civil Code).

validly entered into, this necessary preliminary of validity must have been secured; then, on this ground of the common law of contracts, the assailants of marriage would have fair play, since they could too easily prove that the "marriage duty" which weighs upon the spouses is much heavier than the obligation to devote some hours in every year to tilling a field or pruning a vineyard, and that therefore it was unlawful to burden oneself with such a duty. The partisans of the extension of divorce to the will of one party have not failed to see how favourable to their cause is this ground of argument,<sup>1</sup> and this appeal to the principles of common law has not been neglected in order to stir up ill-informed hearers and readers.

The truth is that the matrimonial contract cannot, in its form, in its essence, or in any other point, be put on the level of other civil contracts; obviously, it has connection with the civil law of human societies, but no less obviously it goes infinitely beyond that law, and every effort to reduce it to a mere part of that law only brings into greater relief irreconcilable contradictions.

It matters little that modern civilization no longer tends to recognize perpetual contract, and even in practice to multiply shorter and shorter contracts. No doubt we no longer recognize contracts of perpetual rent, ground or otherwise, nor the "franchise lease," (*bail à cens*) of our old law, nor the legal force of religious vows. Leases on the old Roman emphyteutic principle are almost unknown even as a private arrangement, and our joint-stock companies do not accept orders for supply except at short dates forward. These economic and legal modifications indicate, it is said, the direction of a movement so powerful that it must, in turn, sweep away monogamic indissoluble marriage, which, as part of the

<sup>1</sup>"Oh! that there should be no more slaves, no more serfs anywhere, and yet that one must be a slave, a serf, because one has a husband! That there should be no more eternal vows to God, since a religious, in these days, can quit her convent, and that there should be an eternal vow of one spouse before the other! That each should not be supreme in the disposition of his soul and body, this goes beyond me, I do not acknowledge it, I do not suffer it, I do not will it!" (Paul Hervieu, *Les Tenailles*).



settled régime of property and capitalistic production, will disappear along with it.

The fine passage of Foerster which has been quoted above is enough to refute this rash induction. As the great pedagogue says: "Monogamic marriage for life is the conscience of all human social existence," and it is precisely in the school of this marriage that the individual grows into those habits of loyalty and responsibility, of being true to his word, of tolerance and mutual respect which have made the multiplication of these temporary economic relations possible. They will doubtless be multiplied still more in the future, but their very extension will but demand, in ever greater degree, the development of those moral qualities of which monogamic indissoluble marriage is the best school and the only solid safeguard.

## II

The first two questions which we had to study are thus really one, in spite of appearances; it must be acknowledged that the third, which we now come to examine, has a special aspect of its own: If it is impossible to tolerate divorce by mutual consent or at the will of one of the parties, ought it not to be allowed at least for legitimate grievances, alleged by one against the other?

We know the answer that is given by most modern legislation. Inspired by the doctrines of "liberty" that flowed from the Reformation and the Revolution, they admit that husband or wife is entitled to demand divorce in a certain number of express cases, where the partner is proved guilty of some grave violation of the promises of fidelity, love, kindness, or probity, made on the day of their marriage. Some legislatures, going much further, lay down that the rupture of the marriage bond can also be demanded in certain circumstances when,

without any fault, cohabitation has become impossible : for instance, in the case of a serious or contagious, incurable disease, insanity, premature senility, impotence or sterility that has supervened *since* marriage, Let us confine ourselves for the moment to legitimate grievances in connection with the demand for divorce.

There is alleged, in the first place, the general theory of contracts involving reciprocal obligations, of which contracts marriage is obviously a variety. Since in such a contract the obligations on the one side become the rights of the other, it is obvious—so people argue—that the party who violates the obligations loses all power of claim in respect of the rights. Inevitably therefore, the injured party has the right, either to demand the loyal fulfilment of the engagements undertaken, or the cancellation of a contract which the other contractant is treating, in practice, as null and void. *Patere legem quam ipse fecisti.* Everything—justice, good sense, logic—combines to give the victim the choice between these two solutions.

The argument of human liberty comes, as was to be expected, to support the demand. By what right can a blameless husband or wife be confined in this prison-house of marriage with an unworthy partner? No doubt the expedient is offered them of bringing their life together to an end, and this bodily separation will dispense from the intolerable burden of cohabitation. But what a make-believe and spurious solution! The innocent victim of the other's misdeeds had the vocation to marry, and therefore has the right to live in the married state ; but what is this but perpetual celibacy, a hundred times worse than the other, imposed on an unhappy being totally irresponsible for the misfortune? Besides, do we not know what will happen? The couple, bound to one another in spite of bodily separation, will hasten to contract irregular connections, and unlawful unions will fill the place denied to the legitimate home.

Everyone agrees that the maintenance of the original union in peace and harmony is far better than divorce followed by remarriage. Only, it is said, since society

finds itself in the presence of an evil which it cannot suppress, it is bound to apply the remedy which will reduce the evil so far as possible. This remedy, divorce, is therefore the restitution to both parties of the right to marry again lawfully, and do we not see every day married people who, under the shelter of a new legitimate union, lead a peaceful existence, without scandal, and helpful to both individual and social interests? Sometimes even, the children born of the first marriage are not the last to profit by this boon.

Thirty-five years ago it was understood that these arguments must seem irresistible to every mind not imbued with religious prejudices, and it was said that only "clericals" could dispute their irrefutable force. Times have changed, and the world war has hastened the evolution of ideas which were already obvious before 1914. To-day, if the necessary good will is brought to bear on it, this question, so lately a storm-centre, can be examined calmly, and all educated minds now recognize that this question of divorce for a specific cause is something else than a tilting-match between revealed dogma and free thought. It is a question that appeals specifically to social science, and it is from this point of view, exclusively, that we would study it here.<sup>1</sup>

It would be inconsistent to deny the force of this style of argument, and it is inevitable that it should seem

<sup>1</sup> On this ground we will even begin by acknowledging the lamentable insufficiency and weakness of the refutations and objections which "the children of tradition" put forward in opposition to the vigorous campaign of Naquet and Alexandre Dumas *filis*. They were usually met by religious and dogmatic arguments, which were in the very nature of the case rejected, and when by chance social arguments were ventured on, it was rare that they were of a kind that an educated sociologist could take any account of. Some of the other side were also incompetent; in particular, the campaign undertaken at the beginning of the 20th century in favour of the extension of divorce betrays an ignorance, beyond all measure, of social reality and man's interior life. It is obvious that our grand-children will be unable to understand how a nation capable of producing so great a band of heroes in time of war could in time of peace, and up to the very eve of the war, have given such credit to publicists ignorant enough to utter such rubbish as if from a doctor's chair. Here is one sample among a thousand: "Two persons enter into a business partnership, say as clothiers. The day comes when one wishes to retire. Why? Let us

irrefutable to every epoch in which individuals, as a whole, have lost any deep sense of, and care for, the collective interests of the society to which they belong. But if, *in trying to restore to their intelligence this sense and care*, without which no human society can prosper, or even keep going, we set ourselves to a methodical analysis of social facts, observation will soon show us that the phenomena appear in reality completely different from what such rudimentary arguing has made them appear to be. Four notable facts, completely established and beyond discussion, arrest the attention.

This is the first: The institution of divorce, far from safeguarding marriage and the family, has helped to compromise and debase them. The fertility of legitimate unions has suffered such rapid diminution that pessimists, these last forty years, have not dared to look forward, and the rate of marriages has only been kept up because, little by little, marriage has continually lost more and more of its moral and social meaning. Many are still ready to marry because it is understood that, thanks to divorce and anti-conceptionist practices, the step no longer involves any burdensome obligation.

On the other hand, it is also well established that incompatibility of temper and quarrels have become far more frequent in families than they used to be. Adultery has greatly increased, and the number of acts of violence, or even of attempts on life, committed against husband or wife, has not diminished. It was announced, at the time when the law of 1884 was being prepared, that the annual number of divorces, after the

suppose a mere whim, that woollen goods do not please him, and he wishes to set up as a silk merchant. The law cannot keep him at his counter by force. It has no power, either in this case or in any other civil case to make anyone do what he does not wish to do. Why then should it claim to insist on a husband (or wife) cohabiting with his (or her) partner unwillingly?" (*Le Pays*, 31st October, 1917). This same pretended sociologist wrote in the same journal (3rd October, 1917): "The independent woman will benefit by the evolution of manners. When she holds in society the place which man holds to-day, she will no longer fear to have a child outside of marriage, either on the score of expense or that of her reputation."

settlement of the old quarrels, would fall to a normal level which would allay all disquiet. *On this point, as on all the others*, the provisions of the promoters of the new legislation have been proved false by the facts. The speed of the movement was on the contrary accelerated, and from 4,000 in 1885 the number of divorces rose to above 7,500 in 1900, to leap in 1913 to 15,000; in less than thirty years the number had therefore been quadrupled.

In the third place, observation shows that the distinction established by the French legislators between divorce for a specified cause, which it allows, and divorce by mutual consent, which it repudiates, cannot resist the victorious thrust of the forces of voluptuousness and sexual indiscipline which it has imprudently encouraged, and no practising lawyer will dispute the fact that divorce by mutual consent has become the present usage in our courts. We have arrived at the "juge-ment d'accord" in the matter of divorce.

"From the first appearance of the law of 1884," writes M. Planiol, Professor of the Paris Faculty of Law, "when there existed no real cause for divorce, the husband and wife agreed to invent a fictitious one: they pretended adultery, they produced paid or complaisant witnesses, etc. The magistrates were aware of what comedies were played before them, and they shut their eyes; but counsel did not even need to resort to this stratagem. One of the couple had but to leave the home and refuse to come back; he thus commits a serious injury which gives his partner the right to obtain a divorce (Tribunal de Montauban, 16th December 1903, *La Loi*, 14th January 1904); or, again, one of the parties prefers a demand for divorce against the other on false grounds, and this calumny enables the other to claim it in turn. (Compare also a decision of the fourth Chamber of the Tribunal of the Seine, in the *Temps* of 25th November 1902.) In fine, we have come the length of "agreed judgments" in this matter: there is no pleading, the interests of the children are invoked, and no inquiry is made. Under these conditions the refusal of

divorce by mutual consent is an empty and meaningless provision, it would be more worthy of justice to authorize it frankly. The regulation of the dissolution of marriage might even make it more difficult to obtain.<sup>1</sup>

Yet this is only a halting-place, and one must be wilfully blind not to see that our legislation already secures the obtaining of divorce at the will of only one, if that one possesses a little cleverness and perseverance. It is enough to frequent our courts to know that little deceits, the combination of which is always at the service of the most crafty of our instincts, succeed in turning upside down, while taking advantage of them, the seemingly protecting rules laid down by the legislature, and while our pharisaism pretends to believe that divorce can only be obtained by the victim against the guilty, actual practice reverses these *rôles* at its will and as often as it likes; the husband's cunning mobilizes to

<sup>1</sup> Marcel Planiol, *Traité élémentaire de droit civil*, tome I, p. 368, 7th ed. How, after these elementary reasonings, could M. Emile Durkheim write in an article in the *Revue Bleue*, 5th May 1906—a very curious article, in which a disabled rationalistic sociology breathlessly combats the divorce by mutual consent which the premisses of his “philosophical” doctrine postulate and the most certain conclusions of his inquiries repudiate:—“Divorce by mutual consent is a type of divorce *sui generis*, separated by an abyss from the others.” I do not undertake to explain this statement, or rather, the explanations would take us too long for them to be given in this place. It is true that further on the same writer, alluding to the proceedings for adultery or pretended ill-usage, which became classic on the very morrow of the promulgation of the law of 1884, tries to get out of the question by taking refuge in a comparison of which he does not even see the evident inapplicability: “There are many swindlers and rogues of all sorts who easily live within the margin of the Code: it is not therefore proposed to give legislative sanction to swindling and roguery.” Certainly not, but only because the victims of such people have never been seen to associate themselves with their exploits. That makes all the difference. If these victims were the first to demand the acquittal of their exploiters, the articles of the Code concerning swindling and roguery would have been abolished long ago. That is precisely the case here. Husband and wife are both in the secret, and it is the “dishonoured” inventor of supposed adultery or ill-usage who agrees with his partner to allow himself to be charged with an act of adultery or cruelty which both know to be fictitious. And then, we have never heard that the articles of the Penal Code which aim at restraining swindling and roguery have really had the effect of multiplying such exploits. And this is precisely what *has* happened with the articles of the Civil Code which sanction divorce (*Vide infra*, the official testimony of M. Marcel Planiol).

his service that legal cunning of the solicitor, and both do wonders, with the collaboration of a complaisant magistracy, itself swayed by a public opinion that ever grows more accommodating to capitulations of the conscience.<sup>1</sup>

In short, we are assisting at a determined return of the polygamic instincts which are always slumbering in the depths of our animal nature, and which nothing justifies us in thinking of as destroyed. People were amused lately when several clear-sighted moralists pointed out the relationship between the successive polygamy allowed by divorce and simultaneous polygamy, and the founders of the reform of 1884 declared themselves faithful to the ideal of monogamic marriage. But it is no longer possible to laugh, now that the polygamic claims have been accepted by the legislature itself. Not only is the practice of the double establishment an understood thing, not only has the law of 15th December 1904 abolished the prohibition of marriage with the guilty accomplice, after divorce, to the adulterous husband or wife, but it is also possible to-day for a husband and a married woman to confer the advantages of legitimate birth on children born of adultery. Besides, the law of 30th December 1915, passed on account of the war and

<sup>1</sup> Have we ever reflected to what a degree of heroic patience a husband or wife must be capable of rising, when they refuse to bring forward any evidence of offences, ill-usage, serious wrongs, when confronted with a partner who has sworn to obtain a divorce, and who is determined to use all means, even the most perfidious and contemptible, in order to succeed? A saint would not face such a trial.

A correspondence published some years ago, which we have no wish to reproduce, in order not to associate ourselves, however remotely, with the indelicacy which permitted its publication, has shown to what lengths sexual jealousy can go, even in people from whom we should have expected a totally different moral standard. The cunning "amante" gives such counsels as these to the husband: "You must methodically do all you can to render her life unbearable. You must deprive her of everything that can please or distract her, or make her believe that an understanding is possible . . .

"One of the first things to do is to have your separate room. I fear, more than I can tell you, unforeseen happenings, tearful crises which you resist so badly, ambushes to cause you to make her *enainte*, which she will reproach you with as a crime, etc. . . . Never go downstairs unless she comes to seek you, work late, leave her to drag about, weary her."

with an incredible levity, lays down expressly that legitimisation is authorized in three cases: subsequent marriage, when children are born of adultery, and—which is surely as accommodating as anyone could wish—legitimation is allowed “of children born of adultery on the part of the husband, if at the time of the subsequent marriage there are no children or legitimate descendants of the marriage in the course of which the adulterine child was born or conceived.”

Thus many halting-places have been passed on the road that leads to the open repudiation of the monogamic ideal, and preparations are in progress to make us pass yet more.

These four facts, which witness to the acuteness of the crisis through which our conjugal institutions are passing, should be faithfully noted and pondered by all who desire to form a judgment on the social value of divorce, and it seems impossible that attentive minds should not be struck by the close connection between the disorganization of the French family and the whole scheme of the doctrines taught by the champions of divorce. It will be replied that an institution is not responsible for the abuses of which it is made the accomplice. *But these abuses must not result from the very same source that has to apply the remedy*, as is the case here. Auguste Comte saw it when he wrote, on the subject of divorce, that profound sentence already quoted: “The possibility of change induces it;” and from an advocate of divorce I quote this confession: “A vexatious phenomenon is becoming more and more evident: the mere possibility of divorce separates many couples which otherwise would have remained united, or at least resigned; it is like a gully which creates a fictitious stream. In fact, many people marry lightly, saying to themselves: “If this doesn’t answer, we will get a divorce.”

Anti-conceptionist practices only find in divorce a co-operator and support, whether the husband wishes to punish his wife for inordinate fecundity, and her refusal to submit to shameful expedients, or whether—much oftener—both spouses, who have not made up their



minds as to their reciprocal plans, prefer to be on the safe side: in case the marriage is repudiated, the care of children would be a hindrance which it is more prudent to avoid.<sup>1</sup>

Such, then are the chief results of divorce: encouragement of capricious passion and conjugal infidelity, a premium on fickleness and calculated interests even in concluding the most formidable and serious of all contracts, marked preference given to the sterile or little fruitful union, gradual abandonment of the monogamic ideal, which all the same is looked upon as the very condition of all civilization. This pretended remedy automatically increases tenfold the grave evils which it claims to heal, and very actively collaborates with the moral disorganization of our families, which it proclaims itself able to arrest.

To compare divorce to the amputation of a limb, which one cannot forbid on the pretext that the surgeon mutilates the sick person is pure jugglery;<sup>2</sup> for one has never heard that the success of surgical operations has hindered people in health from taking every precaution in order to keep their limbs, while it is proved that divorce possesses this very grievous property of multiplying infinitely quarrels and adulteries.<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup> The strange line of argument taken by M. Emile Durkheim in trying to refute the partisans of divorce by mutual consent tended to encourage systematic sterility. Many opponents of divorce are in the habit of laying stress chiefly on the children's interests; how is it that they do not see all the dangers of their line of argument?

<sup>2</sup> I borrow this comparison and this argument for divorce which is the final conclusion of the same Professor of Law who formulates, in the same book, and on the same page, the statements which I have just quoted! The inconsistency is flagrant, and yet the learned professor does not even suspect it. There is always and everywhere the same slowness in sociological studies as compared with other mental training.

<sup>3</sup> If we had the time, it would be suitable to insist especially on the close relations between divorce and the multiplication of adulteries. Far from suppressing adultery by making it useless or inexcusable, as the men who initiated the reform of 1884 had promised, divorce was inevitably bound to encourage it, especially since the complementary law of 15th December, 1904. In the absence of other energetic restraints, the sense of repulsion which adultery excites in a society attached to the monogamic

As was inevitable, the blame for these excesses and abuses has been thrown on our magistrates, who are accused of compounding, by a guilty complaisance, with the worst disorders. A sorry excuse, truly. Besides the fact that one does not see how, under a democratic government, the magistrates could escape the stream that is involving all society, it should not be forgotten that all legislation which forgets the great social interests that it is its mission to defend, is always liable to receive individual applications which aggravate yet more the evil with which the law is itself affected.

The legislation of 1884 has only undergone the application of this sociological law, and it is simply puerile, in view of the disorganization of our political morals and the way in which our magistrates are promoted, to hope that our courts will busy themselves in reducing the mistakes of our legislators.

All these statements and considerations are serious, and it seems impossible to me that readers who reflect on them can remain indifferent. Even before the war public opinion had begun to be stirred at the sight of the disorders of which divorce was the unfailing accomplice ; it cannot be that, after our great trial, the urgent need to restore the French family to its old stability and fecundity will not help to develop yet more this movement towards restoration and this effort to reflect logically. It is fully proved that the problem of the legal rupture of the marriage bond for specific grievances is more complicated than the generation of 1880 took it to be.

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ideal cannot but weaken gradually, until it disappears in a society which allows re-marriage with the co-respondent, and gives the guilty and cunning partner the means to secure divorce in spite of the resistance of the other party. (*Vide supra*). Adultery must soon appear to be but a very slight breach of the law, since the husband or wife has done nothing but anticipate the time, and committed no wrong but that of not waiting for the judicial authorisation of his or her illicit commerce, which the law is quite disposed to recognise and sanction. Thus the penal repression of the crime of adultery has practically disappeared, and the provisions of the promoters of the law of 1884 have on this point received a double disappointment ; it was proclaimed that adulteries would become more rare and be more severely punished : they have been multiplied and have secured impunity.

## III

One argument remains, however, which still keeps among the defenders of divorce a great number of impartial and frank minds, who are able to appreciate all the social gravity of the misdeeds which it encourages. "Nevertheless," they say, "in spite of all these reasons we cannot make up our minds to condemn divorce, because it is the only remedy in certain infinitely sad and unmerited circumstances. At any cost there must be intervention, in spite of the hurt incidentally inflicted on the whole of society, for in such cases society is no longer justified in sacrificing the sacred rights of the individual."

Let us try to get close to this argument, since it is in the long run the only one that is worth anything.

It must first be noticed that in a healthy and normal society, in which marriage would be surrounded by the very serious safeguards of reflection and care which it demands, the number of these victims would be extremely limited, and would be so reduced that many of our contemporaries are not even able to express the infinitesimal number to which it would descend: it would scarcely be a few units. In a society which constantly maintains a high ideal of marriage and of the responsibilities which it involves, and where it is known that the contract, once made, holds good to the end of life, marriage is not undertaken lightly, and, once married, there is no reason to nurse projects of which no one even imagines the realization.<sup>1</sup> Auguste Comte's phrase, so

<sup>1</sup> These sentences would deserve a long commentary, and I do not conceal from myself, as I write them, the almost insuperable difficulty of making them understood in the sense in which I write them. Obviously, many will think that I yield myself here to simple ideology. To convince them that here, as everywhere, I remain invariably faithful to the system of "observation," will they try to reflect seriously on two unchallenged facts. France lived for nearly a thousand years under the rule of absolute indissolubility, and no history gives us the right to think that marriage was then an intolerable prison full of the groanings of the unfortunate husbands and wives rivetted to the chain. On the contrary, the records of the period witness to the ready acceptance of this rule against

often quoted, remains wholly on this side of the psychological reality, and we must even say that the mere possibility of change brings to birth, and creates, first the desire and the wish for it, and then the need. And there, in truth, lies the essential evil of the institution of divorce. In all societies where divorce does not exist, not only does everyone regard marriage with the gravity which so an important contract merits, but, above all, each husband and wife exercises over the affections and imaginations a preventive control which crushes in the germ the temptations and the dramas of which our contemporary literature loves to tell us the horrors. We are moved to pity by the dreadful tortures inflicted on an innocent victim of the prison, but we forget that it is the very creation of a way out which has made people regard as a prison a comfortable and healthy dwelling, where, in order to recognize its advantages, it

which no one dreamt of protesting, and the stories of our forefathers often end with this formula : "he lived happily and had many children."

On the other hand, when under the Restoration, the law of 8th May 1816, which abolished divorce, was passed, it is perfectly correct—and in a sense it was a great mistake and a great misfortune—that the law was looked upon as a satisfaction made to the Church for the régime born of the Revolution, but it must also be said that M. de Bonald's proposal was accepted without debate, and no one considered that marriage would henceforth be again a frightful prison ; society, after the great shocks of the Revolution and the First Empire, simply returned to a conception of marriage which seemed to include, naturally and logically, its indissoluble character. And it returned so completely that the Government of July, which nevertheless "did not love the curés," and which had by its character deprived Catholicism of its exclusive position, had the good sense not to imagine that its lack of sympathy with the Catholic Religion pledged it to pass a law re-establishing divorce.

In the same way, after the events of 1814, divorce disappeared in Italy along with the French domination, "without regret or protest."

In short—and this fourth fact will no doubt appear the most significant of all, and its social value is in fact considerable—it must not be forgotten that, even in our contemporary French society, when the elements of dissolution and moral indiscipline penetrate so actively into the smallest hamlet and the humblest cottage, the proportion of divorces to marriages varies considerably. While in Paris there are 79 marriages in 1000 dissolved by divorce, 63 in the Rhône, 59 in Yonne, the proportion is only 1 in 1000 in the Hautes-Alpes and Lozère, and 2.5 in Côtes-du-Nord ; that is to say, in these departments divorce corresponds to no pre-existing psychological necessity, and only tends to create tendencies which are new, and singularly hurtful to the maintenance of good family morals.

was sufficient to know that one was established there for life.

It is evident that in a society, like ours, *used to the idea* that marriage can and should be dissolved in certain cases by legal authority, the abolition of divorce would profoundly trouble the psychic economy of some people, and would arouse violent protests which, no doubt, would not tend to the good of the institution of the family. "Many young men, and even girls, have come to look on marriage as a mere form of regularized and permissible debauchery,"<sup>1</sup> and under these circumstances a substantial modification of our divorce laws might even be hurtful to morality. Besides, no one thinks of demanding it, and it is noticeable that it does not figure in the programme of any Catholic candidate at the last elections, still less in the programme of any deputy actually returned.

Are we to say that in societies which have known nothing of divorce, harmony, peace, and love have invariably been the lot of all lawfully constituted homes? Certainly not, but at least in all these supposed cases of unmerited wretchedness where the husband or wife, notwithstanding all safeguards at the time of marriage and absolutely correct personal conduct, was the victim of the misdeeds of the other partner, this suffering was bravely accepted as the inevitable price of the most precious of all possessions, the indissolubility of the marriage bond. In those days it was not held that man had a *right* to happiness, still less to sexual pleasure, and when life in common became completely intolerable, it was thought that corporal separation was a sufficient slackening of the bond which nothing could break.

Often—much more often than our "sociologists of the boulevard" could believe, so true is it that the strength of a blameless moral attitude has a power of attraction which it is usually hard to resist in the long run—the guilty spouse, touched at last by this unfailing steady patience and sweetness, came back, in the evening of

<sup>1</sup>This sentence is taken word for word from a letter written by one of the best known and best informed masters of our university education.

## 362 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

life, to ask forgiveness. No doubt such pardon can not efface the recollection of past licence and of days all filled with bitterness, but let us not fail to recognize the pure and noble happiness which it has kept in store for the home that had been maintained in spite of storm and suffering. Under the impulse of the shameful doctrine of retaliation and revenge, and of the senseless idea of a man's "honour"—to which will soon be added the no less absurd idea of the "honour" of a woman—we have chosen to forget the magnificence of forgiveness and the joy of repentance, but we are at least still capable of understanding the prize, without any admixture of compensation or recompense, which unswerving loyalty to the sublime obligation of marriage has in store for those who do not refuse to become its martyrs.

In any case, even if these consolations were refused them, these men and women were the witnesses of the inestimable social value of the monogamic ideal. They were, side by side with the celibates of devotion, a living proof of the possibility of sexual discipline; creators of moral energy, and sources of spiritual life, they upheld by their example millions of other weaker souls, who in touch with them took fresh courage and found strength not to yield. Thus their life was beautiful and fruitful, unlike that of our modern *divorcés* who, after an unfortunate experience, and often even without having tried to make it better, come to demand, by a fresh marriage, the means to make a new home. As the French people have become "accommodating," in the sense which they attach to the word,<sup>1</sup> we willingly admit that they often succeed. Their success is, most of the time, only an added scandal to that of their past life. We do not usually say that the cleverness of a thief in founding a prosperous establishment with the proceeds of his theft makes his evil doing any less of a crime, and, if we were not wilfully blind, we should not fail to see how this breaking of the most solemn promises, this substitution

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to prepare a statement of the number of children per household, born after the remarriage of *divorcés*. But who thinks about it?

of one oath for another which violates the first, these interchangeable love-affairs which on each occasion are declared to be until death, have reduced and degraded the very idea of monogamic marriage.

If our sight were clear enough to look further ahead, we should also see that marriage and the family are not the only victims of the wrong. This sham success shows the advantage of being able to shake oneself free of vexatious obligations, to break compromising covenants, to abandon what one has promised to serve. The lesson will not be thrown away, and did not our obliging pharisaism maintain, in the teeth of all evidence, a pretended distinction between private life, and public or economic life, we have no doubt as to the eagerness with which the teaching would be followed.

The repercussions of this attack on the inviolability of marriage will, therefore, have no limit, and, in the last analysis, none of these sufferings would have to be borne unless the principle had been laid down of the "right" of married people to sexual enjoyment. At the bottom, this is the principle, sometimes admitted, sometimes covered with oratorical flowers to hide its brutality, this is the principle which inspires the whole theory, a purely naturalistic principle which we shall find all through this study, and to which an absolute character is persistently assigned, as if it was under no obligation to be co-ordinated with the well-being of society.<sup>1</sup>

In following out this principle, various laws have allowed divorce in case of insanity or incurable disease, which have supervened since marriage. The conclusion is logical, and would gain the adhesion of many amongst us. Only, when we come to this point, can we say any longer that marriage is an association of two persons of different sex who join together "for better, for worse," and that this incomparable union rests on the entire gift of true love?

"A fiction," writes Dr. Toulouse, "which often hinders the happiness of married people, is that the instinct of love

<sup>1</sup> On this pretended principle, *vide supra*, chap. VI, and especially *infra*, chap. X.

is a tyrant and must be satisfied at any price . . . Now the very characteristic quality of man, and the apparent end of his evolution, is an ever growing independence of his appetites. The child learns to master his coarser needs, and the adult to overcome his passions. This scheme of all good upbringing is not chimerical, nor something outside practical life. For the end of our nature is precisely to be subject, in great degree, to the personal tendencies which constitute our will. All these pretended tyrannies of instinct are nothing but the sign of a weak, badly trained, unformed will. What one shelters behind as 'temperament' is usually nothing but weakness. The keen man who is really strong knows how to use his powers at the right time."<sup>1</sup>

Thus, at the end of this study, nothing is left of the arguments, which seemed unanswerable, in favour of divorce. It is altogether a mistake to think that the rule of indissolubility is only an ecclesiastical precept, wrongfully imposed on human conduct by an authority inimical to human freedom. This rule would not have been a religious precept unless the needs of social life had imperiously demanded it, and it is not suprising to see thinkers who are wholly outside the Catholic discipline take up the defence of monogamic indissoluble marriage. We know Auguste Comte's attitude: "Our hearts," he says, "are so changeable that society must intervene to hold in check the vacillation and caprices which would otherwise drag down human existence to be nothing but a series of unworthy and pointless experiences."

In the same way Pestalozzi, in his book "Leonard et Gertrude," signalizes the supreme importance of boys and girls being led, from the very first, to think of the union of the sexes as a permanent and final thing. He would have the ideal of a rightly ordered marriage, with its lasting and reciprocal confidence, its wonderful educative power, and its influence as limitless as it is beneficent, put clearly before their minds, so as to occupy and guide their imagination.

<sup>1</sup> *La chasteté*, in *Demain* of 1st March, 1919.



Finally the biographers of Goethe tell us that this champion of all liberties was led by reflection to assert urgently the value of monogamic indissoluble marriage, the sacred character of which inspired him with so much reverence that at times the very thought would bring tears to his eyes.<sup>1</sup>

What would these profound moralists say if they were to come back amongst us? Most of our contemporaries are so far from thoughts of this kind that they can no longer even understand their language, which is so wonderfully in harmony with the constant and universal needs of the human heart. A great process of re-education is needed. Happily, when it is undertaken, there will be found to work with it countless homes which, though not always with full consciousness of the great ideal of which they have been the guardians, have yet been inviolably faithful to the monogamic indissoluble union. Thanks to these faithful husbands and these admirable wives, we can still speak of marriage and the family, sacred words that conceal the moral wretchedness and licentious deeds of so many thousands of other husbands and wives. Our conscienceless literature readily mocks at conjugal fidelity, and looks on couples who observe it as old-fashioned. That is stupidity joined to ingratitude, for these sham establishments do not suspect what they owe to these "old-fashioned" people. Whatever be their philosophical or religious opinions, all French people ought to associate themselves with the efforts which are being made to restore in men's minds

<sup>1</sup> Goethe himself relates that Reinhard, court preacher at Dresden, often expressed surprise at hearing him express such strict opinions with regard to marriage, which contrasted strangely with his usual extreme liberalism. Voss also relates that he was present one day, by the side of Goethe, at the reading of "Louise"; when the passage describing the betrothal was reached, the great philosopher suddenly began to shed tears, and cried: "A holy passage!" with such warmth that all present were deeply moved. Thus the illustrious writer testifies against his own past life and actions, and desired to make it known that his romance "Wahlferwandtschaften" was nothing else than a commentary on Christ's words: "Whosoever looketh on a woman to lust after her hath already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matt. v. 28). (Emile Durkheim, in the *Revue Bleue*, 5th May, 1906.)

the idea of the monogamic indissoluble marriage, and it may be said, without paradox, that without this restoration it will soon be impossible to maintain the law of 1884. The legal establishment of divorce is by itself such a dissolvent force that it can only maintain itself in a society where the vast majority are still loyal to the principle of conjugal indissolubility.<sup>1</sup> Forces more potent than all human wills cannot but make it impossible for France to follow, for yet some decades more, the direction which our legislation has taken on marriage and the family during the last thirty-five years: either the French people, grown wiser, will know how to give it the finishing blow, or else increasing disorganization will lead them to the ultimate precipice. There is no third choice.

<sup>1</sup> From the sociological standpoint it can be said, without paradox, that for thirty five years it is Catholics who have saved the divorce laws: if they had supported them, the flood of disorder would have been such that the defenders of those laws would have been the first to propose their repeal. This is but the application of a great social law which is verified throughout all social phenomena. In the same way, it is the temperate people who preserve the drunkards from Draconian legislation.

## CHAPTER X

### FERTILITY AND CONTINENCE

“There is no dearth like the dearth of men.”

ROUSSEAU

“Homicidii festinatio prohibere nasci.

To forbid to be born is hastening to kill.”

TERTULLIAN.

THE legitimate union of man and woman, though prepared for by chastity during the years of celibacy, undertaken after an attentive and disinterested examination of the conditions which must safeguard its permanence and happiness, supported by love, and maintained with unshaken fidelity, is not, for all that, certain to fulfil the high mission entrusted to its care. In a sense it even could be said that all this is but a preparation for the essential task, that of the transmission of life, of the upbringing of a new generation, held in reserve to replace the generation of adults which every day is becoming worn out and on the way to death.

Except the professors of unrestrained neo-malthusianism, whose theories have been refuted in the preceding chapters, no one would deny that one of the first obligations of people lawfully married is that of fertility, or, to put it more exactly, of loyalty in their conjugal relations. During the forty years before the war, and the five years of the war itself, France has suffered enough from voluntary sterility, and the resulting losses which she will recognize more clearly every year are heavy enough to remove all uncertainty as to this: that France needs that marriages should be fruitful, and that her people should accept generously the duty of transmitting life. She needs this in order to safeguard her economic, financial, military, diplomatic, intellectual and

moral interests, which are everywhere and seriously compromised by systematic sterility.

Without repeating what we have already said, let us nevertheless pause for a few moments to make ourselves gauge still better the inestimable value of the services which this fertility in marriage renders at once to society, to parents and children. The sociologist and moralist are only too well accustomed to complain of the violence and impetuosity of instinct, those inexhaustible sources of nameless evils. But besides that they would be certainly much reduced, if only we would leave off doing all we can to over-stimulate them, it is evident that this tenacious vigour of the instinct of generation was necessary in order that all human society might every instant be at work, and as it were braced up by an irresistible need of progress and development. Some pages further on we shall show the evils which result from inordinate fecundity; but precisely because we shall show them with all honesty, we must here signalize the splendid help which the instinct of generation supplies to human progress, when the salutary discipline of monogamic marriage is duly accepted.

By his very nature man is but too prone to spare himself exertion, to calculate what trouble he can avoid, to give himself over to idleness, inertia, and mere routine. "It is better to sit than to stand, and better to lie down than to sit," says an Arab proverb. Yet the real interest of every individual, equally with that of the whole race, demands the development of exactly the opposite qualities: ardour and application in work, readiness to take trouble, the spirit of initiative and discovery. The fertility of his generative instinct and of his love has to develop those precious qualities in the individual, and make him cross the ditch on the edge of which his selfishness and softness hold him back. By the side of himself and his wife, though their own needs are easily supplied, there is a whole crowd of little beings who claim nourishment and constant care, and whose needs and expenditure will only increase as they grow older. They must be

worked for, and father and mother, who would not work for others without a wage, will work for them, with what ardour and joy! It is because they are flesh of their flesh, the fruit of their affection and loving embraces. We shall show later on, with Malthus, how population has a tendency to increase much more rapidly than the means of subsistence, but this truth, which the sad experience of hundreds of millions of families throughout the world confirms so forcibly, must not shut our eyes to another truth, which Malthus was undoubtedly wrong in not making clear along with the first, namely, that it is the fertility of the human race which has always been in the past, and most certainly will always be in the future, the most active and powerful collaborator in all progress, whether material or moral. Because each year a greater number of human beings require more nourishment, more clothing, more dwelling-places, waste lands are cleared, mines are opened, the forces of nature are made to serve, inventions are followed up in all directions. Inertia, indolence, and routine will everywhere have the worst of it, and we know how easily they become dominant, and take their revenge on societies which practise systematic sterility.

But man does not live by bread alone, and in spite of our magnificent material progress, we must recognise that these material possessions are not enough. What shall we say of the services which the large family also renders to the soul, to the development of the best kind of discipline, of mutual tolerance and respect, of devotion and unselfishness? We have said many times, and daily experience confirms the statement, that it is possible for the union of man and woman to be nothing but a twin selfishness, and if they have but one or two children, it may be selfishness spread among three or four: founded on selfishness these homes merely generate selfishness. But if the home contains six, eight, ten, or fifteen children, the way of selfishness and caprice would obviously not suffice to secure the peace and well-being of the lively crowd. Diversity of characters and multiplicity of incidents increase

## 870 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

indefinitely the chances of disorder and disagreement, and the need of discipline, order, devotion, and mutual charity, is so evident that each feels himself bound to acquire these qualities. It may be said without exaggeration that the domestic life is, for the parents and children of such families, an incomparable training-ground, where they find every moment of the day—and sometimes of the night, at least for the parents!—the need to combat their selfishness, their whims, and their faults of character. And what encouragement the large family gives the parents in correcting their own faults! Since by watching more carefully over oneself, in controlling more effectually one's tendencies to gluttony, idleness, sensuality, vanity, avarice, or anger, one certainly adds to the well-being and happiness of the eight or ten children whom one loves so dearly, how could the effort not be made to correct the faults which we cannot effectively combat in others unless we are trying to get rid of them ourselves?

No doubt we often find parents who take care to train, with devotedness and true discipline, the only child, or the two children, who are growing up in their homes, but how often the effort seems futile and artificial in comparison with the spontaneous training which the child of a large family receives, and in the frequent case of voluntary sterility, the growing boy or girl soon comes to guess the hypocrisy of the advice given in formulas which are nothing but lies. Since the parents have thought they could sacrifice the strictest social obligation to their advantage and the child's own, what use is it for them to speak of sacrifice and devotedness? The child will put the interests of his own valuable person before everything else. Family life teaches him that, above all, he must take the winning tricks: the lesson will not be thrown away<sup>1</sup>.

<sup>1</sup> "It is a matter of daily observation," writes M. Dumont, "that a small family makes the parents weak, and weak parents often make the children insolent and capricious. Even when docile an only child learns respect imperfectly, because he has not the fear on him of a firm, energetic voice compelling obedience. In such a case, however moral, the upbringing

Thus the child's character is sacrificed as completely as his material interests, and the shameful bargain which his parents have made for his sake with nature—whom they have defrauded in her legitimate demands—is, all along the line, a bargain made by dupes. What is the father's cash worth in comparison with the indefinite resources which laborious activity and bold initiative would have won for him? His moral character is as much emasculated as his economic capacity; he will soon learn to his cost that life, especially modern life, requires something more than aptitude to keep up small things in a small way, and in any case he loses the healthy and fortifying joys of the stirring vigour that can produce, and of the generosity which does not spare trouble because it knows itself always able to produce yet more.

And even the physical health of the individual and the race reaps great benefits from fruitful marriage. Beyond the fact that health depends greatly on a virile strengthening and disciplined upbringing, it also profits by the natural operation of the law of selection and survival of the fittest which terrifies our morbid sentimentality. Physicians have for long laid stress on the harm caused to the general health, and the race, by the assiduous care which we lavish on children who are rickety, scrofulous, syphilitic, and otherwise diseased, and who consequently have no hope of a normal existence. It may be that the care bestowed by parents or charitable institutions succeed in snatching them from premature death, but this success benefits no one, and in a healthy society where the sources of life flow in abundance, these poor specimens of a reduced humanity would not have drained, to their own advantage, the care and attention which would have been better employed otherwise.

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will be soft and unmanly. But if there are five or six children, it is quite another thing. Then the mother's tears will no longer compel the father to make peace at any price with insubordination. All the brothers will naturally join with their parents with regard to the one in fault, and the more boys there are the greater will be the paternal authority. In short, have one child and you are a slave; have half-a-dozen and you are their master."

## 372 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

Much has been written during the ten years that preceded the war on race-culture and physiological amelioration; the attempt had even been made to found a new science, that of "Eugenics," in this connection. We may rest assured that the normal fertility of marriages is the surest way of progress in this way. People say, "We would rather have quality than quantity," a convenient formula, but we must know whether a certain abundance is not precisely the condition of quality. However one returns to the problem, therefore, and from whatever standpoint it is regarded, it appears that the family cannot exert its educative action on the strength and progressive development of the children unless that action is exercised over a compact little throng.<sup>1</sup>

Thus the true interests of parents and children are identical with those of society in demanding a generous fertility. Without going so far as to say that the marriage duty has no other end but the procreation of children,<sup>2</sup> which would go near condemning, even in marriage, all cohabitation which cannot lead to procreation, at least it must be asserted that procreation is its primary end. If husband and wife suffer, at the time of their marriage, from incapacity to transmit life, their marriage is null and void; similarly, all agreement of conjugal fraud arranged between an engaged couple or at the beginning of married life must be condemned with the utmost rigour. These agreements are not rare in these days. After what has been said, it would be superfluous to show why the sociologist can only compare such compacts to mere prostitution, with this aggravating circumstance, that the contracting parties usurp the honour of the matrimony which they degrade and defile.

<sup>1</sup> On the extremely fatal effects of anti-conceptionist precautions on the woman's health, *vide infra*, chap. xiii.

<sup>2</sup> Catholic theologians teach that the act has a triple end: *ad procreandam prolem, ad fovendam amorem, ad sedendam concupiscentiam.*



## I

But here a question of capital importance presents itself. Fertility is unquestionably to the interest of society, but is it to that interest that married people, blindly obeying a natural instinct, should allow this fecundity to multiply indefinitely the number of their children, up to the age when the decline of the organism reaches the period of sterility? With man, physical affection and power of generation know nothing of a special season. "Every month, with women, new ova which can be fertilized come to replenish the ovaries, and in the interval the times of sterility are short, or do not occur at all." A woman cannot become a mother more than about once a year, but we may be sure that her power of conception will not remain unemployed, if husbands yield themselves in all simplicity to the cravings of nature. Every year, or nearly as often, a new pregnancy will occur, and it seems even that in our hyper-civilized societies the functions of lactation have lost their valuable privilege of making, while they last, the mother's organism immune from any new fertilization. Thus the number of children increases, one pregnancy follows another until the time when maternity is no longer possible. Families of ten, twelve, fifteen children will become the rule, unless the increase of population is soon reduced to more moderate proportions, to the grief of parents and all society, by the terrible mortality of new-born infants, young children and parents, especially mothers.

It is strange that the moralists and educationalists of our days seem anxious to avoid this problem, and even to have lost the aptitude to grapple bravely with such troublesome questions : one would say that they had shut themselves up in a tower of ivory, the better to assure themselves that the distressing question, *famosissima*

*questio*,<sup>1</sup> shall never come to disturb the rhythmic harmony of their optimistic conclusions. Around them, countless families of working folk allege, with a sincerity which is only too genuine, the impossibility of providing for the needs of their children who increase in number year by year; and by the side of these, are bourgeois or peasant couples, also countless, who equally resist the indefinite increase of their families by means of which everybody knows the effectiveness. Yet it is preferred to burke the question: the vast majority of Catholic writers fall curiously into line with other publicists in avoiding it; people content themselves with reminding us that the country needs defenders; that we must trust ourselves to Providence; that "God blesses large families; that He feeds the little birds, that Solomon in all his glory was not arrayed like the lilies of the field, and, besides that the child is so beautiful, with his sweet smile!" And that is all. It is but little, and this attitude is so much the more disconcerting since these same moralists in recommending to young men chastity and early marriage, ought not to be ignorant of the marked increase of conjugal fecundity which would result from putting their advice into practice.

It goes without saying that these tactics will not be followed here: since both domestic and social life present the tragic question, we will try not to shirk it.

In order to make our study more methodical let us begin by eliminating the pitiable argument drawn from the ends of nature "which wills that life be fruitful, and which only assures the perpetuation of species by multiplying beyond all count the occasions from which life can spring."<sup>2</sup> The least that can be said of this widely-spread, but utterly vague, belief as to the excellence of nature's ends, is that it is extremely inconsistent, and

<sup>1</sup> That is, the terrible question of the confessional. The others are nothing in comparison, and I know of holy priests whose sacerdotal ministry is beset with the nightmare of the question, which is for ever recurring, and which sometimes they do not know how to resolve.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. Th. Ruysen, in the article quoted p. 267.

that its persistence has even been of great service to the neo-malthusian propaganda. When we know that this docility in corresponding with nature's ends leads to that frightful infantile mortality which lately used to snatch away four fifths of the children born, and resulted for the mothers in premature exhaustion, their only guarantee of ultimate sterility, one is less inclined, *a priori*, to admire these ends, which appear to us extremely uncertain, and may not even be real. As we have already refuted this argument, in the course of another discussion, we confine ourselves to recalling that its hopeless futility would especially hit the theorists of sexual morality. Is it really believed that it is only nature which will impel young people to chastity during their years of celibacy, and after that to a monogamic marriage? If we do not believe that, how can it be lawful to invoke at one point a species of argument which is rejected at another? On the whole, licentiousness and conjugal fraud are as natural as chastity and conjugal fertility, since it is nature that endows us with the sexual appetite, and intelligence that seeks to increase the enjoyment of it without risk. Alcoholic intemperance responds to our natural desires quite as much as does sobriety and it is certainly also nature, that sows by the side of the wheat evil weeds, that would choke it. "The cultivation of the earth is not natural, nor is the sinking of mines, nor the cooking of food, nor science nor art."

Shall we be told that we must distinguish, that there is nature *and* nature? Very well: but on what principle can you make such distinction, and what becomes of the original thesis if you do make it? There is only one way out of the difficulty, to abandon it altogether, unless you take refuge in those convenient *a priori* assertions which honesty and sound critical methods agree in repudiating. All human history is a commentary on that expressive saying of Bacon: *Homo additus naturae*; how can it be validly asserted *a priori* that this universal task of human intervention cannot be applied to those inborn energies which nature has implanted in us for the recruiting of our race?"

M. Ruysen is undoubtedly right in stating that the lack of equilibrium between the individual instinct of generation and the economic capacity of the family and of society to supply the needs of an overflowing birth-rate is, more or less since the dawn of history, one of the most important of the facts that dominate the story of our race. From the most remote times, no matter how favourable were the conditions or how frugal the way of living, human society bears continual witness that the progress of clearing and cultivating the soil, and of all productive labour in general, cannot keep pace *pari passu* with the increase of population. Thus the ancient philosophers took care not to neglect the settlement of this question in their scheme of social construction. Plato fixes the age for marriage, and arranges for getting rid, by abortion or infanticide, of children whose mothers had passed the age of useful fecundity; it was to be the magistrates' business to see that there was neither defect nor excess of population. Aristotle applies himself with more precision to the same problem; he fixes thirty-seven as the age for men to marry, and eighteen for women; and he would have the number of children in each family determined. As Rossi remarks, he discerns "the principle of population" twenty-two centuries before Malthus. What proves this is that he blames, on the one hand, those who would have an equal division of land, and on the other, those who had neglected to place any limit on the population. "If you give," he says, "one portion to each family, and do not fix the number of children, what will those become who are beyond the desired number? They will be wretched and useless, and will be a source of trouble in the city."<sup>1</sup>

Besides, let us not forget that, in pagan antiquity, the co-operation of one great social institution was sufficient to simplify greatly, it might be said to solve, the problem of population; the slaves formed the vast majority. As far as they were concerned, the checks of which Malthus spoke, vice and misery, were widely

<sup>1</sup> Rossi, *Cours d'économie politique*, t. IV, p. 425.

operative and there was no fear of excessive multiplication.

On the dawn of Christianity—the problem remained for awhile unrecognised by thinkers and moralists; if on the one hand large families were looked upon as a divine blessing, the precedence given sometimes exaggeratedly, to perpetual virginity, and the widely-spread distrust of every work of the flesh, even in legitimate marriage, were enough to prevent an inordinate birth-rate. Besides, the pagan society of this epoch, victim of its disorders and its lusts, was, on the other hand, struggling against the scourge of depopulation and the frightful ravages which invariably result from it.

When the Middle Ages succeeded in organizing the Christian society for several centuries, the question of natality does not seem to have occupied men's minds seriously. The quantity of waste lands, and the important work of clearing them, easily provided the means of subsistence for docile and disciplined societies, used to a frugal life, and in which infantile mortality and the sicknesses of women, pregnant or in child-birth, exercised a powerfully restraining action. Great social scourges, epidemics and wars, notably the Black Death of 1374, also co-operated in the same direction.

It is not until the middle of the 18th century that we again encounter, in the works of economists and politicians, the anxieties which had haunted men's minds in the pagan days. The fertility of the human race was certainly a law of nature, and could not therefore but be supremely beneficent. Yet the disasters of the reign of Louis XV. and the growing impoverishment of our country prevailed over the incurable optimists of physiocracy, and at the end of that reign economists began to suspect the existence of an inexorable law which limited the number of manual workers to the needs of the industry they were engaged in, and the sustenance available for their support.

Combined with the premisses, admitted by everyone—and with reason at that era—that the instinct of generation impels the manual worker to indefinite procreation,

this economic law forbade the workers' wages ever rising above what was just sufficient to ward off death by hunger, and to make reproduction possible. "In every kind of industry," writes Turgot, "a time must come when the workman's wage is limited to what he needs for his bare maintenance," and his contemporary Necker expresses the same thoughts in still more striking terms: "If it were possible to discover some means of nourishment less agreeable than bread, but which would support man's body for forty-eight hours, the people would soon be reduced to eating only once in two days."

These formidable statements (heavy with grievous consequences, and from which emerged later on, with the celebrated Law of Wages, our contemporary scientific socialism), remained as mere isolated and incidental observations of these writers. They did not make any synthesis of their ideas, and whether their fundamental optimism still dominated them too exclusively, or whether other questions took up their chief attention, it did not occur to them to deduct the gloomy doctrine which their statements involved.

The powerful genius of Adam Smith pushed the analysis much further, and since the basal principles of his "Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations" are but little generally known, it will be useful to reproduce here a passage of some length.

"A man must always live by his work, and his wages must be at least sufficient to maintain him. They must even on most occasions be somewhat more; otherwise it would be impossible for him to bring up a family, and the race of such workmen could not last beyond the first generation.

"Poverty, though it no doubt discourages, does not always prevent marriage. It seems even to be favourable to generation. A half-starved Highland woman frequently bears more than twenty children, while a pampered fine lady is often incapable of bearing any, and is generally exhausted by two or three. Barrenness, so frequent among women of fashion, is very rare among those of inferior station. Luxury in the fair sex, while it

inflames perhaps the passion for enjoyment, seems almost to weaken, and frequently to destroy the powers of generation.

“ But poverty, though it does not prevent the generation, is extremely unfavourable to the rearing of children. The tender plant is produced, but in so cold a soil, and so severe a climate, soon withers and dies. It is not uncommon, I have been frequently told, in the Highlands of Scotland, for a mother who has borne twenty children not to have two alive. Several officers of great experience have assured me, that so far from recruiting their regiment, they have never been able to supply the drums and fifes from all the soldier's children that were born in it. A greater number of fine children, however, is seldom seen anywhere than where there is a barrack of soldiers. Very few of them, it seems, reach the age of thirteen or fourteen. In some places one half the children born die before they are four years of age ; in many places before they are seven ; and almost everywhere before they are nine or ten. This great mortality, however, will everywhere be found chiefly among the children of the common people, who cannot afford to tend them with the same care as those of better station. Though their marriages are generally more fruitful than those of people of fashion, a smaller proportion of their children arrive at maturity. In foundling hospitals, and among the children brought up by parish charities, the mortality is still greater than among those of the common people.

“ Every species of animal naturally multiplies in proportion to its means of subsistence, and no species can ever multiply beyond it. But in civilised society it is only among the inferior ranks of people that the scantiness of subsistence can set limits to the further multiplication of the human species ; and it can do so in no other way than by destroying a great part of the children which their marriages produce.

“ The liberal reward of labour, by enabling them to provide better for their children, and consequently to bring up a greater number, naturally tends to widen and extend those limits. It deserves to be remarked, too,

that it necessarily does this as nearly as possible in the proportion which the demand for labour requires. If this demand is continually increasing, the reward of labour must necessarily encourage in such a manner the marriage and multiplication of labourers as may enable them to supply that continually increasing demand made by a continually increasing population. If the reward should at any time be less than what was requisite for this purpose, the deficiency of hands would soon raise it ; and if it should at any time be more, their excessive multiplication would soon lower it to this necessary rate. The market would be so much under-stocked with labour in the one case, and so much over-stocked in the other, as would soon force back its price to that proper rate which the circumstances of society required. It is in this manner that the demand for men, like that for any other commodity, necessarily regulates the production of men ; quickens it when it goes on too slowly, and stops it when it advances too fast. It is this demand which regulates and determines the state of propagation in all the different countries of the world, in North America, in Europe, and in China ; which renders it rapidly progressive in the first, slow and gradual in the second, and altogether stationary in the last.”<sup>1</sup>

Thus Adam Smith, in this memorable passage, lays down the whole essence of the three fundamental theories which liberal political economy taught for seventy-five years, up to, and including, John Stuart Mill. It is first recognized that “capital is the limit of industry,” which means that no industrial development is possible which is not preceded, or at least accompanied, by a parallel development of capital. In the second place, the “wage fund” theory shows as a demonstrated truth the determination, fixed at each period, of the part of capital involved in the maintenance of the workers, in the form of wages ; this sum, the amount of which depends on the state of industry and the amount of disposable capital, is divided amongst the manual

<sup>1</sup> *An Inquiry into the Nature and Causes of the Wealth of Nations*, Published 1776. George Routledge and Sons' edition, 1895, pp. 52, 61, 62.



workers, and it follows that the share of each is greater or less according as the number of the participants increases or diminishes. In all arithmetical divisions, when the dividend is given, the variations of the quotient are in inverse ratio to the variations of the divisor. Finally, since the human species is, like the other animal species, endowed with an indefinite fecundity, it is, at each moment, the rate of the standard wage which determines what number of children, amongst all who are born, can be brought up, and should attain full age so as to furnish industry with the hands which it requires. Everything which is in excess of this is condemned to disappear speedily for lack of means of sustenance. Thus an entirely mechanical relation exists between these means and the amount of population: "whenever a loaf is produced a man is born," Jean-Baptiste Say will tell us later on; and since the effective members of the human race always tend towards the possible maximum, the scarcity of bread must inevitably bring with it, by means of famine, wretchedness, and epidemics, a reduction in the number of men.

II

It is strange that no one seems to be conscious of the peculiar gravity of these statements, nor of the manifold and infinitely saddening conclusions which they involve; they are plainly expressed, and yet people go on their way, serenely admiring the wisdom and goodness of the providential laws of the "Author of nature." It required the worse excesses of the crazy optimism, of which the

French Revolution affords so many unforgettable examples, for an austere and thoughtful Protestant pastor, who lived a retired life in his small country parish, to believe it needful to explain in detail the real significance, and the consequences, of the theories generally admitted.<sup>1</sup>

In 1797 Godwin published a new "Essay on Avarice and Prodigality," in which he exhibited with the same extravagance his theories on education and literature: Malthus tells us that "it was this work of Mr. Godwin's that put the pen into my hand." The reply was not long delayed; the year following there appeared, in a little 8vo. volume, and anonymously, the "Essay on the

<sup>1</sup> As this book stands out amongst all, it is well perhaps to state exactly the immediate reason for its publication.

The formation of the American Republic and the events of 1789 had roused to the highest pitch of excitement the "philosophers" on both sides of the English Channel, and one of them, a certain William Godwin, a disciple of Rousseau, Helvetius, and Baron d'Holbacr, had published in 1793 an "Inquiry concerning Political Justice," which was extraordinarily successful. The two volumes cost three guineas, but it seems that the mechanics clubbed together to buy, as a common possession, this precious manifesto of the new social order. In this work Godwin, following the fashion of the day, set forth the theory that moral evil and the various ills of the human race had no origin except the vices of government, and that humanity could raise itself to perfect happiness if it would but establish the reign of justice in laws and political institutions. These prospects of happiness were so radiant that they gave Godwin only one anxiety. Since life would become so easy—half an hour's work a day would be enough, thanks to scientific progress, to supply all needs—and so beautiful, was it not to be feared that life would be handed on with such ardour that the earth would be unable to support an indefinitely increasing population? The question might be painful, but it did not for a moment disturb the incorrigible Utopian. Godwin satisfied himself with the answer that the eventuality could not be realized for "myriads of ages," and will no doubt never be realized, because reason will not be less able to restrain the sexual desire than to correct the injustices of economic life. Even more, we can foresee a social condition in which "the spirit will so completely dominate the flesh that reproduction will come to an end," and man will be immortal. ("Political Justice," Book VIII, chap. vii, published by H. S. Salt, who added an introduction; reprinted by Swan Sonnenschein and Co., London, 1890.) These conclusions will bear comparison with the not less Utopian ideas which our famous Condorcet developed the following year, on this side of the Channel, with respect to the same subject, in his *Tableau historique des progrès de l'esprit humain*, 1794.

Principle of Population."<sup>1</sup> The sensation it made was profound, and very lively polemics began to pass between partisans and opponents. Five years later a new edition, considerably enlarged, and this time bearing the author's name, gave the science of economics the great work which has influenced it so profoundly during three-quarters of a century, and the reputation of which will be yet incomparably greater when our modern societies, disgusted with their ruinous licentiousness or their optimism, will at length face the disturbing and wonderful problems of sexual life, and restore a coherent sexual morality.

I will only recall here the essential features of the work of Robert Malthus; especially as the author himself has taken care to sum up his teaching in three brief conclusions.

Relying on anterior and contemporary observation we may hold it as a certain fact that when the population is not arrested by any obstacle, it will double itself in twenty-five years, and that it grows from period to period by a geometric progression. On the other hand, we can affirm with regard to the inhabited part of the world that the means of subsistence, even under the most favourable circumstances, can never increase more rapidly than by an arithmetic progression. Thus the human race increases in the ratio 1, 2, 4, 8, 16, 32, 64, 128, 256, while the means of subsistence increases in the ratio 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, 9. At the end of two centuries, the ratio of population to the means of sub-

<sup>1</sup> The opinions of Malthus with respect to the consequences of over-population should also be compared with the strange doctrines of several French Jacobins on the need of reducing the French population. "Beaudot and Jean Bon Saint-André, Cartier, Antonelle and Guffroy," says Taine, "had estimated at several millions the lives that should be cut off, and according to Collot d' Herbois, who had at times a picturesque imagination, the political clearance ought not to stop short until from twelve to fifteen millions of French people had been destroyed." "Let the guillotine be permanently at work all through the Republic," wrote Guffroy in his journal, "France will have enough inhabitants with five millions." Taine, *Les Origines de la France contemporaine*, t. III, pp. 396, 394. Cf. also Babeuf, *La Question de la Population*, by Paul Leroy-Beaulieu, p. 34. Paris: Alcan, 1913.

sistence would be as 256 to 9 ; at end of three centuries, as 4096 to 13 ; and after 2000 years the ratio would be practically incalculable.

As it is evident that in any country no more individuals can be alive at a given moment than there is nourishment to support them, obstacles must present themselves to arrest the overflowing torrent of humanity, and by restoring the equilibrium, rectify any serious disproportion. These obstacles, says Malthus, fall under two heads. One class of obstacles hinders the increase of population, while the other destroys that increase as it is formed. The sum of the first compose what we may call the *preventive* check, the sum of the others the *positive* check. Both classes are covered by three terms: vice, misery, and moral control. Prostitution, licentiousness, passions contrary to nature's end, adultery, and all means employed to conceal the consequences of criminal or irregular intercourse, obviously belong to the class of vices. Unhealthy occupations, rough or excessively hard labour, and such as exposes workers to the inclemency of the seasons, extreme poverty, bad nourishment of children, the insalubrity of our great towns, excess of every sort, all kinds of diseases and epidemics, war, pestilence, and famine all come under the term "misery"; and these are the only two categories that arrest—but how severely!—the increase of savage nations.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is in reference to them that Malthus wrote, in the first edition of his book the celebrated passage, so often quoted since, on "the banquet":

"A man who is born into a world already occupied, if he cannot obtain from his parents the sustenance which he can justly demand from them, and if society has no need for his work, has no right to claim the least maintenance and is, in fact *de trop*. At the great banquet of nature there is no vacant place for him; she orders him to depart, and will herself not delay executing her order, unless he can appeal to the compassion of some of the guests at the banquet. If these sit close together to make room for him, [other intruders will soon present themselves, claiming the same favours. The news that there is food for all who come fills the hall with many applicants. The order and harmony of the feast are disturbed, the abundance which formerly reigned is changed into scarcity, and the pleasure of the guests is destroyed by the sight of the misery and poverty which rage in every part of the hall, and by the importunate manners of those who are justly enraged at not finding the food for which they had been given to hope."

But since civilized man, unlike animals and savage tribes, "has the capacity to foresee and appreciate the distant consequences" of his actions, there is a third way open to him by which to escape the countless misfortunes which the excessive fecundity of the human race inflicts upon him, and this means is *moral restraint*.

What will be the form and mode of application of this moral restraint? Malthus is quite clear: the double form of unmarried chastity, and abstinence from marriage as long as one has not the certainty of being able to support, in a suitable manner, the expenses of a household. "Abstinence from marriage, joined to chastity, is what I call moral restraint." And he adds in a note, to prevent any misunderstanding: "I understand by moral restraint that which a man imposes on himself with regard to marriage, from a motive of prudence, while his conduct is during this time strictly moral. I have never, in this work, used the expression except in this sense. When I have had occasion to speak of the restraint which a man imposes on himself with regard to marriage, without taking into consideration the consequences of such restraint, I have sometimes termed it a prudent restraint, sometimes a part of the positive check, of which it is without dispute the chief element."

Since vice must be opposed and misery ought to be abolished, it is the business of moral restraint, as thus defined, to solve the problem, and the learned pastor has no doubt that this is enough; in fact he repudiates all other collaboration. He informs us especially, and for reasons which the French people ought to understand, that he regards all voluntary limitation of legitimate natality as evil-doing. "I will always repudiate any artificial and unnatural means which some would employ in order to check the population, both as immoral and as tending to suppress a necessary means to stimulate men to work. If in every marriage the number of children were subjected to a voluntary limitation, there would be reason to fear an increase of indolence, and it might come to pass that neither the various countries taken, individually, nor the entire world viewed col-

lectively, would attain the degree of population which they ought to attain. The restraints which I have recommended are of a totally different character. Not only are they indicated by nature and sanctioned by religion, but they tend in the most marked way to stimulate labour and industry. It is not easy to find a more powerful encouragement to work and good conduct than to have marriage in view as the state to which one aspires, but which can only be enjoyed by acquiring habits of labour, prudence, and economy. And it is under this aspect that I have constantly desired to present it."

In no passage of his voluminous work does Malthus require husband and wife to abstain from intimate relations, and, on the other hand he condemns every shameful way of limiting the number of births. "The disorder of our manners, which is carried so far as to prevent the birth of children, appears to degrade human nature and rob it of its dignity. It produces this effect on men, and degrades still more the character of women. It effaces in her the characteristics which are most lovable and which constitute her nature;" and in another passage the genial author of the "Essay on Population" adds these words, which for our country are truly prophetic: "It would be too easy and too convenient to arrest, even completely, the increase of the population, and one would fall into the opposite danger."

Such is the famous doctrine of Malthus. For a hundred and twenty years it has aroused ardent controversy, and as insincerity and intellectual cowardice do not easily let themselves be dislodged from convenient positions where they lie in ambush, it may be that such controversy will go on for yet a few years more. If we disentangle the doctrine, as equity demands, from the compromising exaggerations which its numerous followers, both to right and left, claim to deduce from it, I fancy that no decisive adverse criticism of it could ever succeed; and, Proudhon's anathemas notwithstanding, the monument raised by the "dismal science" of the pastor of Aylesbury, along with Ricardo's admirable theory of income, seem to me to constitute the

two most important and most solid edifices which economic science has constructed since its beginning. If we consider that the recent neo-malthusian doctrines, of which Malthus may justly be considered the precursor and initiator, involve very serious danger to modern society, that is nevertheless no reason for disputing the doctrinal value of a theory which is no doubt incomplete, but which on its positive side is most worthy of attention ; and we should be aware that, here as everywhere, it is by starting from the truths which the theory contains, and not in opposing it by childish criticisms, that we shall succeed in expelling the poison and correcting the evil-doing.

“A dangerous idea,” writes M. Eduard Jordan, “is not necessarily false ; and malthusianism is true. It is very true that in a society in which pro-creation was regulated by mere instinct, without any intervention of the will, over-population would quickly tend to become a scourge for which there would be no remedy but other scourges : famine, pestilence, or war. And if this hypothesis is rejected as a mere theory so far as it concerns society as a whole, it would still be everywhere and always true that every couple, except in the case of physiological sterility, quickly find themselves in a situation which admits of only three solutions : either the acceptance of excessive and insupportable burdens, or conjugal deceits, or continence—that is to say, pure malthusianism—*moral restraint*.<sup>1</sup>

The doctrine of Malthus falls into two divisions . the law of population and the necessity of moral restraint to preserve humanity from the formidable scourges which that law foretells.

<sup>1</sup> Cf. the articles from the *Revue du Clergé français*, quoted by M. Jordan. By this explicit and courageous adhesion to the irrefutable malthusian demonstration, M. Jordan renders a signal service to the Church and the Country. As he is not one of the electoral and political set, many Catholics disregard it, but it is none the less of first importance, and I am not afraid to say that if the professors of moral theology in our great seminaries were resolved to instil into themselves bravely the strengthening truths contained in the last twenty pages of this *brochure*, there would be some change in France.

With regard to the law of population, while it can be easily shown that Malthus' two progressions do not correspond exactly with facts, we must recognize that the principle remains undeniable, namely, that the advance of population naturally tends to be much quicker than that of the means of subsistence. It does not seem that any valid refutation of this formidable statement has been furnished, or even attempted, and the examples, always quoted, of the United States, England, Germany, and Belgium, where wealth has increased much more rapidly than the population, prove nothing, since it is only too certain that in these countries vice and wretchedness have continued the very work, which nature demands, of re-establishing the equilibrium. Who does not know that in our days prostitution, abortion, and anti-conceptionist practices every year prevent the birth of several millions of human beings, and yet by the side of these "preventive checks" misery, which is a "positive check" does not cease to supply its very active co-operation. Every year in these four countries, a number which it is impossible to estimate, and which certainly reaches several millions of children, adolescents, and adults, die prematurely in consequence of wretched conditions, insufficient nourishment, exhausting labour, or the consequences of their vices. If we attempted to add together these miserable calculations, and if to them were joined the number of registered births, it would be found that the malthusian law of the doubling of population in twenty-five years is justified, *and even exceeded*, and this is so evident that no educated mind can have a doubt of it; indeed we could not comprehend how it could be contested, if we did not know what strange and terribly calamitous prejudices too often pervert the social ideas of reasonable people and even of economists.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> How is it not observed that the example of the four countries we have mentioned is simply a peremptory demonstration of Malthus' law? If we wish for another we need not go far to find it; France herself, whose demographic condition is well known, will supply us with it. There are about 300,000 abortions in France every year—Dr. Lacassagne puts the number at 450,000—and anti-conceptionist practices undoubtedly prevent the birth of double that number; while vice and misery cause the death of



The second part of Malthus' reasoning is as incontestable as the first; no one has attempted to prove that the increase of means of subsistence can be according to geometrical progression. It is possible that the problem proposed by Herschell to his guests<sup>1</sup> may have something of a scientific mediocrity about it, but the truth is that, without going so far back as Cheops, if we could only reckon the number who since Malthus' days have been hindered from being born, or who have died prematurely through vice or wretchedness, the figure arrived at would be such as to freeze the least susceptible man with horror.<sup>2</sup>

For nearly a century, therefore, no economist worthy

a great number of children, adolescents, and adults, every year. If we add these three sets of numbers together we arrive at a total which is certainly above 1,500,000. This is then the plain question: is it believed that France could every year find resources to supply the needs of 1,500,000 additional children? The doctrines set forth in this book show sufficiently that I should be delighted to think so, but I cannot conscientiously arrive at such a conclusion.

<sup>1</sup>If we take a human couple of the time of Cheops, that is, 3000 years B.C., and suppose their descendants to be doubled every 30 or 35 years, and to be only subject to the ordinary causes of death, famine, war, and contagious diseases excepted, what number would such descendants have reached at the present time? To express it no less than 26 figures would be required. We wished to discover how this crowd would find room, and calculated that it would not only cover the face of the globe, but that on the top of it there would be other layers of humanity as far as the star Sirius!

<sup>2</sup>It will be said, perhaps, that if these two forces had not acted, the necessary means of subsistence could, nevertheless, have been found, thanks to the unoccupied lands in the new countries. Malthus had foreseen this objection, which has no force. As a fact, emigration and establishment in vacant territory could only serve for a very short period of human history, and could only be a temporary expedient because of the very limited extent of the surfaces capable of cultivation. On the other hand, it would be a strange conception of colonization which would represent it as but one form, at least in its beginnings, of the suffering which it is its business to prevent. The opening of a new country to immigration can only be achieved at considerable cost of human lives, and for long after this opening, the troops of emigrants can only recruit their numbers from the robust and vigorous adults whose very existence was responsible, in their native country, for the evils which this emigration undertakes to heal. (*Cf.* on this point the excellent chapter in the "Essay on Population," Book III., chap. ii.

of the name has been found to dispute the value of Malthus' demonstrations, and if a fairly complete list of the authors who adhere to the "Principle of Population" were required, almost all the names of the most celebrated representatives of economical science would be brought together. Jean-Baptiste Say and Destutt de Tracy, MacCulloch and Sismondi, Duchâtel and Bastiat, Charles Dunoyer and James Mill, Rossi and Villeneuve-Bargemont, de Metz Noblat and de Puynode, John Stuart Mill and Michel Chevalier, de Molinari and Émile Levasseur, were malthusians, and described the advantages of a restrained natality corresponding to the needs of production and the amount of disposable wealth. This loyalty to the Master's teaching was sometimes joined to doctrinal brutalities which the amiable pastor would have repudiated, and J. S. Mill wrote:—"While a man who is intemperate in drink is discountenanced and despised by all who profess to be moral people, it is one of the chief grounds made use of in appeals to the benevolent, that the applicant has a large family and is unable to maintain them." And he adds in a note:—"Little improvement can be expected in morality until the producing large families is regarded with the same feelings as drunkenness or any other physical excess. But when the aristocracy and the clergy are foremost to set the example of this kind of incontinence, what can be expected from the poor?"<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> "Principles of Political Economy," Book II., chap xiii., B. I., p. 226. (People's Edition, Longmans, 1891). Several pages earlier, he writes:—"No one has the right to call into being those who will be a burden on others. Whoever invokes the first of these rights must renounce all claim to the second."

"Yet there are abundance of writers and public speakers, including many with pretensions to high sentiments, whose views of life are so truly brutish that they see injustice in the law which prevents paupers from breeding hereditary paupers in the workhouse itself. Posterity will one day ask with astonishment what sort of people it could be among whom such preachers could find proselytes." (*op. cit.* p. 220).

Mill complains that the Christian Religion blesses large families. His fear of over-population was such that he, the stubborn champion of liberty, demands, in his book "On Liberty," that the marriage of indigent persons should be forbidden by law, just as many German laws at that

But more frequently the economists of a kindly disposition confine themselves to counsels, the advantageous equivocation of which is greatly appreciated. This is the advice which Pellegrino Rossi gives the workmen :—

“ It would be more useful to give the poor than the rich some ideas of political economy. The workman must not ask a wage which depression of prices does not permit, nor indulge in immoderate enjoyments when they rise. To secure this an exact idea must be given him of the origin of wages, of the nature of the contract, often contingent, which governs the relation between workers and employers.

“ It is time to make him understand that labour is powerless without corresponding capital, that the value in exchange for work, like that for everything else, inevitably diminishes when the supply exceeds the demand, and that too early marriages are fatal to the poor, whether they overstock the labour-market, or whether they burden families, to their mere loss, with weakly and short-lived children.

“ This teaching must not, of course, be opposed either by the legislature, or by ministers of religion, or the chiefs of industry, or any men of influence. Legislative measures which are merely useless to an enlightened people are fatal to the unenlightened.

“ Indirect encouragements are not less dangerous, such as the poor-rate in England, and foundling hospitals. On the other hand, almshouses for old people, hospitals for the sick and disabled, and schools, are not hurtful to the regular development of the population. France only needs to persevere in these happy paths, and to strive to make all sections of the Empire participate in the benefits in which the hard-working and prudent popula-

time only allowed marriage to those who could show that they had sufficient means.

And the learned economist who demands such a law is the same who declares himself opposed to all limitation of licensed houses : it would be a violation of liberty and an insult to the workmen to treat them like children !

tions of the departments which have assimilated the French civilization now rejoice."<sup>1</sup>

On the morrow of the most blood-stained trial that the world has ever known, and taught at once by the unutterable sufferings of the war and the manifold and rapid weakening of the long preceding time of peace, we cannot to-day read these pages without bitterness, and it is easy to throw the blame on the men who seem to have had so little foresight. Yet the number and the fame of these economists, recruited from all sections of philosophical and religious opinion, ought to warn us against too ready criticism, and it is necessary to remember the circumstances in the midst of which these celebrated writers lived and studied, those at least of them whose books and teaching are previous to 1870.<sup>2</sup> The

<sup>1</sup> *Cours d'économie politique*, I. I, p. 304. The learned professor, who at every opportunity insisted on the importance of Malthus' doctrine, has developed his advice to workmen in the curious and lengthy account which he drew up specially for the "Collection des grands économistes," and which is published at the beginning of the French translation of the "Essay on the Principle of Population."

This teaching, given by so many authoritative lips and in so many ways, especially from 1830 onwards, produced other results besides, as is stated in this other passage from Rossi's *Cours*, t. I, p. 319: "I am glad, in concluding these studies on population, to be able to add that the French population, thanks to the advance of general prosperity and the influence of our social and public institutions, is daily becoming happier and better regulated. Already in more than one department, especially in those of Normandy, the population only increases with a great and wise slowness, and the population of France, at the present rate of increase, could not be doubled for 130 years. There is a wide gap between that and the 25 years of North America. Besides, the birth-rate and death-rate have both sensibly improved; the annual death-rate to-day is 1 in 40; only thirty years ago it was 1 in 35.

Pellegrino Rossi, an Italian by birth, came to France after the Revolution of July, and was naturalized in 1833. He became successively professor at the Collège de France, and professor of constitutional law at the Ecole de Droit, peer of France, and ambassador to Rome. He was Pius IX's minister after the events of 1848, and was assassinated on November 16, 1848; his murder contributed greatly to estrange Pius IX from liberal opinions. History does not tell us if the minister who wished for "two million Swiss rather than eight million Irish," often discussed the burning question of population with the Ruler of the States of the Church.

<sup>2</sup> If one wishes to discover where the responsibility lay, it is necessary to take careful note of the period of these various writings and lectures, since the demographic conditions of France have been greatly modified

multiplication of the working classes was extremely developed at that period, and their poverty, which seemed to resist all economic treatment, soon inspired Karl Marx with his doctrine of the growing pauperization of the wage-earning class, and Lassalle with his formula of the "law of brass."<sup>1</sup>

That generation of publicists could not have had any idea of a social condition like ours, that of a nation which through the course of a long period of peace and unheard of prosperity, deliberately refuses to transmit life, to such an extent that the births do not even compensate for the deaths. They were wrong, and their master was wrong before them, not to see the error of the premisses of the moral and religious life which infers the principle

during the last sixty years. For instance, it is not easy to understand how Dr. Broca could have written in 1867, in the *Gazette des hôpitaux*: "With regard to the state of the French population as compared with that of the other European nations, it offers a prospect as flattering to our national self-respect as reassuring for our safety," and still less how in 1870, several months before the war, he could have repeated the same error, in a lecture before the Academy of Medicine: "It is not satisfactory," he cried, "to be in a position to state that France has the greatest number of individuals disposable either for labour or national defence? The children, who are the joy of their families and the hope of the country, are, to speak truly, from the standpoint of social economy, but a burden on society, since, at the present time, they consume without producing." (Quoted in *Une plaie sociale: les avortements criminels*, by Dr. Balthazard and E. Prevost, p. 61. Paris: Maloine, 1912.)

In 1865 Léonce Laverne still asserted that French agriculture suffered from an excess of labour! (*L'agriculture et la population*, p. 326), and even in the second edition of his great work on *La population française*, published in 1911, M. Emile Levasseur still wrote: "Europe will for long continue to increase more quickly than France, for she is far from having reached the extreme limit of the possible density of her population and the maximum of her wealth, and we know that this limit may recede with civilization, while the maximum does not exist . . . There is therefore room for a great development of the human race . . . We are disposed to think that several nations, probably among the most dense in population and the richest, will some day see, like France, their increase slacken gradually, and their population tend to a stationary figure; perhaps at that epoch, if the mind of Europe is no longer haunted by the nightmare of war, demographic authorities will unite in praising this abatement as an advance of human foresight." *La population française*, I. 3, p. 483.

<sup>1</sup> Compare also the memorable inquiry of Villermé in 1841, and the foundation of the Conferences of St. Vincent de Paul by Ozanam, a few years later.

of population, but these premisses admitted, they were right, not in giving the equivocal advice which they did give, but in adhering to the teaching of Malthus.

It is really too convenient to think that the statement of a social law has been refuted by urging against it the action of forces which it was precisely the object of the formula to eliminate. Malthus never said that population doubled itself in twenty-five years, in fact, he explicitly said the reverse, since, except in uninhabited lands, it would be a radical impossibility. He affirmed that in a society which respected the moral law and simply obeyed the suggestions of the instinct of generation, that is, in a society in which the young people of both sexes, maintaining chastity during their youth, contracted marriage so soon as they felt the desire of it, and in which husbands and wives were strictly loyal to the marriage bond, the population would tend to increase to a very large degree, which could be represented by a geometrical progression of which the coefficient would be two, and the period twenty-five years. He affirmed also that the means of subsistence increased much more slowly, and then he required that the human race should consent, in order to avoid the operation of the repressive checks of misery and vice, to discipline itself, notably by delaying the age of marriage among the working-class.

This is all that Malthus asserted, and against this rock neither the violent and childish hostility of Prudhon, nor the interested assertions of a providentialism which ought to have been better instructed, nor the summary and novel objections of certain economists of the liberal school, whose good will and good ideas would gain in value if they assimilated more of the critical spirit and stricter methods there have succeeded in prevailing.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> I have already stated that between 1825 and 1850, it was the socialists who opposed the teaching of Malthus, and the liberals who defended it. Fourier reckoned four material ways of arresting overpopulation : women becoming more vigorous ; the development of each of the bodily faculties by exercising them all ; "gastrosophy" or culinary wisdom, and flowery manners !

Except for one other complaint, which we will formulate later on, we can only reproach Malthus, and still more his disciples, with not having perceived that the principle of population is united to a certain moral condition which was itself neither permanent, nor universal, nor absolute, but which on the contrary might disappear and be replaced by another plainly different or even contradictory. It was a principle with the liberal school that the phenomena of the production and consumption of wealth could be studied by themselves, *without reference to men's moral conditions*; all men, it was said, are subject to the attraction of pleasure, and seek the line of least resistance; therefore all their actions must be similar. This abstract representation of *homo economicus* and the hedonistic principle has been the cause of many errors, but nowhere has the gratuitous assumption of the complete separation of man's economic and moral activity been more fatal than with respect to the great questions of population and natality. During nearly a century the liberal school lived on this principle, that "where a grain of corn sprouts, there a man is born."¹ that every increase of the means of subsistence automatically brings with it an increase of population. Sad experience has demonstrated that this supposed automatic action was nothing but an illusion. In France we have made grains of corn to sprout, enough and to spare, and yet the population has not increased; and in other countries

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Pierre Leroux only avoids these eccentricities by taking refuge in the most gratuitous *à priori* statements. He asserts the existence of what he calls the "circulus," that is, that every man supplies enough fat to ensure his subsistence!

Finally Prudhon, after the events of 1848 and at the time of the discussion on the right to work, in the National Assembly, writes a most bitter pamphlet against the opponents of this right, under the title of *Les Malthusiens*.

¹ Our great Taine wrote in the same way: "A man becomes father of a family so soon as he believes he can support his children." How far we are from that epoch, which is yet so close!

the increase of human beings has been far behind the proportional increase of the means of subsistence.<sup>1</sup>

But this reservation has nothing to do with the discussion of the questions we are studying in this chapter. Let us therefore pass it over, and content ourselves with setting forth the consequences which result from the "Principle of Population," as made clear by the genial perspicacity of the pastor of Aylesbury. I assume that the reader realises the principles which it will be enough to explain briefly.

### III

The first consequence which must be considered in the face of these formidable developments, is this : human societies are constantly employed in limiting their fecundity and restraining their increase within the bounds proportionate to the resources at their disposal. Not that a limit can be laid down to the population of the world ; we have not even an approximate idea of the number of human beings that could live on the surface of the globe for many thousands of years ; but what we do know, is that this increase will only continue at a much slower pace than would result from the natural result of the instinct of generation, and that therefore man's voluntary intervention will have exerted its moderating influence upon that increase. No doubt Herbert Spencer predicts a golden age for humanity when there will be automatic equilibrium between "individuation"

<sup>1</sup> It is not to be doubted that Malthus, with his great perspicuity, was himself aware of this rapid evolution of manners and of the character which results from the psychological tendencies, the constancy of which he had too easily assumed. Unhappily his disciples were not. Still more unhappily, for themselves and for us, they did not share their master's moral convictions, and this serious difference made them congratulate themselves on a "prudence" with regard to procreation, of which they knew the means of securing, and of which, without any doubt, their master would have severely disapproved.



and "genesis";<sup>1</sup> but while we await the coming of this "paradise regained," the human will must intervene.

I am fully aware that this conclusion will surprise and probably scandalize more than one reader. Many will think it was not worth while to write such a book in order to arrive at such a conclusion. Our system of moral education with regard to boys and girls, as to the sexual question, such as is given by a very large number of parents, teachers, and ministers of religion—I mean parents and teachers worthy of the name, who do not start from the premiss that "youth must have its fling"—consists practically in exhorting young people to chastity, and letting it be understood that when married the young man may satisfy his appetite to his heart's content. I do not trouble myself to estimate the proportions of pharisaism, ignorance, or virtue, which enter into these pious counsels, when parents who thus advise their sons are the first to remind these very sons, or such as they, their daughters or daughters-in-law, that as a fact "a couple is better than a dozen," and other mottoes of the same description. What is certain is that so brief a moral education drives to the worst disasters the moral life of thousands and thousands of husbands and wives who have willingly accepted it, and leads to the most terrible traps—there is no other word—the unhappy ones who are thus betrayed, without defence or warning, into difficulties of the most inextricable kind. From the third or fourth year of their married life, husband and wife find themselves facing the too certain and too evident consequences of an indefinite increase, of which no one has told them, and which their economic re-

<sup>1</sup> Here is his bold prediction: "The pressure of population and the evils which accompany it will disappear and will leave in its place a state of things which will only demand a normal and agreeable activity from each individual. The cessation of the decrease of fertility implies the cessation of the development of the nervous system: which implies a nervous system more capable of responding to the demands made upon it, that is to say, one with nothing to do but what is natural to it. But this exercise of faculties which does not exceed what is natural is an enjoyment. In the end, then, the acquisition of means of subsistence and the accomplishment of parental and social duties will demand precisely that kind and quality of action which is necessary to health and happiness." ("First Principles.")

sources, the wife's health, and even, let us have the courage to say it, the truly moral conception of marriage and the *rôle* of the wife and mother in the home, cannot sustain.

On serious reflection, this lack of preparation of young people in respect to the most formidable and most distressing of the problems of married life is perhaps the most decisive victory which neo-malthusianism has gained, since it is the very extension of the practices they recommend and the principles they proclaim which has concealed from many reasonable people, who desire absolute sincerity, a problem which nevertheless must be faced when we undertake to formulate the principles of a sexual morality at once coherent and adequate to the facts.

That in our pious pharisaism, our teachers themselves have come to act as if they believed that legitimate natality would take care to limit itself to a rate which could be called reasonable and sedate, what our arm-chair sociologists call the normal family—that is their affair; but nature has never promised to endorse our idyllic theories, and in mockery of our *a priori* arguments, faces us with the formidable problem of the indefinite increase of the human race.

"If no restriction were imposed on fecundity," declares the learned Professor Charles Richet, in his report of the commission on depopulation instituted by the Academy of Medicine in 1917, "the fecundity of the woman, and much more that of the man, could continue at least until the age of 44. Allowing 22 as the average age for marriage, this gives 22 years during which the woman is apt to conceive . . . The rarity of large families proves beyond dispute that if couples (French and otherwise) have but 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8 or 9 children, it is because they have not desired more. In other words (and this is the logical and physiological conclusion at which we arrive) in almost all households, if not in all, the number of children is the number which has been agreed upon. If there are three, it is because not more than 3, if 4, because not more than 4, were desired.

“ Let us all be sincere with ourselves, taking the line which alone is worthy of us, and acknowledge this evident, incontestable fact that in all households there are these conjugal frauds (to which I shall return immediately) thanks to which births are due not only to the embryological consequences of normal intercourse, but to a definite psychological intention: consent to maternity on the woman's part, will for paternity on the man's . . .

“ If therefore these couples are not more fruitful, if the number of families with 10, 12, or 15 children is so few, it is because all husbands and wives practice voluntary restriction. They have not *willed* to have 10, 12, or 15 children, *and they have succeeded*.<sup>1</sup>

Judging from my personal enquiries, *I would not subscribe to such general statements*, but, *under this express reservation*, it is certain that these assertions of honest *savants* are incontrovertible<sup>2</sup> and every day thousands and thousands of young married people verify to their cost, the stern exactitude of the statements. They declare that the fecundity of their marriage does not stay within the bounds which a silly and pharisaical sentimentality had led them to expect, and they are compelled deliberately to limit the burdens of which they cannot support the weight.

Once more I am aware that in writing these lines, the gravity of which I conceal in no single point, I come into collision with respectable prejudices, hitherto looked on

<sup>1</sup> Report to the Academy of Medicine in the name of a Commission composed of MM. Gariel (president), Delorme, Doléris, E. Gley, Pinard, Paul Strauss, and Charles Richet, secretary, (15th May, 1917).

<sup>2</sup> I notice also another mistake, which is by itself a curious witness to the strange state of mind which prevails in France to-day. The Commission asserts that in *all* normal households where there are not 10, 12, 15 children, recourse has been had to conjugal frauds. This is not exact, and I know households with 10 children where the natality has stopped at this figure because husband and wife have imposed continence on themselves: certainly such households are not numerous, but they exist, and therefore scientific analysis does not allow us to write *all* households. It is a great misfortune for the members of the Commission, and for France, that this method of solution did not even occur to them.

as the necessary defence of virtue, and I lay myself open to the anathemas, always easy to pronounce, of virtuous people who do not allow that science will overturn the traditional technique of virtue to which they are accustomed. But anathemas and blows are not reasons, and if, as after long study I am convinced, the "Principle of Population" is a truth, it remains only for humanity to choose between the methods of limitation; the sole option left to it is, not to choose how healthy and reasonable people can follow ingenuously their natural impulses, but to choose what method of limitation it will employ.

Far from revolting against the admission of the principle of limitation, reasonable people should on the contrary perceive the immense help they give to the diffusion of the neo-malthusian doctrines by their obstinate refusal to consider sincerely the most acute moral problem which social life presents to the conscience. It is proved by experience, and confirmed by all physicians, that among a hundred *normal* couples, there are not fifteen who more or less ingenuously follow the way of nature; with more than eighty-five the weariness of the wife or lack of means impose, after a few years, the use of means of limitation if the worst disasters are to be avoided. Now Malthus teaches us that far from seeking an impossible solution in the overthrow of our economic institutions, or an extension, which must always be essentially inadequate, of our resources, we should on the contrary bravely accept the restrictions on fecundity which social life imposes on us, and to reckon as a benefit and a salutary restraint, the difficulties in which so many thousands of young married people are struggling.

For here lies the profound meaning, which must be known to be embraced, of Malthus' demonstration. It not only teaches us that every effort to solve by intensive production the problem of the excessive fecundity of our race is by the very definition, bound to be foiled, but it also makes us judge quite differently the social value of the obstacles, which reasonable spouses meet with, to the

natural expansion of their conjugal fertility. These obstacles, individually experienced, are neither arbitrary nor useless ; they correspond to a profound need of society in general ; and if, by an impossibility, means were found to abolish them, it would be necessary, with all speed, to find other means of preserving human societies from the disastrous consequences of our excessive fecundity. The present obstacles render society a service which cannot be too highly valued, and of which we shall see the inestimable value so soon as the return to moral discipline recalls to many reasonable people, who now refuse to see it, what can be, and what in reality is, the power of the growth of a virtuous society.

From this point of view the sociologists, who have no desire to be like the arm-chair reformers, ought to appreciate the social value of the spontaneous checks which, under the capitalist system, discourage the individual in his tendencies towards excessive increase of family. Not to speak of the pressure of circumstances on the workman's family, which we shall discuss later on, it should be said that the sentiments of forethought, attachment to capital, whether great or small, already gained, the desire to make one's children benefit by the various advantages which it confers, the desire to rise in the social scale, all supply very valuable co-operation with the ever necessary guard against inordinate fecundity. These sentiments and desires, so deeply rooted in the hearts of our peasants and our middle class, *on condition that they are joined to other moral sentiments which keep them from becoming excessive*, contribute indispensably to the solution of the most formidable of social problems, and by the new light of the "Principle of Population" we can see that the services which they render are very much greater even than those which we usually recognize. The wonderful flexibility of these salutary checks is only equalled by their efficacy. Since the principle of population is obviously independent of the method adopted for the production and distribution of wealth, the substitution of a collectivist for the capitalist régime would not in the slightest degree modify the data of the problem that has

to be solved ; it would even immeasurably increase the difficulties, and when socialists, coming back to the beginnings of scientific socialism, wish there to be something other than a violent coalition of discontentments and demands, and will take the trouble to present a body of coherent doctrines as to organised social life, their first duty will be to tell us how they propose to safeguard society against the ravages of the "devastating torrent of births." An educated mind, determined not to be satisfied with words, cannot, in fact, but assent to John Stuart Mill's words : "It would be possible for the State to guarantee employment at ample wages to all who are born. But if it does this, it is bound in self-protection, and for the sake of every purpose for which government exists, to provide that no person shall be born without its consent. If the ordinary and spontaneous motives to self-restraint are removed, others must be substituted. Restrictions on marriage, at least equivalent to those existing in some of the German States, or severe penalties on those who have children when unable to support them, would then be indispensable. Society can feed the necessitous, if it takes their multiplication under its control ; or (if destitute of all moral feeling for the wretched offspring) it can leave the last to their discretion, abandoning the first to their own care. But it cannot with impunity take the feeding upon itself, and leave the multiplying free."<sup>1</sup>

These brave words deserve entire approval, and if anyone wishes to protest against them, at least let the protester show that he is capable of something else than angry anathemas : people may storm at their leisure, the finest bursts of virtuous eloquence do not supply the lack of a methodical refutation—and for this we shall have to wait long enough.

Such are the first conclusions which emerge from the

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* p. 220. A study of this passage could be recommended to several of our too zealous champions of repopulation, whose aim is to realize such profound changes in our laws that it will be to the interests of the individual to have many children. The obvious impossibility of carrying out this plan makes this recommendation superfluous.

principle of population, and we repeat again that their honest and sincere acceptance seems to us one of the first conditions of any return to a really coherent sexual discipline.

A question of the first importance is therefore stated : since human societies are powerless to supply the means of subsistence sufficient for the tumultuous multitude of human beings which the natural fecundity of our race never ceases to pour forth in waves over our globe, what intelligent means are these societies going to employ to restore the equilibrium between the means of subsistence and the number of human beings, unless indeed they are willing to leave to nature herself the work of securing respect for her laws by her own implacable sanctions ?

These natural sanctions are well known : they all tend to elimination, by various forms of the mortal exhaustion which nature holds in reserve in order to disembarass herself of beings which she cannot support ; famine, epidemic diseases, anæmia, chlorosis, scrofula, tuberculosis, premature senility, and the rest. These sanctions have held, since the beginning of the world, a large field, which they continue to occupy in over-peopled Asia, and even in our Western nations. Even in these latter, so proud of their wealth and their institutions of prevention and help, what statistics could ever enumerate the immense multitude of new-born infants, young children, adolescents, and adults, who every year die of wretchedness and exhaustion through excessive labour or insufficient nourishment ? Up to the present time human societies have serenely accepted the operation of these natural sanctions ; they did not shock men's consciences,<sup>1</sup> and we must think them in reality

<sup>1</sup> We wish to repeat that the material conditions of life have undergone, the last hundred years, more profound modifications than they had previously undergone since the siege of Troy ; we wish it were possible to reckon the same observation true with regard to our moral dispositions.

It is also one of the consequences of the principle of population deduced by Malthus that the problem of the super-abundance of human beings presents itself, by the very definition, before every human society whatever, and at every period of its history. It is immanent in all social life.

less revolting than we are willing to admit, since we also accept them so serenely. We like to fulminate vehement protests, but anyone would say to look at us that this oratorical effort exhausts our capacity for rebellion; after the fine speeches, the wretched hovels and the insanitary workshops are kept up as before, infantile diarrhoea pursues its ravages among the newly-born, and emaciated, half-starved little children go their way, for lack of adequate nourishment and air that is fit to breathe, towards incurable anæmia and tuberculosis.

It is probable that the recent advance of sexual indisciplinè among young people, the extraordinary multiplication of abortions, and the general spread of anti-conceptionist practices, do not permit us to form even an approximate idea of the incalculable number of the victims of these natural sanctions. When we consider that the France of St. Louis already reckoned

Formerly, this premature death of innumerable little children was accepted as a normal and persistent phenomenon, and religious faith helped to give a meaning to these trials which baffle us so greatly. The passage from Adam Smith quoted above is very suggestive from this point of view: the author evidently knows that the reader is familiar with the statement which he brings forward, and does not think of expressing an unnecessary emotion which the reader would not share.

If I may speak of my personal experiences, carefully pursued since my childhood in a little Norman town which I know well, I can testify that this serene acceptance of the death of little children was still more widely spread in France up to the last years of the 19th century, among the working-class. In this little town it was usual for non-qualified wage-earners, (unskilled labour, as the English say)—day-labourers, navvies, carters, mason's men, sailors in fishing-boats, boatmen, coal-heavers, etc.—to have 10, 12, 15 children. Scarcely two or three came to adolescence; all the rest died prematurely, usually in the first few months. And these premature deaths appeared logical and natural; they aroused in the parents no sense of rebellion against nature, Providence, or society. In accompanying the little coffin to the cemetery—one undertaker's man sufficed to carry it under his arm—the parents only said "they could never have brought him up, and the little chap was happier thus." The father scarcely took a half-day off his usual work to attend the funeral, and went back to work at once. Next year the same round was repeated—pregnancy, birth, and death.

It goes without saying that the local bourgeoisie accepted these hecatombs of the little children of working-class families as serenely as did the parents, and no one had any illusion as to the impotence of the various benefit societies to supply these families with the large supplementary resources without which they could not rear their children.



twenty-five million inhabitants, we cannot doubt that every year the necessity of bringing the population to the level of the means of subsistence has thus cost several millions of human lives. And the other European countries have undergone the same restraints.

Nevertheless, as Malthus saw very clearly, these chastisements of nature were not the only means at work to restore the equilibrium; an important percentage of the population remained in the celibate state, either to consecrate to pious works an activity which it was believed could not be better employed, or simply because the celibate declined to marry because he considered that his condition did not allow him to bring up a family in the only way he judged to be fitting. On the other hand, our fathers, much better prepared than ourselves to face the special duties which excessive fecundity may impose on the parents, did not fear to give continence a large place in the conjugal life of the households best trained in discipline and reflection. During certain periods of the year, more especially devoted to penance, married people were advised not to use their conjugal right, and the same abstinence was counselled on the day when the Sacraments were approached.<sup>1</sup> Thus habits which enslaved the body were broken, and husband and wife, used to intervals of

<sup>1</sup> In the "Introduction to The Devout Life" (Book II, chap. xx, on Frequent Communion) St. Francis of Sales writes: "I must say one word to married people: In the ancient law God did not approve of creditors exacting what was owing to them, on feast-days, but He never disapproved of debtors paying what they duly owed to those who required payment. It is unfitting although no great sin, to solicit the discharge of the marriage duty on the day of one's Communion; but it is not unbecoming, but rather meritorious, to fulfil it if required. No one therefore must be hindered from Communion by assenting to this duty, if devotion prompts him to desire It. Unquestionably in the primitive Church, Christians received Holy Communion every day, although they were married and blessed with children; it is on this account that I have said that frequent Communion would present no inconvenience, either to fathers, wives, or husbands, so long as the soul approaching Communion is prudent and discreet." We shall see further on with what wisdom and energy the holy doctor recommends chastity and continence to married people.

continence, were not unarmed when excessive fecundity made it necessary for them to abstain.

It is of course impossible to estimate the relative importance of these two private checks, but it is certain that the first—celibacy, voluntary or under necessity, temporary or perpetual—contributed, during the Middle Ages and until the nineteenth century, not a little to the solution of the problem, and when the historical facts are known, there is no longer room for surprise that Malthus believed that it is this special form of moral restraint that can solve the most tragic of all the problems of social life.<sup>1</sup>

Unhappily, this reasonable and learned man, a victim like so many others of that complete separation which political economy has, since its beginning, believed must be established between man's economic and his moral activity, omits to inquire under what conditions the sacrifice which he demands can be accepted by the countless hosts of manual workers of whom he requires it, and the results of this omission did not take long to show themselves among his first disciples, and still more among their successors. Is it not even more true to say that they show themselves already in the work of the virtuous economist himself? He knew that in the past there had been little practice of the moral restraint which he extolled, and for the future he does not seem to have that confidence which is necessary for everyone who would influence others. In the fourth chapter of Book IV., devoted to the "examination of some objections," he writes :

"A third objection might be made, and it is the only one which seems to me to be at all plausible, namely :

<sup>1</sup> It would be interesting to analyse methodically this practice of accepted or voluntary celibacy in France and England, previous to the 19th century. For noble families there were special institutions which involved celibacy : the Order of Malta and various benefices for the boys ; the Noble Chapters for the girls.

Malthus has most judiciously analysed (Book II, chap. viii) the various reasons which in every social circle—the liberal professions, farmers, small tradesmen, industrial workers, domestics in the service of rich families—induce delay, or even entire renunciation of marriage.

that in insisting on the duty of moral restraint we run the risk of multiplying offences against chastity.

"I should be distressed to say anything which could, directly or indirectly, be interpreted as unfavourable to the cause of virtue. But I do not think that the offences in question ought, from the moral standpoint, to be the only ones considered, nor that they are even the most serious that can be imagined. It is true that they never, or rarely, fail to involve misfortunes, and on this account they ought to be forcibly repressed; but there are other vices still more pernicious in their effects, and there are situations which should alarm us still more. Extreme poverty exposes to yet more temptations. Many individuals of both sexes have lived an honourable, chaste, and virtuous life outside the bonds of matrimony. I do not believe that many are to be found who, subjected to the trial of extreme misery, or even of a continually disappointed life, have lost nothing of their delicacy and whose character has not become insensibly degraded."<sup>1</sup>

Such were the teaching and statements of Malthus. They were dangerous; how much more dangerous were the recommendations of innumerable liberal political

<sup>1</sup> In another chapter, Malthus adds this comment: "I have said, and I believe it to be strictly true, that it is our duty to defer marriage until we are able to support our children, and that it is equally our duty not to give ourselves up to vicious pleasures. But I have nowhere said that I expect to see either of these duties exactly fulfilled; much less, both at once. In this case, as in many others, it may happen that the violation of one duty facilitates the fulfilment of the other. But if there are really duties which are prescribed to us, and which we can fulfil without sacrificing any, there is no power on earth with authority to absolve him who violates them. This right belongs to God, Who will weigh in His wisdom the temptation and the sin, and will temper His just judgments with His mercy. The moralist cannot, under any pretext, dispense himself from counselling the practice of both these duties; each individual must after that be left to himself to act, under the influence of the temptations to which he is exposed, according as his conscience dictates to him. In all that I have said . . . I have taken man as he is, burdened with all his imperfections. In regarding him under this aspect, sure as I am, besides, that in one way or another the population must be checked by some restraining obstacle, I do not in the least hesitate to say that "prudence, which is opposed to thoughtless marriages" [notice that the question is one of "prudential," not of "moral," restraint] "is an obstacle preferable to premature death." "And this opinion appears to me to be fully confirmed by experience."

economists, who were his disciples, and whose equivocal proposals we know. Prudence is advised, but how carefully they decline any clear explanations, how perseveringly they avoid going to the root of things, to that ultimate point where will be found, as they suspect, those great problems of conscience and morality which it is agreed to ignore. We are speaking of the time of Victor Cousin and "eclecticism," the epoch when triumphant bourgeoisie cares more for material gain than for generosity or logic, and when each is left to himself, the economists going on their way, to draw from the "Principle of Population," for the guidance of his conduct, such conclusions as seem to him most moral—or most convenient.

But fifty years roll by, and the neo-malthusian doctrine frankly adopts the position of which I have been speaking, and when one has read, as I have done, the innumerable speeches, recommendations, pamphlets, books of liberal political economy, one is almost grateful to the *doctrinaires* of sexual emancipation for the crudities with which they present us: they had to explain themselves clearly, and these equivocal cards which players who were reputed respectable made use of, will no longer be found on the board.

This need of clear explanations is, in truth, not yet recognised by everyone—quite the contrary; and whilst amateur writers sustain the incredible hazard of undertaking to raise the French birth-rate without previously laying down the precepts of conjugal morality, a fair number of Catholics "seem to be strangely in accord with them" by imitating this kind of procedure.<sup>1</sup>

But both must have little clear vision if they do not see that our contemporary evolution is forcing them inevitably to emerge from this hiding-place. Neo-malthusian knowledge has been diffused through all western civilized societies—and is awaiting diffusion in all countries of the world—to the extraordinary degree of which we are aware and humanity is bound to take a side

<sup>1</sup> Cf. E. Jordan, *Revue du clergé français*.

as to the means which it considers legitimate to preserve in our homes the equilibrium between resources and burdens, between the health and dignity of the wife and the ardent appetite of the husband; to maintain in certain societies already over-populated, or menaced with over-population, the equilibrium between population and means of subsistence.<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Because contemporary France has chosen to expose herself, by a system of voluntary sterility, to all the sufferings which result from the scourge of depopulation, it is not reasonable to deny the terrible sufferings which fecundity also inflicts on various countries of the world. Not to speak of China, Japan, and India, it may be said that a modification of the excessive natality of Russia is a condition of the progress of that country, and that the Balkan States cannot long maintain their great fecundity. In the same way, if we were willing to prosecute a methodical enquiry as to the French Canadians, it would be seen that there is reason to abate the admiring eulogies which we bestow on their families of 15, 18, 20, and 22 children. On thinking it well over, this Canadian fact appears to be the clearest proof of the insincerity and cowardice which deprives of all value the teaching on sexual morality which so many teachers, lay and religious, claim to give. In Canada we see what human fecundity that respects the moral law can accomplish, and we should like to ask these teachers, who quote us this model across the sea, to tell us what would become of France and the French people if families of 15, 18, and 20 became the rule. If they believe this hyperfecundity to be possible, good, and desirable, let them clearly explain the consequences—and the reading of their explanations will certainly be no wearisome task; if they do not, let them tell us what physiological privilege is to preserve the French people, when they once more respect conjugal morality, from this hyperfecundity. They will only escape the dilemma by explaining the voluntary means of limitation. But then, why do they never speak of them? The Canadian example proves that in that country the wives are wonderful in their generosity and devotion, but that the husbands are much less so, and their failure to control their instinct of generation seriously compromises the economic, intellectual, and even the moral progress of their race. Even in France, several priests who have been over there on voyages of practical research have acknowledged this: why do they not say it in public? They would be doing a great service to religion.

## IV

The answer is clear: obviously the continence of married people is the sole means of correcting excessive fecundity, and outside this means every precaution and every anti-conceptionist practice must be condemned.

I do not conceal the peculiar gravity of this practical solution, nor, still less, the Utopian and unreasonable character which, in the teeth of all evidence, will be ascribed to it by a certain number of people whose own life is scrupulously moral, but who have never made up their minds to analyse, methodically and pitilessly, the facts which embarrass them. All the same, I would not for the world throw a stone at the unhappy husbands and wives who are crushed under the weight of evil responsibilities to a society that essentially rests upon a system of conjugal deceit, and who deplore their inability either to observe the duty of continence or to bear the expense of a fresh pregnancy. If they have already had several children, as many as the wife's health and the family resources could possibly support, if they keep in their hearts the sincere and loyal desire to return to an absolutely sound and correct married life, they deserve the most merciful sympathy, and I venture to say that their spiritual experience will be the most decisive proof of the truth of the precept just laid down. Our Lord once refused to condemn the adulterous woman; after His example, no one has a right to judge the conscience of others. But nothing is gained by further embarrassing the question before us with many others that have nothing to do with it; and whatever repugnance our teachers and moralists may feel in recognising the existence of a law which profoundly modifies the economy of their moral pedagogy, the fact remains, none the less, that the law of continence in marriage is the necessary consequence of the law of fertility. The two laws are strictly connected, and that of conjugal continence is not only a

complement and corrective of the other, but also its necessary guarantee and indispensable safeguard.

Here we meet an essential error of the neo-malthusian doctrine. Its partisans start from the premiss, which is in itself only too certain, that families and societies need to be protected against inordinate fecundity, and arrive at the conclusion that "precautions" and anti-conceptionist practices are all evidently indicated, by their very simplicity, as the means of fulfilling this social function. But in reality the device is too simple to include in its methods the phenomena, always so complex, of sexual life, and two things are forgotten: first, that if society needs protection against inordinate increase, it no less needs to be assured of a sufficient fertility; secondly, that the method of protection against the first danger certainly ought not to be such as to destroy, by its very principle, the whole economy of the rest of sexual discipline, of which, after all, fertility is the proper end. Now it is impossible to doubt that, in their very essence, neo-malthusian practices are stricken with this double infirmity, which makes them wholly unfit to fulfil the function which the arm-chair reformers would lay upon them.

It is pure illusion to imagine that neo-malthusian practices could be followed only by husbands and wives who have already contributed to the maintenance of the race such a generous quota as their endowments of physical health and pecuniary resources should claim from them in a well-organized society, and that thus society at large could reap the benefit, while escaping all the damage. Such reasoning is purely ideological; facts give it the lie in the most categorical fashion, and experience proves that the damage is great in exchange for a service that is almost non-existent.

"No one ever really defends neo-malthusian practices. People deceive themselves by believing they are admissible, so long as the cases are exceptional; for everyone persuades himself that his own is one of these cases. What pregnancy does not risk the wife's health? What income is not disturbed by a birth and an education?"

## 412 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

What unexpected birth comes quite at the convenient moment, and does not disarrange some, possibly important, plan? Malthusians like to say that the child should be wished for. An easy but false formula. They know well enough that the child is rarely *desired*; not indeed (and the sophistry lies in not making this distinction) that there is the wish *not* to have him, or regret that he has arrived. Most couples wish at least for one or two; and there are still many, thank God, who are proud and happy in the possession of a large family. But every child has not been expressly desired for the exact date on which he is called into being. Even those who in a general way wish for children, and still more those who find themselves already provided with a sufficient number, if the moment depended on them would often postpone it. They would say: we really haven't the time. Now if we admit neo-malthusianism, they have the formidable choice of the moment when they will not have any children. They cannot be so certain of a choice of the moment when they will have them. If people would but draw the conclusion."<sup>1</sup>

No well-informed psychologist will contradict this evidence. With regard to neo-malthusian practices, we must repeat what we said in our last chapter, on divorce: just as the mere possibility of change urges people to divorce, so the mere possibility of deliberate sterility impels them to this, and the impulsion is here incomparably more wide-spread and more powerful than the encouragement given to breaking the marriage-tie by the institution of divorce. Indeed to obtain a divorce is a much more complicated business than to employ a "precaution." Divorce in France shatters rather more than 15,000 homes every year; what statistician could count the millions which neo-malthusian practices defile and sterilize? This exploit achieved, such practices are in a commanding position to complete the ruin of all other sexual discipline. One of the dominant con-

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Jordan, *Contre la depopulation*, p. 19.



clusions of this book is the strict connection, the essential solidarity, which unites each one of the five rules of sexual discipline to each of the four other rules : what striking confirmation this law of solidarity receives in this case ! When in any society several millions of couples have fraudulently ensured sterility in their conjugal relations, how is it possible to speak to young people of both sexes about the strict duty of chastity and purity, how can they be exhorted to marry and found a family ? how can the principle of conjugal fidelity and indissoluble marriage be maintained ? how can abortion and even infanticide be forbidden ? In fact, will these words themselves retain any meaning ?

It is replied that they will, since they still have one for a great number of husbands and wives who practice voluntary sterility, and who yet loudly condemn the misconduct of young people, divorce, abortion, and the rest. The answer is much less reassuring than it seems, and we must not weary of repeating that in no department does our social life fail to draw, immediately and extensively, the logical consequences of the novelties which it adopts. It is with inventions in the moral order as with those in the economic. They only spread by degrees, and according to circumstances, their diffusion and the extension of their consequences, near or far, are more or less rapid. But invariably this amalgamation takes place, because social life feels the profound necessity of coherence and logic. It matters little, therefore, if married people who resort to anti-conceptionist practices still feel a sentiment of reprobation towards the other forms of sexual indiscipline ; for it is plain that a society does not lose in a few years the fruit of a training of thirteen centuries during which, with alternations of success and drawback, a sexual discipline was taught. The question is of quite another sort ; it is, to know, on the one side, whether the abolition of all moral discipline is the logical consequence of the right claimed by married people, to intervene in order to secure the infertility of their relations with each other, and to know, on the other, if the facts confirm this logical

## 414 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

connection. Now, on these two points, the answer cannot be doubtful. The work of acclimatization goes on its way, and this even with a giddy rapidity: the sentiments of reprobation with regard to the other forms of sexual indiscipline are no longer so general or so deep as they were forty years ago—very far from it, and the extension of neo-malthusian doctrines and practices has greatly contributed to this declension.

Every couple who assert their right to sexual enjoyments, artificially rendered sterile, assert at the same time that man and woman, when they think that they have sufficient reason, have the right to separate this enjoyment from the responsibilities and the function which nature has attached to it. By their conduct they profess that this enjoyment is itself the one end of the marriage duty, an end which makes prevention, in order to prevent the transmission of life, legitimate. Incalculable consequences inevitably flow from such an assertion, and to add that such prevention is lawful only when the couple really feel the need of taking care of the wife's health, or of not increasing, yet further, expenses already too heavy, does not lessen the peril. In the first place, who is to decide as to the reality of this need? And then, how can we assume that these two circumstances are the only two that can justify such prevention? If it is true that the sexual need is so urgent as people say, why should not the young man pretend that he too finds his case exceptional, and in the same way why should we refuse to listen to the complaints of this husband, still young and ardent, whom the worn-out health of his wife "compels" to seek indispensable compensation elsewhere?

It is not surprising that, during these last forty years, divorce and abortion, adultery and sexual indiscipline of young people, have followed or accompanied in their developments the ever-growing restraints of systematic sterility, and, in the same way, it is no mere chance that in all countries the most fully qualified propagandists of neo-malthusianism have appeared as the most enthusiastic partisans of unlimited sexual free-

dom and of free love. In France, Paul Robin; in Great Britain, Dr. Drysdale; in Holland, Dr. Rutgers; in Spain, Luis Bulffi; in the United States, Dr. Ruldebash; all these men, whose names stand as a symbol and a pattern to all neo-malthusians, have declared themselves the most zealous supporters of divorce by mutual consent or by the will of only one of the parties, and even the implacable enemies of marriage, the approaching disappearance of which they hail with joy. "It is expedient," said Dr. Drysdale, "to take measures to render love honourable apart from marriage." Happily, he says, "the ease of divorce destroys marriage, which is no longer anything but a contract between two persons to live together as long as they please. It is the only true method of sexual union." Later on, in France, Paul Robin added: "We have seen in the last quarter of a century, the status of illegitimate children raised almost to that of legitimate offspring. Let us bear only the first, and then there will not even be any comparison." Alfred Naquet, the father of the divorce law, who in his hours of frank talk, openly declared war on the institution of the family, was also a warm supporter of the neo-malthusian doctrine.

Thus every rule of sexual morality disappears, from the moment that the least breach in the loyalty of conjugal relations is allowed. And if there is no longer any duty of chastity for the unmarried, nor any marriage duty, nor obligation of conjugal fidelity, nor any marriage at all, is it not plain that society itself will have disappeared? The demonstration is so strong and so unanswerable that no further argument is necessary.

But since so many sophisms have been circulated in order to shake the authority of a rule which is, in fact, one of the central columns of the great edifice of sexual morality, let us again show how the neo-malthusian doctrine, far from being, as it boasts, a victory of spirit

<sup>1</sup> *Régénération*, November, 1902. It is this same Robin who wrote: "In the world of the emancipated, religious marriage is dead. No one any longer seeks it but impudent *arrivistes*, fortune-hunters, and prostitutes."

over matter, of reason over instinct, tends on the contrary more and more to our perpetual servitude to instinct and matter. Nature, more jealous of our dignity, has associated the gratification of the most material and most impetuous of our instincts with obligations and sentiments which should at once moderate its violence and purify its longings. "It is well known that fatherhood and motherhood produce, in intersexual relations, a most healthful and beneficent equilibrium and calm, because they supply an incomparable motive for the moments of tenderness and intimacy, and direct the attention to the most imperious ends. It is not uncommon, in the woman's case, that the mother definitely ousts the wife." Now what do the sexual relations become when artificially beggared of all their magnificence and beauty? Their guaranteed security (by marriage) is but a guarantee against the spiritual side; far from ruling over instinct, it over-stimulates it by placing it under the gross domination of mere animalism. "All the more profound training of our race," says Foerster, "has tended to restrain the merely sensual element, to join animal instinct to a whole world of higher emotions which throw a veil over it, and put it more or less in the background. But what part is played by every method used to prevent conception? It separates this carnal element, this thirst for merely sensual enjoyment, from this admixture of moral and spiritual life, from these great redeeming and sanctifying influences, thus inflicting on the spiritual life an injury of incalculable import, and its principle is, in fact, nothing less than the abolition of all control of the spiritual energy over the fleshly appetites."<sup>3</sup>

We have undoubtedly the right to set ourselves free, so far as we can, from the servitude of nature. But not every victory gained over nature is necessarily a gain

<sup>1</sup> Th. Ruysen, *loc. cit.* "It is the motherhood which they see before them that makes the most chaste brides accept the liberties which their virginity fears."

<sup>3</sup> *Op. cit.*, p. 107.

to ourselves; there may be two losers in the fight—nature and ourselves. We must know which element within us it is that wins the victory; is it the beast or the spirit? is it the sense of man's dignity and responsibility? or is it on the contrary the thirst for pleasure, even the most gross? the impulse of instinct, even the most brutal?

In past times these were, in fact, the results of the sexual relation, which have gradually led humanity to the elaboration of sexual discipline, and this repudiation of them would not be less fatal to man's bodily, than to his moral, health. Physicians have for long proclaimed the ravages in the physiological order produced by the habitual defrauding of the conjugal life, and we can be certain that, notwithstanding all its progress, medical science will always be impotent to keep in a satisfactory state of health men who give themselves up to every suggestion of an irresponsible sexual appetite.

In short, since people profess to be so taken up with safeguarding the rights of love, they should perceive that this love, so far as it is anything more than the contact of two epiderms, must fall a victim to this artificial security against the risk of procreation. It is undesirable to enter into detail, but if love is in its essence the gift of oneself, in a generous and trustful abandonment, how can it be squared with these meticulous precautions, these learned reserves at the root of a distorted egotism, this evil playing with filthy toys? Edward Carpenter calls it with reason "the hopelessly material way, so destructive of true feeling,"<sup>1</sup> and love cannot but "wither at the fire of sterile love-making."

It may be alleged that the employment of anti-conceptionist practices at least allows the wife relief from the sometimes crushing weight of cruelly frequent pregnancies, while it is to be feared that the husband, more ardent and less affected by the burdens of inordinate fecundity, would be little induced to impose continence on himself. It is only too true that there is need for

<sup>1</sup>Enquiry into Neo-Malthusianism in the *Revue de morale sociale*, January 1903, p. 357.

## 418 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

the wife to be energetically protected against the sometimes abominable excesses of the man's desires; but is it believed that this suggested stratagem could be any effectual protection? If it is believed, so much the worse, for then it is clear that people scarcely understand either the human heart or the violence of sexual desire when divested of its responsibilities. Something else is needed, to fight against the abuses and excesses of man's desire, than the tricks of an apothecary or the recipes of a herbalist. So urgent a task as the deliverance of the woman can only be accomplished by delivering the man as well from the slavery of sensuality, and not in giving both of them over to the brutality of an instinct which, when sense of responsibility is lacking, would be still more insistent in its demands.<sup>1</sup> Everything that stimulates the sexual appetite of the man, the over-excitement of which is so injurious, everything that frees it from control and responsibility, must inevitably turn to the wife's disadvantage, without reckoning that it would be a dangerous gift to offer her the means of freedom from the long quiet periods of pregnancy and lactation, which are the best safeguard of her nervous system and the best guarantee of her ultimate health. It is to be wished that, in his endeavour for sexual freedom, man might find the co-operation of a feminism with a worthy standard, as anxious for woman's dignity and duties as for her rights, and, in consequence, always careful to remind husbands and wives of the social responsibilities of marriage.

Thus it is vain to go to and fro, like a tiger walking up and down his cage; no barrier yields: from no point of view can anti-conceptionist "precautions" be justified, and under no circumstances can they be allowed. Thus fertility in marriage is assured, and the greatest of social interests, the recruiting of the race, is safeguarded. We may even be sure that the population of the country

<sup>1</sup> "It is never by the wife's desire that families become too large: it is the wife who endures, besides physical pain and her share of poverty, the intolerable domestic labour which is the result of too many children."

J. S. Mill, *op. cit.*

will thus notably increase, since the only allowable remedy against excessive natality—that of continence—is not one of which we need fear the abuse. “We see what a powerful check is imposed on selfishness. It cannot satisfy itself on one point without imposing on itself, first of all, some privation on another. It will often prefer the distant and uncertain consequence to the present act of sacrifice.”

Besides, the sacrifice is not beyond man's power, as people wish to make out, at least if husband and wife have been careful to adopt such a healthful life as will help the abstinence which is required of them. Before the spread of neo-malthusian knowledge, it was not uncommon in the country for a couple of peasant proprietors to impose abstinence on themselves after the birth of the first child, whom they wished to make sole heir of the property. In the same way it is said that some bourgeois couples still resort to this means, in order to be able to give a good *dot* to the one child whose birth they desire. Why should the wish to lead a moral life be insufficient to induce the acceptance of a sacrifice, when such miserable calculations as these are held sufficient to justify it?

The truth is that moral instruction has too much neglected this special department of sexual morality, and, once again, it is perhaps one of the most certain victories of neo-malthusianism, that it has diverted the attention of teachers from the indispensable part which continence has to play in every rightly regulated married life. This careful silence on one of adult man's greatest duties might have seemed a clever stroke, since so much trouble was taken to keep young men, exposed to temptations of all kinds, chaste until marriage, and whom one must at least, it was thought, allow to have a glimpse of how after their marriage they could satisfy their sensual appetite, under the sole condition of loyalty in their conjugal relations. But the event has shown that these clever strokes are in reality a fatal imprudence, and it is the enemy, the demon of lust, that has scored a double thrust. The chastity of the celibate

has seemed to be no more than a passing virtue, necessary to satisfy the economic demands of an evil society, which forbids marriage at the age when one ought to have a right to contract it, and, on the other hand, the risk is run of precipitating into the abyss young married people entirely unprepared for the moral trials of the life which await them. They have been advised to marry young, so as to shorten the time of "the gridiron on the fire," and we see how their very loyalty to this advice becomes the cause of the most keen distress. And if sometimes they confide in others, they find around them no help or clear counsel; the confidant, if he is decent, limits himself to confessing his ineptitude and lifting his arms towards heaven, babbling some traditional phrases about trust in Providence, "which clothes the lilies of the field and feeds the little birds," and the unfortunate husband and wife, tossed between the tragic realities of the marriage-chamber, and hollow and equivocal formulas, gradually sink down into the whirlpool in which their whole moral life runs the risk of foundering. Good friends, even near relations, only go on telling them that "a couple is worth more than a dozen," and some make the suggestion that it is possible, without moral guilt, to take wise "precautions."

Far be it from me to dispute the necessity of this confidence in nature and in Providence; on the contrary, I am convinced that the glad acceptance of this magnificent law of fertility is only possible if husband and wife, resolutely optimistic in temper and will, have confidence in life, and face its risks and responsibilities with a generous courage. Here, as elsewhere, society only creates miserable cowards, even when it adorns their pitiful calculations with the name of prudence. Yet enough can never be said of the injury caused to moral discipline by this insincerity and lack of courage among our teachers. However disconcerting the reality may be, from the standpoint of the sexual morality to which we have accustomed ourselves, it must be steadily faced; and since we cannot bend it to our fancies, we



must on the contrary model upon it the moral training of our boys, young men, and adults.

No, it is not true, you young men and women who prepare by chastity for the great work of marriage, that you can look upon married life as a haven of safety where all you have to do is to abandon yourselves to the impulses of nature, under the sole obligation of respecting the ends of marriage. The truth, on the contrary, is that after a few years your very abandonment to these impulses will bring you face to face with the most formidable of the problems of your moral life, a problem so agitating that it is a torment in the lives of thousands of married people, wives above all, and that unless it is solved in the only way consonant with morality, thousands and thousands of others drop down by one fall after another, to the lowest depths of licentiousness and selfishness. Learn then that "far from the Sacrament of Marriage covering everything, there are daily committed between married people faults more serious than those of simple debauchery: and far from marriage signaling the moment when everything becomes easy for us, it is then that the most dangerous temptations begin . . . In every decent and reasonable married life there must reign a certain equilibrium between the fortitude of fertility and that of continence. They are equally indispensable. Each is, by turn, the necessary condition for observing the laws of marriage. If one is lacking, too much has to be demanded of the other. If children are not desired, how among all the occasions of life is an impossible continence to be maintained? If continence is impossible, how are too many children to be avoided? People are driven to impossibilities from which, too often, they only extricate themselves by conjugal deceit."<sup>1</sup>

These vigorous words, at once sincere and scientific, should be dwelt on by all teachers and intelligent men. I will add that this conjugal continence, which terrifies so many of our cowardly moralists, gives on the contrary

<sup>1</sup> E. Jordan, *Religion et Natalit *, p. 66.

a new sense and an enlarged significance to the great duty of chastity in the celibate, which all unite in proclaiming necessary. This duty would no longer seem to be, as it were, hanging in the air, necessary only for a time; the time of chastity preceding marriage would appear as part of a coherent sexual morality, as the preparation leading to the more difficult continence which married life will demand. No hard and fast line will divide the two periods; the second is the logical sequence of the first, and has urgent need of habits, already formed, of discipline of the senses, and control of the spirit over the animal nature.

The economists of the liberal school have often discussed the "la natalité optima" but as they have done so apart from all moral conviction, their dissertations are useless, and can neither keep the one half of humanity from the terrible scourge of inordinate natality, which torments it and hinders its progress, nor the other half from the no less terrible scourge of depopulation which threatens or has already decimated and ruined it. A methodical analysis shows how only the rule of conjugal continence can preserve human societies from *either* scourge, and the service which this discipline renders to humanity is not less than that which it renders to society. Even if the wife's robust health and reserve of strength could sustain indefinitely repeated pregnancies, it would still have an essential function to fulfil. Our literature has sinned gravely in turning conjugal fertility and the pregnant mother into a jest, but some virtuous though ill-instructed moralists would sin equally by leaving it to be understood that indefinite and uncontrolled fecundity is the family ideal for the future, and that, in the reward that is due, that family should always have the first prize which has the most children. The evolution of our moral standard will admit this less and less, and in obstinately clinging to it one would compromise that moral education which so urgently needs to be restored.

## CHAPTER XI

### THE WORKING-CLASS FAMILY AND THE BIRTH-RATE

“ We see ourselves compelled to reflect on the present consequences involved in women’s work outside the home. After due reflection we cannot but acknowledge that nothing is at the present time more necessary than to discover such a direction for civilization, such a scheme of social organization, as may restore the mother to her children and her home.” ELLEN KEY.

WHAT has been said in the last chapter holds good for individuals of every condition, without reference to social rank. The double law of fertility and continence governs all marriages without exception.

Nevertheless, our study would be incomplete if we did not approach this problem of fidelity in conjugal relations and of fertility from the special standpoint of manual workers and wage-earners. Everyone is aware of the countless and ever-growing number of households that live, to use the vivid English expression, from hand to mouth, subsisting from day to day on a wage laboriously gained by the husband, or by both husband and wife. Their resources are strictly limited and as a rule there is no prospect of any regular increase; the family income with difficulty supplies the food and clothing necessary for the parents and several children. Every additional birth runs the risk of being disastrous for them all, without even any advantage to the newly-born. The implacable sentence of “ the banquet ” is fulfilled literally in these households; there is no place for the new guest. What have we to say to these millions of workers in blouse or jacket? Lately we have called them the proletariat, *proletarii*, precisely because they have been used, with their brave simplicity, to bring up a very

numerous family. Can they and ought they to continue their historic function as providers of the vast reserves from which, through the ages, the great races of the world draw fresh supplies; and do not the special duties which they owe to their own class, along with those which bind them to their country, lay them under the obligation of restraining the gift of life, by any means whatever?

For long the answer has seemed clear to a great number of intelligent workers, and voluntary, deliberate limitation of births, by the employment of anti-conceptionist methods, is one of the principles which, before the war, were the most integral in the programme of the syndicalist groups. Though not yet a matter of law, even if it ever should be one, the limitations of births "is on the way to become, already, a formal moral duty," which, in his penetrating analysis of the "Coutume ouvrière,"<sup>1</sup> M. Maxime Leroy has justly included as the twenty-fourth of the thirty-one obligations which burden the syndicalist workman. "The strike of wombs" is looked upon as a corollary of the strike of hands; "the proletariat is wearied of being a proletariat, that is, of manufacturing children," and "the sabotage of living matter"<sup>2</sup> seems as necessary to revolutionary associations as the sabotage of raw material and machines. Proletarian, socialist, revolutionary or "liberal" associations, workman's syndicates, unions, federations, labour exchanges, have vied with each other in maintaining the principles of anti-conceptionist prophylaxis, and have, as a rule, set on foot a very active propaganda in its support.

The union of paper-makers, of hair-dressers, cab-drivers, of "les Syndicats de la Seine," of the "Jeunesses syndicalistes de Brest et du Mans," the Syndicate of the sewer-workers of the Seine, the bronze-workers' union, the Syndicate of metal-workers and engravers, that of

<sup>1</sup> Paris: Giard et Brière, 1913.

<sup>2</sup> *La Voix du peuple, passim*, 1910, 1911, 1912. Cf. also *Le Problème sexuel*, a pamphlet by Victor Meric, 1919.

the stamp-cutters of Paris, and that of shoemakers, the Federation-Syndicate of the miners of the Pas-de-Calais—all these associations carry on their neo-malthusian propaganda, and their periodical reports and semi-official publications, the "Réveil des sabotiers et galochiers," "L'Ouvrier métallurgiste," "L'Emancipation" (the organ of the National Union of workers in the Government Marine), the "Bulletin officiel de la Fédération départementale des syndicats du Loiret," "L'Eveil des ouvriers en instruments de précision," the "Travailleur fourgerais," and many other sheets besides, transmit the "message of freedom" to all wage-earners.<sup>1</sup> At Brest, a search made at the Labour Exchange brought to light various appliances of anti-conceptionist prophylaxis, and at a public meeting a workman at the arsenal declared that these objects were in fact sold at a special counter. Other Exchanges second, more or less effectively, the neo-malthusian propaganda, and the sale of the articles which it recommends; finally, since 1910, a "Federation of the neo-malthusian workers' associations," closely related to the "Association of anti-alcoholic workers," partly duplicates "La Ligue de la régénération humaine."

Doubtless this neo-malthusian propaganda has not yet won the support of all who direct the syndicalist movement; several show themselves obstinate, and it was reported even before the war that, in various recent congresses, certain leaders who had previously wished the syndicalist associations to open their ranks widely to neo-malthusian comrades, were beginning to be uneasy at the progress of a doctrine which absorbed so much of

<sup>1</sup> The Trade Congresses have on many occasions been occupied with this question. We may mention especially discussions and a vote at the Congress of the Tanners' Federation (1909), and at that of the Cab-drivers' Syndicates (1909); at that of the Coopers' Federation (1910) on the proposal of the painter, Léon Robert, delegate of the C. G. T. to the Builders' Federation (1910), and discussions of the Ceramic-workers' Congress (1911). In 1904 at the "Congrès Confederal," of Bourges, the Syndical-Federation of the Pas-de-Calais Miners, and the Labour Exchange of Saint-Denis, lodged a report in which the whole neo-malthusian argument, as applied to the workers, will be found in brief.

the comrades' attention and sympathy, that they were growing indifferent to the great revolutionary work of syndicalist action ; but this divergence of opinion had not yet taken the form of an effective opposition, and the neo-malthusian principle was already so firmly established that it was dangerous to risk a conflict.

The sympathy which this propaganda meets with among the workers is attested by the most indisputable testimony, that of the statistics of the births in the industrial centres which have been diligently worked by convinced apostles. The information already given in Chapter III. makes further proof unnecessary ; and it is proved that every big strike is the occasion of an intense propaganda of anti-conceptionist prophylaxis, its co-operation being greatly appreciated by the strike leaders. It is considered that "if wombs go on working" they would betray the comrades who are carrying out the strike, and that, in two directions at once the "concerted cessation of labour" serves the same cause. On both sides there is the same docility, and the production of life is stopped like that of merchandise. The following year the statistics bear witness to the decline in the number of births, and though the hands have resumed their creative work the wombs refuse to resume theirs ; they remain on strike and the birth returns never rise to their former figure.

## I

This new alignment of battle-fronts cannot surprise us, since systematic sterility, by means of anti-conceptionist "precautions," is not only a fact too exactly in accordance with people's selfish tendencies : it rests, we

know, on a vast economic doctrine, borrowed wholly from the works of the most famous representatives of the science of Wealth. In effect, it is said, the wage-earner who increases the number of his children beyond a certain limitation not only increases the burden of his expenses beyond his resources; much more than that, he depreciates to his own hurt and that of the whole proletariat the value of the merchandise which he withholds. Labour is a form of merchandise, as liberal economists have perseveringly taught; therefore, the price of that merchandise is, like all other, subject to the law of supply and demand. Other things being equal, the rate of wages must decline when the hands are more numerous than the labour market requires; it must on the contrary increase when the supply diminishes. In the eyes of the early economists there even existed a strict and mechanical connection between the rate of wages, the number of manual workers, and their happy or miserable state. Just as the regularity of the motions of the piston in a machine is the result of a perpetual compromise between the forces of acceleration and the forces of slackening, every preponderance on either side setting free, at once and automatically, the antagonistic force which must provide the check, so the economists fancied that every rise in wages must inevitably involve an increase of the working-class population, which in its turn, would inevitably involve a depreciation in the value of labour.

The observation of this rigid mechanism, explicitly taught by Adam Smith,<sup>1</sup> became for Malthus the starting-point of his fruitful studies on the Principle of Population, and several years later Ricardo ratified his conclusions unreservedly, when he wrote:—"It is when the current price of labour is beyond its natural price that the lot of the workman is really prosperous and happy, and that he can procure in greater abundance everything which is useful or agreeable to life, and consequently bring up and maintain a strong and

<sup>1</sup> *Vide supra*, p. 378.

numerous family. When, on the contrary, the number of labourers is augmented by the increase of the population, which the rise of wages has encouraged, wages again fall to their natural price, and sometimes the effect of the reaction is such that they even fall below it." Thirty years later Cobden said the same thing, when he invented his famous formula, so often repeated:—"When two employers run after one workman, wages rise; they fall on the contrary when two workmen run after one employer;" and, under the Second Empire, it satisfied Lassalle to sum up faithfully the teaching of the masters in order to draw from it "the law of wages," from which contemporary scientific socialism has taken its rise.

It even seems as if the modern extension of the double syndicalist movement, on the part of both employers and employed, and the progress of the idea of social classes, had but increased the import of this teaching. The workman who has a large family appears to be not only an innocent or a fool; he figures as a traitor who deserts from the army in which he is enrolled; he traffics with the "enemy," at once providing arms for the battalions against which he ought to fight,<sup>1</sup> and rendering himself incapable of serving joyously and with no *arrière-pensée* in his own ranks. Is not the strike, without limit, the necessary instrument for the defence of the workers? Now, can anyone easily take part in a strike when he knows that in his wretched home the mother and famishing children are waiting for the piece of bread that he must bring them every evening?

<sup>1</sup> "From the corporate standpoint," wrote the Pas-de-Calais miners in 1911, "the large number of apprentices thrown upon the labour market tends to the fall of wages. How can we think that this army of the unemployed, waiting as if for an alms at the factory gates, for the labour which will provide them with food, that these submissive ones will not constitute a formidable trump card in the hands of the employers, a check which will hinder the obtaining of all that our fighters have ever at heart to claim: augmentation of wages, diminution of the hours of work, more respect, more freedom?" Limitation of apprentices by decrease in births. (*Bulletin de la Chambre Syndicale de la Typographie Parisienne*, November, 1911).



These are serious arguments, and they deserve something better than the obvious and futile refutations of certain bourgeois publicists, whom an easy and comfortable life, usually secured by the punctual observance of anti-conceptionist practices, makes incapable of understanding the privations and sufferings of an industrious and respectable working-class family. Whatever one may say, it cannot be denied that the wage-earners who sell their work have interests distinct and separate from the interests of the buyers who pay them the price of that work ; they form a class in some degree separate by the very nature of their interests, and it is in response to the deepest need of economic society, and not through men's capricious will, that in all contemporary industrial societies, the employers' associations form themselves in opposition to those of the workers. That class warfare does not represent the last word of labour politics, and that class sentiment must associate itself with the wider sentiment of the country—the national confraternity—so as to lose by that contact the stiffness of its demands and realise that there are other realities not less deserving of attention, is what I myself have many times recalled elsewhere : but these reservations, however important, are far from depriving of all force the premisses on which rests the proletarian doctrine of the necessary limitation of births in the families of the working class.

These families escape no more than those of the middle class the great physiological law deduced by Malthus, and for them the sanction is even more terrible, since the bourgeois family as a rule only compromises its rank and the refinement of its culture by an indefinite increase, while the working-class family, held by the pincers of hunger and wretchedness, is exposed to the worse disasters of physiological and moral ruin. Once more we realize here the distance that separates the empty phrases of devout optimism from the tragic realities which we must none the less face ; and it is a fact that all who, in our poorer quarters and great industrial centres, give up their lives to works of relief

and assistance, acknowledge their impotence to preserve from misery, which ruins both body and soul, the working-class families whose uncontrolled increase indefinitely increases the household expenses. It will be said that neither on its economic or political side does society fulfil its duties towards these families, and the statement will be correct; but it should be added that the very thought of these duties would have no meaning except in a society which the extraordinary spread of anti-conceptionist practices had laid open to the worst catastrophes. Our modern repopulators, who place their trust in premiums, allocations, doles, and supplementary wages, always reckon *in petto*, often without acknowledging it to themselves, that the beneficiaries of these encouragements will always be only a minority, and this argument serves them to convince the directors of charitable undertakings or the Minister of Finance that they have no valid reason for refusing sacrifices which can never be a very heavy weight. It may be that these tactics are the best at the present juncture, but they can be nothing but a temporary and opportunist expedient; the immanent logic of social life will soon compel their partisans to find safer ground. What would be thought of a temperance league of which the propaganda had allowed for the existence of innumerable drunkards, or of a justification for the holding of private property which provides for the multiplication of thieves and wastrels?

The truth that must be recognized is that, even in the midst of the frightful ravages which have resulted from the diffusion of neo-malthusian knowledge among the working-class, the severe pressure which falls on a workman's family, and the heavy penalties with which it is threatened in case of inordinate fecundity, are but the individual and beneficent revelation of the deeper need of that class and of all society; and far from being constrained to be beyond measure sad at this family suffering, which otherwise merits all sympathy, we should on the contrary be grateful for the happy convergence which joins in one close solidarity the triple interest of the

family, the class, and society as a whole, which are all three imperilled by uncontrolled proliferation.<sup>1</sup>

No more than kind words and pleasant statements can keep from misery working-class families that are indefinitely prolific, do reassuring assertions succeed in gaining for a growing proletariat higher wages, or shorter or less trying hours of work. There has never been even the outline of a demonstration that can make us understand how these advantages could be obtained with such a proletariat, and on the contrary it is only too certain that such a one would be irresistibly exposed to the devastating action of the "law of wages." The rate of wages and the length of the hours of labour correspond precisely to what can support the workers who accept the hardest conditions, *and whose hands are still needed to supply industrial demands,*<sup>2</sup> and no way will ever be found of avoiding these "industrial sub-concurrences," which one of the best informed and most acute of our young sociologists has studied with a masterly grasp.<sup>3</sup> If we must believe (and who will refuse to admit it?) that wage-earners ought in the future to obtain better conditions of work and remuneration, we must realize that, among the conditions of this progress, stands out the condition of a working-class birth-rate controlled and

<sup>1</sup> We see how every page brings us back to the vital problem so courageously studied by Malthus, and to the principle of population which terrifies our cowardice. It is most important, therefore, to take our side on this principle. Yes or no: do we believe that a virtuous society, in which husbands and wives, chaste until marriage, and abandoning themselves to natural impulse, should respect the loyalty of their conjugal relations; do we believe that such a society could escape terrible misery, and the worst physiological and moral degradation? If we do, let us say so openly, and make known the unpublished supplies which would enable the resources of humanity to be doubled *every twenty-five years*. If we do not, let us at least have the honesty to acknowledge that the limitation of births is for the working-class family, as for the middle-class, a necessity; at least do not let us accept the mechanical operation of the terrible preventive check of misery, which, all the same, no civilized society can allow to work to the bitter end, if it has any sense of honour left.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. on this point my book "Le contrat de travail et le rôle des syndicats professionnels." Paris: Alcan.

<sup>3</sup> Paul Gemähling (Bloud et Gay, publishers.)

preserved from an increase which is the mere result of abandonment to the impulses of instinct.

In the same way, all society is interested in these wise reservations, and since we have admitted the accuracy of the "Principle of Population," it is evident that society as a whole cannot escape the terrible consequences of hyper-natality as long as the greater part of the collectivity considers itself authorized to place no limit on procreation. It is no advantage to society, which indeed suffers manifold and very serious injuries from it, that swarming crowds of pitiful and miserable beings, periodically decimated by epidemics, should encumber with their superabundant offspring the insanitary quarters of our ever-spreading towns or of certain industrial centres; and it is proved that, even in our days, when we have pushed the power of capitalism and of our means of production so far, a countless multitude of children, adolescents, and adults, die every day of hunger, wretchedness, anæmia, and tuberculosis, through insufficient nourishment or excessive work.<sup>1</sup> No doubt vice, alcoholism, and waste, are also causes of these disorders, but they are not the only ones, and it is with justice that public opinion is at one with that of economists and people devoted to charitable works, in recognizing that no social progress can be realized so long as this inordinate child-bearing is continued. In fact, the initiation of these swarming crowds into the rules of cleanliness, hygiene, foresight, temperance, and good order, their rise in the moral and intellectual scale, is always coincident with a notable diminution of natality, and nothing gives the sociologist a right to say that this diminution is nothing but a victory of selfishness over

<sup>1</sup> In our western societies people do not die of hunger like a traveller lost in the desert, nor of fatigue like the runner of old who drew his last breath at the end of his course in announcing his country's victory. But there are more subtle and civilized ways by which to die of hunger and exhaustion, that of the seamstress who every day lacks so many decagrammes of nitrogen or albuminoids, or of the dock labourer whose body daily sustains a load of 10 per cent. beyond what he is really capable of bearing. In all callings the number is considerable of workers who could say with the Apostle of the Gentiles, in a new sense, *Quotidie morior*.

generosity.<sup>1</sup> Whatever good will there may be, society has not the means to undertake the expense of the maintenance and education of all the children whom these manual workers would be induced to bring into being, and if this statement is displeasing, reasonable people must nevertheless be convinced that it is only when they cease, in the teeth of all evidence, to reject it, that they will be able to oppose effectually the immoral doctrines which rely upon it.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> It is the correct thing in certain circles to talk of voluntary limitation of births as the basest of moral perversions ; on the other hand the heroism of poor parents who multiply their offspring without reckoning is complacently admired. It would be well, however, to put a little order into these ideas. If the essential characteristic of the moral life is to submit energy to a law recognized as good, if as a rule, the triumph of this law is only assured by disciplining or even crushing down the natural impulses, by what right of exception does the sexual instinct receive from the moralist licence to dare everything, so long as it is not dissociated from its natural consequences, and how does it find moral justification in unintelligent thoughtlessness? How does the eventual birth of a child make innocent an act which under other circumstances would be counted unseemly? Th. Ruysen, *op. cit.* p. 39. There would be several reservations to make on this passage, which at least has the advantage of stating a problem too often misunderstood.

<sup>2</sup> If I may be allowed a personal reminiscence, I will here recall the mishap of which I was the witness after a lecture which I gave in 1913 in a large town in the north of France. I had been speaking of moral discipline and natality, and a public discussion was opened. Several present spoke in various senses. One of them had just been opposing the neo-malthusian doctrine and anti-conceptionist practices, confining himself to commenting on *Crescite et multiplicamini*. A neo-malthusian followed him on the platform, and in flowery language which I cannot reproduce here, confined himself to stating that the workmen had at their disposal a very simple means to stop the mouths of the "procreation-maniacs." These means consisted in docilely following the advice of the last speaker: "Soon the torrent of natality would become so impetuous that 'Messieurs les bourgeois' who, of course, had previously resolved not to let the little ones born to them die of hunger and misery, would have no choice but to come in hot haste to implore the closing of the taps which they had imprudently demanded to be opened." The audience began to laugh, and waited in vain for the previous speaker's reply.

## II

It is true, therefore, that the interest of all society is in accord with the interest of the proletariat, and that of the working-class family, in requiring a limitation of the fertility of wage-earning households; but having laid down this principle, we return to the question already handled: by what means can we procure this control over the recruiting of manual workers? Is it to be by unlawful instruments that hinder or destroy life, or by the sovereign mastery of the workman himself, intelligent and obedient to moral discipline, ruling his senses, and able to guarantee in his own life the supremacy of spirit over matter, of soul over the animal nature? A tragically momentous question, since, according to the reply given, the whole working-class is directed, whatever one may say or do, either to slavery or to freedom.

We have already given the answer, and the underlying motives which are valid for all men and all families, and therefore for wage-earners of all conditions. We need not, therefore, return to it, but we will cite the special proofs supplied by a special examination of the interests of the working-class.

In the first place it should be remarked how foolish it would be to wish, on this question, to isolate the interests of the working-class, by separating them from those of our whole society and of the country. Undoubtedly it is correct that employés have their own interests, distinct from those of employers, and the fertile check of mixed syndicates and workers' club, so much recommended by M. Albert de Mun and his friends, and of so many other similar attempts should at last convince those who most obstinately deny this divergence. But, even on the economic ground, the wage-earners and employers are very far from having only opposing interests, and besides, economic activity is very far from exhausting all human energy. Man is something else

than a producer of wealth, and if there can exist a "producers' morality," this must, in order to constitute itself, consent to recognize that the producers are also husbands, fathers, and citizens. Now, the neo-malthusian syndicalism ignores these other manifestations of human energy, and arbitrarily cutting out the reality, elects to see in the individual nothing but the wage-earner working at a factory or behind a counter, endeavouring to make sure, with the least effort that may be, of big wages which will permit him to lead a comfortable existence in his hours of leisure. To say nothing more, this very dull ideal witnesses to sufficiently debased sociological conceptions.

The world-war will, it is to be hoped, have opened the eyes of all who are not wilfully blind, and if there is any truth completely proved, it is certainly this, that no social class can be prosperous and happy in the midst of an anæmic and suffering collectivity. Now, how can these intelligent syndicalists believe that it is lawful to release themselves so cheerfully from the responsibilities which result from their status as citizens? Since the first need of a nation is the abundant recruiting of its people, how can so numerous a class of citizens have the right to repudiate the burdens which the satisfaction of this need inevitably involves? It would be a poor joke to say that it is the business of the bourgeois to ensure, as they best know how, by their children, the recruiting of the race, since everyone knows that this middle-class, of which so much parade is made, represents but a tiny minority, powerless, in spite of all good will, to discharge the task which people wish to lay upon it.<sup>1</sup> Besides, it is difficult to see on what principle intelligent workers can, by this strange way of promising for others, demand from the bourgeoisie such patriotic good will, since, according to the argument, this distinct class

<sup>1</sup> There are in France about 51,000 families with an income between 20,000 and 50,000 francs, and 9,800 with one between 50,000 and 100,000. What an absurd minority, compared with the 12,000,000 families in the country!

should itself also have power to consider its own caste interests, and to care only for its own advantage.

It is obvious that, once embarked on this road, there can be no end but in the ruin of all society, and therefore of the working-class itself. If, in the 18th century, the physiocrats committed a most fatal mistake in asserting the inevitable identity of the interest of the individual and the collective interest, it would be no less erroneous to consider the general interest as anything else than the arithmetical total of the interests of the different classes. To assure the prosperity of a country, something very different is needed than the strife of various classes whose interests injure and vie with each other, and we must remember that the obligation of patriotism weighs on classes as well as on individuals.

To this first injury, which is inflicted on the working-class only by a kind of repercussion, are added many others, directly inflicted and still more serious. Is it believed, for instance, that this class can preserve its dynamic force, its combative vigour, its conquering power, when neo-malthusian practices and abortion have definitely drained its fertility and the very sources of its life? Deprived of numbers, it would also lose, at the same stroke, what in all ages and societies has constituted its force, the massive strength of its unnumbered hosts. Twenty-five centuries ago, in Rome, the people, oppressed by the patricians and ruined by usury, retired to the Aventine, and at the mere sight of the multitude that left the city the oppressors were terrified and capitulated. In our time the hosts of the people have less rudimentary means by which to manifest their will and their discontent, but at bottom the reason of their effectiveness is the same : "the big battalions" are always the best guarantee of plebeian victories, and their groups, if reduced in numbers, are bound to be defeated, since the middle class has always the advantage over them of capital and culture, of foresight and critical methods.

It is alleged that quality will supply for lack of quantity, but we have already demonstrated the empti-



ness of this assertion, which experience has no more verified from the physiological than from the moral standpoint. Besides the power of numbers, the people have that of their generosity, their courage, the prodigality, even, with which they give their trouble, their labour, their lives. It is answered that the time of these generous deeds is past, and that the people have rightly had enough of this rôle of being perpetually exploited. But it is one thing to put an end to exploitation which was only too real, and another to abolish those very qualities which, throughout the whole length of history, have been the principle of conquering force and of victory. Neo-malthusianism is fundamentally a thing of timorous prudence and suspicious reserve; adopting the methods of an attorney, the workman tells himself that he is afraid of life, afraid to give and to risk his own life. These tactics may seem clever, especially to the isolated individual whom selfishness detaches from the solidarity of his fellow-workmen, but the fact remains that they are the direct negation of the qualities and methods which have gained for the "petites gens," the *humiliores*, the working-people, their best victories.

"Less in numbers, deprived of the opportunities of revival which a lavish and abundant life can alone supply, will not the workers, if they become altogether neo-malthusian, be threatened with a moral sterility more formidable than the competition of apprentices? If prudence befits those who have to keep, should not those who have to conquer be bold and generous if they wish to win the victory? Does not prudence correspond to a slowing-down of life? Is it not pessimistic?"<sup>1</sup>

The friend of the syndicalists from whom I quote confines himself to asking the question, but the answer is not doubtful, and if the neo-malthusian doctrine obtained the definite adhesion of the proletariat circles, one might with all the more certainty predict the defeat of the working-class, since it is already apparent, by certain signs, that a fraction, which increases every year, of the middle class has begun to realize its family duty.

<sup>1</sup> Maxime Leroy, *La coutume ouvrière*, t. I., p. 269.

It is not impossible, and it must be honestly recognised, that neo-malthusian practices might for two or three decades serve the cause of the wage-earners, by supplying them with a new arm in the bitter fight, which they must constantly carry on for the improvement of the conditions of labour. There has not been enough reflection on the frightful condition of a swarming proletariat who, finding over them a body of employers enfeebled by systematic sterility, is on that account deprived of new opportunities of work which the foundation of new industrial establishments would offer.<sup>1</sup> But this service to their cause would have been merely temporary, and dearly bought by the injuries which were the more serious because less apparent. We have already demonstrated how anti-conceptionist practices impel to licentiousness, to debauchery, and abortion, how they ruin marriage, excite to adultery and divorce, and by the encouragement which they give to moral indiscipline and selfishness, ravage the moral life in every direction. We will not return to this, but we feel compelled to put one question. If it is true that to serve the sacred interests of the manual workers one requires discipline and devotion, the vision of the ideal proposed, and forgetfulness of individual advantages, which are deliberately sacrificed in view of the coming—always distant—of a better *régime*, how could these noble qualities still be found in a working-class which neo-malthusian practices would have bent beneath the yoke of licentiousness, and of the uncontrolled violence of the most brutal of our appetites? How could this working-class preserve its aptitude of living for the future and sacrificing itself thereto, when it had given itself over to the tyranny of the most absorbing, most anarchic and improvident of our instincts? The directors of the syndicalist movement justly complain of the indifference of the “comrades”

<sup>1</sup> In the autumn of 1913, when there was an acute crisis in the cotton trade, a great industrial employer said to me: “We are losing money, and yet we are forced to do everything possible to keep our workers: otherwise we shall not get them back again. Formerly, they offered themselves in abundance; but now . . . !”

to corporate interests, of their nonchalance, their lack of interest in taking part in the deliberations and in paying the assessments, small as they are, with which the French syndicates are content. But must not these failures and shortcomings necessarily be multiplied in a working-class which is a prey to the besetting pre-occupation of sexual enjoyment, the desire and habit of which will be developed by the rejection of the responsibilities and purifying discipline with which the secular efforts of our fathers had surrounded it? Besides, do we not every day meet these young workmen, from seventeen to twenty years old, with emaciated faces, earthy complexions, filthy talk, and unkempt appearance; with such recruits the leaders might be able, on days of excitement, to form a gang for assault, able to smash, burn, and slaughter, but who would dare to say that such as these could be the true authors of their brothers' freedom? On the contrary they are the most active collaborators in every system of oppression and slavery! Only to look at them is to be possessed by the melancholy assurance that economic forces, helped by an indifferent or selfish middle class, will be able to pursue at their ease their work of destruction and desolation. The swarm of work-girls in rags making a rush to the factory doors to gain, by the hour, the few pence which will enable them to appease their hunger is a horrible thing, but the calculating and cunning licentiousness, exploiting the modern methods of anti-conceptionist prophylaxis, is still worse, for educated savagery is always more perilous than uneducated. Whatever may be said, a gain never materialises when associated with defects and vices which defile it. The systematic sterility of the middle class has been the origin of the pitiable losses of which to-day, it supports the heavy burden. The indissoluble law of cause and effect will not allow the wage-earners, any more than other classes to borrow the recipe and escape the consequences. It even appears already that the ravages of the scourge will be still more terrible in this case, because the "people" as a rule ignore those reservations, of very mediocre moral value as they

are, which, in the case of the bourgeois, are wont to temper both his vices and his virtues.

The militant syndicalists have often called attention to the detrimental effects of alcoholism among the working-class, and have even accused employers of cunningly making an agreement with the purveyors of stupefying drink, in order that the wage-earner may consume in the humiliating debauches of the public-house the energies which should have been reserved for the great struggles for freedom. How is it that these fighting-men are so long in recognising that the workers' cause must engage yet another enemy of the interior; how is it they do not see that licentiousness and debauch, to excite and to serve which is precisely the end of anti-conceptionist practices, are also powers which could be turned to the employers' advantage? It is boasted, certainly, that they have considerably rarefied the atmosphere of Labour, but does not this brutal rarefaction, which has no connection with the control of natality that should be the result of celibate chastity and married continence, run the risk of turning against its authors? The law of supply and demand which is relied upon is a two-edged weapon, and under its action we have seen the importation of foreign labour multiplied. Kabyles and Arabs, Lithuanians and Bohemians, Annamites and Moors, called in by employers' organizations, have come to offer themselves, and the near future will doubtless show how greatly the presence of these labourers, who cannot assimilate our civilization, is inimical to the progress of our working-class and of all society.

There is serious harm in this, and, taking everything into account, it is certain that the neo-malthusian workman has already inflicted very serious injuries on the working-class. By entangling themselves in the path of anti-conceptionist prophylaxis, the wage-earners turn their back on the road which leads to freedom—that of the healthy, robust, and fertile family, and assuredly our descendants will not be able to comprehend how, in our time, our manual workers, so keen to claim their political rights, could have held so cheap the equally

important right to a true family life. No attack on the worker's dignity can be more serious than that which is directed against the dignity of the husband, the father or the mother, and anti-conceptionist devices no more solve the problem before us than the deserter co-operates, by crossing the frontier, in the revision of the military laws which he thinks unjust and excessive. Fraud, cunning, and desertion, far from setting free our oppressed brothers, can only bind more tightly the chain that is bruising their shoulders, and make still harder the condition of healthy and decent families. At an epoch when men have lost the sense of spiritual realities and of the glorious perspectives which they open to the eyes which have learnt to contemplate them, it is only too easy to understand how the purely mechanical operations of anti-conceptionist prophylaxis have won the success of which we are aware. All the same the wonderful complexities of social life will always refuse to admit such feebly simple solutions, and it will soon be seen that once again the substance has been given up for the shadow. Since the soul of the people is in love with sincerity, and repudiates the equivocations in which middle-class society too often delights, how can it fail to see that the neo-malthusian workman, laying the yoke of the capitalist forces on the working classes whom he professes to liberate, accomplishes nothing else than to reserve to the bourgeois the monopoly of family life and the incomparable dignities which follow in its train? This is as good as saying that the wage earners would be excluded from all true family life, and that the victims would be themselves the accomplices of that exclusion. The sacred right to paternity and motherhood would be abolished, and how could we then justly give the title of husband and wife to these men and women who would have acquiesced in the most brutal orders of economic society? It matters little that in praising the systematic restriction of births by means of anti-conceptionist practices, certain propagandists have had the intention of more effectually safe-guarding the working-man's family; here, as everywhere else, social life does not trouble itself about our

intentions, but confines itself to working out our acts so as to produce the consequences involved in them, be those consequences dangerous or beneficent. Will it be said that in introducing the neo-malthusian doctrines to a circle still used to "nests" of eight, ten, or twelve children, we might have reasonably expected that the only result would be to reduce the workman's family to a more reasonable number—to what some amiable statisticians call "the normal family"? The result has falsified this expectation; we have said it before, once give neo-malthusianism an opening, and it soon contrives with one thrust to sweep propagandists, statisticians, workman's families, and the rest, to the borders of complete sterility. If, in fact, one commits the unpardonable offence of asserting as a principle that no wage-earner can bring up more than one or two children decently, why should not the law of competition,<sup>1</sup> pursuing its victories, lay down to-morrow that it must suffice the wage-earner to gain as much as will provide for the needs of one unmarried person. Once entangled in this path, one could even reach the point of obligatory sterile concubinage, since the common life of two workers of opposite sex is more economical than two separate establishments? Such an exploit is not beyond the power of competition, and others of the same kind are amongst its possible activities. Thus economic institutions would crystallize around, and with a view to, this new life-régime, and it is, in fact, proved that *such crystallization has already begun*. With our usual folly, which allows us to retain the words, while our social life has emptied them of the reality they express, is it not true that in our great towns and industrial centres innumerable concubinages are established, as marriage legal or illegal, the systematic sterility of which corresponds so well to the selfishness of the couples concerned, and to the economic conditions of their life, that it seems sometimes as if no way was left

<sup>1</sup> As to what competition can do, cf. the memorable English inquiries of the first half of the 19th century, the inquiry of Villerme, the numerous works on the Sweating System, and my own book on "Le Contrat de Travail."

them to escape from the blind alley in which they have been so weak as to engage themselves? The double weight of economic society and of irresponsible sexual appetite weighs them down, and the two tyrannies support each other. Once more, could the worst enemy of the manual workers dream of a more degrading servitude? How far we are from the promised "freedom?"

If ever the proletariat classes are to gain their freedom, this emancipation will be the result, not of the eagerness with which they have demanded their share in gross enjoyments, but of the ardour which they have exercised in claiming man's higher rights, and of the capacity which they have shown to honour the obligations which result from these rights. Now among these rights the first, because it is the essential preparation for all the others, is the right to a true family life, to an honest conjugal life, to legitimate fatherhood and motherhood.

How often the lasting interests of the wage-earners would have been better served if, more anxious for their dignity as citizens, and reminding themselves that without forfeiture of that dignity they cannot refuse to provide for the working-class itself and for society in general the abundant supply of recruits of which both are equally in need, there had been cherished and realised in their homes, the need of a controlled and fertile family life, and if they had been helped to gain those complementary rights without which this need cannot receive its legitimate satisfactions. What a profound impression would be felt by our society—so weak-willed, so unaccustomed, in conventionally shallow thought, to examine the great problems of moral life,—if some day the wage-earners from the factory and the fields, from counters, stores, and offices, were to gather together and use such words as these:—"Here we are, ready for work, and endeavour, we desire to be hard-working and capable *employés*, and we recognise the present necessity of the employer's function. But also, because we desire to work, we affirm that the conditions of labour must be compatible with the normal life of a family which respects

alike its moral and its civic duty ; we do not accept the position of being mere producers of wealth, we are citizens as well, and in our eyes the establishment and maintenance of a real home is at once the most sacred of our duties and the first of our rights. Also, for the support of our families, we wish for neither the alms of benevolent charity nor the doles of official assistance. If capital is capable of realizing, as it professes, the demands of justice, it should be able to give satisfaction to our request, and the sober and hard-working employé should supply, by his own work alone, the needs of a rightly-ordered family, without himself being crushed by excessive toil. In any case, our resolution is definite, and so long as we shall be without satisfaction, we shall not cease to protest against the inequity and to renew our claim, because we know that it is according to justice and right."

I do not know if many intelligent workers, capable of such vigorous language, are still to be met with in France. What is certain is that if a sufficient number could be found, and if they devoted to their cause an ardour equal to that by which many less essential claims have benefited these last forty years, they would render an incomparable service to their oppressed brothers and their country. Capitalist society would be shaken to its foundations, and the shock would not be such a one as destroys and leaves nothing but ruins behind it. It would be fruitful in generating progress because it would alarm selfish, and constrain noble minds to reflect on the injustices of a system which its very victims maintain by their acceptance of it. In very truth, these men would be redeemers and liberators of their brothers : following in their steps, and ransomed by their sufferings, innumerable comrades, for whom they would have smoothed the way, would with greater ease bring up, and secure a normal life, for the happy crowd of their little children, and would taste the wholesome and profound joys of a rediscovered home and civic dignity. Wages would soon be found to rise, while the working-man's family, better nourished, better housed, and better



clothed, would rise to a higher moral and intellectual level. The rise in wages, and the increase of hours off work, would then, and then only, be a social benefit; hitherto they have too often merely accelerated still more the social disorganization of the wage-earners, many of whom are incapable of employing wisely the increased resources and leisure placed at their disposal.

This programme of syndicalist action will seem Utopian, and it is likely to appear so for some years yet. But it is bound to come if we wish to restore the vitality of a country exhausted by fifty years of intensive neo-malthusianism and by the frightful bloodshed of the war. Perhaps, too, the adoption of such a programme may not be so distant as one is tempted to think. During several recent strikes it was noticed that the married workers were more determined in claiming a rise in wages than those of their comrades, whose dissolute morals had been a bad training for the persevering firmness and the strategic foresight of the modern worker. This movement may become more general, and it would then be understood how ruinous for the working-class was this neo-malthusianism which appeared to be so serviceable; it would be put on the list, already a long one, of those pernicious remedies which only aggravate the evil that they are supposed to combat. They are tried for a time, and the only escape from being killed by them is to perceive the dangers they entail.

We have been dealing with the duties of the syndicalist workman, conscious at once of the interests of his class and of his country, but this does not mean that employers, masters of industry, commerce, and agriculture are exempt from all obligations with respect to the families of their employes. However, as I have already<sup>1</sup> treated at length the important question of the family extra-wage,<sup>1</sup> and since, besides, this institution, thanks to a

<sup>1</sup> Cf. especially my articles published in "Pour la Vie," and especially in the Bulletin of the *Association nationale d'expansion économique* 23, Avenue de Messine, Paris, in 1918 and 1919.—At Rouen, since 1st July 1919, employers have followed the admirable example given by the metallurgists of Dauphiné, and 68 textile houses which pay together over 50 millions in

clever combination of the professional organizations for distribution invented by the metallurgist employers of Grenoble has already been so widely applied in our country, I confine myself to recalling that the formula "to equal work, equal pay" no longer appears to satisfy the present demands of justice. If it is true that the same work demands the same remuneration, it is also true that the sober and honest workman ought to find in his wages the means to secure proper living for the members of his family ; if he does not find it, equity is outraged and grave injury is inflicted on innocent victims and on society at large. The workman's family should neither have to beg nor to accept alms or gratuities ; a just wage is all that it demands. Several years before the war a Bishop, recently nominated to the archiepiscopal see of Cambrai, at a great Labour meeting in the Nord department, uttered these magnificent words: "Ten thousand francs in just wages are worth more than a million francs in alms." The formula displeased the audience, and he who uttered it knew to the end of his life that it was neither forgotten nor forgiven. It nevertheless expresses a profound truth, and undoubtedly some great social upheavals would be avoided, if French employers, becoming more and more careful of the interests of the workman's family, resolved to protect the wage-earners more effectually against a society too often indifferent to the most just demands.

Moreover, this task of the employers would become much easier if the leaders of the labour syndicalism became, on their side, more conscious of the citizen's civic obligations, and repudiated the unjust and anarchic doctrines which they too often profess with regard to the labour contract. M. Jouhaux once admitted that the

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wages annually have established a co-operative organization for the distribution of the extra wage. And, not to quote other examples, the institution of the family extra wage is to-day firmly established in commerce and industry, and all our great industrial towns vie with each other in zeal to increase the rate and multiply the applications. Three years have sufficed to accomplish this revolution, which economic orthodoxy would condemn without appeal !

workman who was father of a large family had a right to a supplementary wage; it is to be wished that he would convert some of his colleagues in the "Confédération Général du Travail" to the same opinion.



# PART IV

## THE CONDITIONS OF THE RETURN TO MORAL DISCIPLINE



## PART IV

### THE CONDITIONS OF THE RETURN TO MORAL DISCIPLINE

WE have accomplished the exposition of the five essential rules of a coherent sexual morality, prescribed equally for the advantage of the individual and of all society. We have thus finished the task which we set before ourselves, which was to discover, by a methodical and purely objective analysis of the realities of social life, the laws which rule the function of sexual energy.

At the end of this study a question arises, at once so urgent and so disturbing, that we could have no excuse for leaving it unanswered: How are we to arrive at the restoration of this moral discipline? How are we to make these millions of young people of both sexes, who rush to sexual enjoyment, accept the rule of chastity? How make these husbands and wives understand who have lost all sense of fidelity, and who, above all, for twenty or twenty-five years have maintained, with the minute vigilance of their stubborn selfishness, their method of systematic sterility, how can we make them understand that marriage is an indissoluble union, and that it becomes an instrument of licentiousness, with hypocrisy in addition, when it repudiates the principles of continence and of loyalty in conjugal relations? It is proved that we cannot live without sexual discipline, and that we are condemned to irremediable disaster if we do not pull against the stream. But can we do this? Are we capable of again learning this magnificent, but austere discipline? and if we are, what are the best means to obtain an effective moral re-education?

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I will not delay, at this point, to examine the first

of these alternatives, or to enquire if we are capable of regeneration : even to put such a question at the present seems doubly sacrilegious and impious. Two millions of Frenchmen have accepted death or the most terrible mutilation that France may live and pursue her glorious destiny in the world ; what expressions can we find strong enough to describe the conduct of the survivors, if they declare that for them it is now impossible to ward off the death of their country, incurably smitten as she is by the wounds of debauchery, abortion, and systematic sterility ?

On the contrary, the question of the *means* of regeneration, and the *methods* of re-education, deserves our closest attention.

We must never be tired of demonstrating the sufferings which result, alike for the individual and for society, from all the revolts against moral discipline, and since there are still many people who are ignorant on the subject, let us even multiply in every possible way our propaganda and instruction, but do not let us think that these exposures and demonstrations will be sufficient. When a social evil has taken such deep root, it is bound up with, and becomes one of, a coherent and strict association of interests, practices, actions, desires, and institutions, which have co-ordinated their direction to its own.

Let us cherish no illusion ; it is the entire edifice of our social life which has to be underpinned in every one of its sub-structures : we live in a society which has accommodated itself to the licentiousness of young people, and rests on the systematic sterility of the married ; our task is to constitute a society which will respect chastity in the young and fruitful marriages ; it is a far-reaching revolution.

The difficulties of this revolution must neither be exaggerated nor minimised ; the greatest arises from the close connection between individual and social morals. We must change our individual manners ; but we cannot deny that many falls are suggested, provoked, and almost forced on us by certain social customs. We must



therefore change our habits. But are they, to a certain extent, anything but the sum total of our individual manners? Thus we describe a kind of vicious circle. And yet an intuition more trustworthy than all arguments assures us that there must be ways of escape so soon as we will try *truly, loyally, and sincerely*, to emerge from the *impasse* in which our prevarication and our cowardice have imprisoned us. Just as coal will only burn in contact with fire, and yet this vicious circle does not hinder the housewife from heating her pan, so we can easily begin the first preparatory labours, the development of which will enable the whole house to be rebuilt. The fact is, that to accomplish this great work of regeneration and renewal, the manly resolution of each individual to reform himself and to change his conduct, must be associated with the active, earnest collaboration of the various sections of our social life.

A few pages will suffice to indicate the scope of these sections, and the part each should take, since we have already, in the course of this work, discussed the special obligations of the public authorities and of society on its economic side.

obtain at once the adhesion of the will and conformity of conduct. People liked repeating with Jean Macé, the founder of "La Ligue de l'enseignement," that to open a school was to close a prison. But experience has dealt hardly with this dogma of the modern spirit, as with so many others; we have opened many schools and have not closed one prison, not even one of those shameful prisons in which human bodies are confined to serve the passion of the stronger sex. It is certain that sexual education would only serve the interests of licentiousness and systematic sterility: it would but multiply the booksellers of special literature, and death-dealing laboratories, and moral discipline would gain nothing.

Sexual instruction would have the great drawback of attracting children's attention to a subject which should on the contrary remain in the background of their general consciousness, and this attention would unquestionably rather suggest possible enjoyments than do any real good. The same thing would happen, as has been proved, in the case of medical students, pupils in midwifery, and hospital nurses. In these professions express teaching is given on the functions of the generative organs and the diseases which affect them; yet these initiated ones furnish a large contingent to the crowd of victims to venereal diseases, and they are too often skilled experts in the art of systematic restriction of natality, and even of abortion.

No good could therefore be expected, and even the knowledge of the menace of venereal disease would serve no purpose, since everyone usually persuades himself that he will be clever or lucky enough to escape the ills which, he tells himself, only attack fools or bunglers. On the other hand the real injury would be grave, since we should achieve the ruin of a precious sense, the preservative action of which should be valued by the sociologist, the sense of shame. There has been good cause for reaction against a false prudery, the result of morbid reflection and pharisaism rather than of obedience to the promptings of a genuine instinct

of purity. But in certain circles the reaction has passed all bounds, and the best qualified pedagogues agree to recognize that, with regard to the organs of generation and sexual relations, so profound and universal a sense as that of shame ought to play a part of the first importance in the rule of our conduct. "Reticence is not hypocrisy," says Vischer, "and a nation is condemned to ruin when it no longer feels shame," and Foerster insists on the preservative value of the sentiment. "The sexual organs," he says, "are connected with extraordinary sensations of pleasure and excitement, and thus they continually threaten to absorb an inordinate share of our powers of imagination, foresight, and memory. This predominance, directed rather to the enjoyment of the individual than to the social service of the reproduction of our kind, is the greatest obstacle to the normal development of sexual life, and its prevention should therefore be the essential aim of all sexual education." The sense of shame helps to bridle an intellectual curiosity which is inevitably unhealthy, and diverts people from regarding as a mere personal enjoyment a function that should be chiefly devoted to the service of the race.

We ought therefore to condemn resolutely every plan of sex education in the schools, and far from desiring that this subject of the functions of the organs of generation should become as familiar a branch of instruction as that of the digestion or respiration, we ought on the contrary to leave it alone, since the instinct of generation differs entirely from those of the other physiological necessities, to which some who claim to be pedagogues would assimilate it.

But because the school's business is not to undertake a form of teaching which would undoubtedly be most injurious, it must not be concluded that it has no part to play in the great effort for regeneration which we are bound to achieve. On the contrary, its contribution can be most important, if schoolmasters and professors will remember that in a question of education and moral

training, the indirect method is often the most efficacious, and sometimes the only one that offers itself to their good will. If it is true that moral discipline demands, above all, the habit of controlling mere instinct, a care to respect the human personality, thought for social interests and the needs of the race, strength of character, love of liberty, and the sense of the ideal, how could the school have other than a great part to play? Could the schoolmaster, especially since the war, take no care for these things without forfeiting the culture of these qualities? and is it not obvious that in cultivating them, he is preparing his pupils for the hard battles which await them through the impulses of an instinct of which the brutal anarchy is on a par with the selfishness? The youth who has for long been accustomed to respect his health, to school his will, to judge of life with lofty sentiments, regarding it as a splendid opportunity offered to man of assuming responsibilities and accomplishing noble and brave deeds, will naturally tend to despise the easy and gross enjoyments of an irresponsible sexual appetite; all that is low and degraded, all that is simply animal and has its starting-point merely in the flesh, will appear to him as something altogether foreign, and a kind of spontaneous reflex will warn him of the distance that separates the best aspirations of his spirit from those sensual enjoyments towards which he is impelled by his lower instincts.

Let teachers give, above all, a high ideal and a profound conviction to their pupils of the limitless power of their spiritual energies. It is not only on the battle-field that the soul must be mistress of the body which it animates, and it is ill prepared to resist the impulses of the sexual appetite when it is the dupe of mere animal demands. Our youth must learn that our true nature is to do in this world the business and the work of a man, and our business as man calls us to a task of spiritual development and progressive freedom.

This is the true sex education which the schoolmaster should give; and it differs greatly from that which belongs to a school of gynæcology or veterinary

## 458 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

surgery; for man is something more than a mere animal.<sup>1</sup>

By the side of the masters and teachers of our young people there are in modern society other instructors, who deal with adults; these are our men of letters and publicists of all sorts, who by the Press, the theatre, the novel, and the picture-house, reach an immense crowd of readers or spectators. We have incurred a heavy literary responsibility in the depravation of our moral standard, and, without going back on the past, we have the right at least to demand a different attitude in the future. Would it really be very difficult to lay down the principle that every author who delights in the detailed description of the refinements of licentiousness, whose works debase young people and defile the heart, is in truth a disgraced writer, a man disqualified from being greeted with a friendly clasp of the hand, whom we invite no more to our table, a bad Frenchman, who collaborates actively with German avarice? Would it be too much to require the Société des Gens de Lettres to exclude such evil-doers from its ranks, the Chancellery

<sup>1</sup>If a counter-proof is needed to demonstrate these truths, it will be easily found by analysing the conditions of conversions to a life of chastity of which the accounts reach us from time to time, and which were so frequent among the young men and girls who had the privilege of associating with their comrades of "Le Sillon." None of these converts, reclaimed to purity, had followed the instructions of the sexual teaching; they had never dreamt of doing so! Their souls were opened to the ideal, the radiant beauty of a generous and pure life was revealed to them, and as soon as they had felt its attraction there was no longer room for the "old man," the dominion of the flesh; it was a new birth.

Is it necessary to add that these remarks as to the insufficiency—to give it no stronger term—of our pedagogues as to sexual initiation, apply still more strongly with regard to the preservative value of athletics and physical exercise? Two months before the war an athletic meeting on a large scale was held at Rouen, honoured by the presence of the President of the Republic, on which occasion the Press did not fail to point out all the educative value of this intensive physical culture. The truth is that physical culture thus understood would be a new danger, and would tend still more to destroy the sense of shame, the social value of which is so great.

At the same time I must beg not to be ranked, because of this remark, among the enemies of sport and physical exercise. They are, on the contrary, extremely useful to young people, provided that those who manage them do not lose sight of the higher side of our nature.

of the Legion of Honour to reject them when their names are proposed; and all decent people to refuse to buy the newspaper which admits them among its contributors, and to boycott pitilessly, *and for several years*, the theatre which has committed the crime of putting on the stage a play which is licentious and immoral?

Our enfeebled society has no idea of what varied and indefinite resources are at its disposal so soon as it really wills to undertake the regeneration of our manners, and yet it only requires a little thought and resolution to discover them.

All men who have the honour to wield a pen could collaborate most actively in this regenerative work, if they would employ themselves in demonstrating this social indiscipline, the far-reaching and fearful repercussions of which so many people know nothing. How many there are, to say the truth, who are neither heroes nor saints, neither libertines nor egotists, and who nevertheless imagine that they have a right to the common liberties with regard to moral discipline. As unmarried men, they have during their youth made use of the easy opportunities which offered themselves; now they are married, they violate without remorse the law of the transmission of life. They are ignorant of the laws which they transgress, and no one has ever shown them that these actions, which they imagine concern merely themselves, are in reality of the widest importance, since their effect on the prosperity or the suffering of society is immense. One would say that nature has only willed them to be secret in order to safeguard our freedom, that this may be respected most in the action which is to the greatest interest of society in general.

Once more, journalists, publicists, and men of letters would have, here, the opportunity to accomplish a great educative work which would somewhat atone for the crimes of their profession in the past, and the exploits of their heroes would not be less dramatic because they were mindful of social interests. Writers love to depict the sufferings of the victims of the mar-

riage law and the irresistible impulses of passion: there are other victims, innocent ones, who suffer from the debauchery of others—why have the novel and the stage so little to say of *them*? We can never give men too many reasons for being pure and chaste, and the knowledge of responsibilities incurred would give a new strength to uncertain or wavering wills.

Public opinion, and that of the salons, ought to uphold this movement for the conversion of our literature, and it is quite likely that it will. There was talk lately of making fertility fashionable, as much as sterility had lately been; the evolution will no doubt not be so easy, yet we may believe that perhaps the time is not far distant when some young couples, suspected of systematic sterility, might encounter, on entering a drawing-room, smiles which they could not endure, and some candidates for big dowries and the hand of only daughters might justly meet with the contempt which their lazy incapacity and unscrupulous avarice deserve.

These reforms of public opinion, literature, and education would not be very difficult, nor very meritorious, yet, united to those of political and economical society, would have considerable results. They would honour the chastity of youth, conjugal loyalty and fertility, and would cherish courage and generosity. There would no longer be need to deplore "the lassitude, not to say the disgust of parents, who have gained nothing from their abundant offspring but increase of fatigue, moral and physical wear and tear, no aid, or scarcely any, from the State, and who experience in the towns a difficulty in finding a roof to shelter them." Thus would be changed, at little cost, an abnormal social condition, of which it might be said, without much exaggeration, that soon no one would have children but saints or imbeciles; and the up-bringing of a family would become possible for a great number of people who, little disposed to be reckoned as imbeciles, do not, all the same, claim the virtues of saints, but content themselves with being honest folk, good citizens of the twentieth-century city.

Yet it must be confessed that this programme which

because it demands so little of us, should in consequence be quickly successful, does not seem the one on which to rely for our escape from the infernal circle which we have described above. The reform to be accomplished is too deep and too general, it involves too complete a reversal of our actions, our desires, our judgments—in a word, of our whole individual and social life—for us to have any right to hope that it can escape the great law of history, according to which devotion, self-abnegation, sacrifice, even martyrdom, are the only possible authors of all serious renovation and all real regeneration.



## CHAPTER XIII

### THE GOOD CITIZEN

NINETEEN hundred years ago Christianity stood face to face with the same difficulty : it preached chastity and the excellence of virginity, the indissolubility of marriage and loyalty in all conjugal relations, and it found a society given over to every kind of lasciviousness and debauchery which were admirably maintained and provisioned, if the expression be allowed, by a legal institution wonderfully adapted to their designs—that of slavery. And yet the Church of that first age was able to escape from the vicious circle. She was able to give certain souls a life sufficiently intense, a heat sufficiently conquering, for this little band to become the salt of the earth, to escape the pagan influence of social manners, and, instead, to contribute to their Christianization. And the atmosphere in which the great majority lived, and sinned, and died, was little by little purified by the small minority, by a handful of Christians who had Christ in the midst of them.

After nineteen centuries the method still holds good for all time ; all the great reforms of history have proved its worth, and there is no other way. No doubt there are in our modern societies many young men who would be chaste if they lived in an atmosphere which sustained their chastity, and many young spouses who would be willing to transmit life generously, if only our social customs supplied them with encouragement and co-operation ; but since this atmosphere and these customs do not exist, it can be foretold, to their misfortune and ours, that they will

be neither chaste nor prolific ; they will be nothing but bad citizens, all too capable of developing yet more these evil social habits which they deplore with their lips, but which their cowardice hinders them from opposing. As an American Bishop puts it, evil comes in a crowd, while the workers of good advance in Indian file.<sup>1</sup> Let us turn then to the picked men, without waiting for the co-operation of the rest, let them take the initiative and smooth the way which, later on, those may take who too easily imagine themselves prudent and moderate, when in reality they are merely weak and fearful. The true saviours of our society, who saved it during the war, and will save it again now that peace has returned, are these picked men.

Happily, these men are still legion, and with what joy I can at last ask the reader to dismiss from his sight the hideous visions which I have put before him and recall the merit and salute the courage of our present day heroes. Strong and vigorous young men, no fools but on the contrary wonderfully well-informed, who know, according to the saying of our Secretary of State, that "only fools make a jest of chastity," and who, by the absolute purity of their youth, train themselves in that salutary discipline without which they could not, later on, accomplish their task as men ; admirable husbands and wives who know as well as others the methods of systematic sterility, but to whom these methods are hateful, because they see in them at once a defilement of their love, a treason to their conscience and their country, and a shameful hypocrisy. They are perfectly aware of the unjust and arbitrarily multiplied difficulties which a society founded on a criminal restriction of natality would sow along their path, and, knowing how harsh evil is when it is in power, they know what their noble revolt against the surrender of so

<sup>1</sup> On the encouragements which solidarity gives to our immorality, see ch. ix. of my book "La crise moral des temps nouveaux." Solidarity is far from being able to act as the foundation of morality, as M. Léon Bourgeois suggested.

many others will cost their courage. Especially, they know that wages and salaries, and professional gains generally, are not calculated in view of the large family, and that nevertheless they ought, like others, to feed, clothe, house, bring up according to their condition, and educate, their numerous children ; but the modesty of their life and the energy of their work supply all these needs, and they are often to be seen devoting many hours of their time or some savings from their income to solace the wretched or to help some work for the public good. To these young men, these married couples, these fathers and mothers, we never can render enough homage ; once more, they are the saviours of their country. A perverted public opinion, yesterday, still thought them simple and old-fashioned ; to-morrow, if France desires to live in the joy of re-found national vigour, a regenerated public opinion will consider them her veritable vanguard, the pioneers of her new civilization. By the example of these good citizens of the modern city let us instruct ourselves and endeavour to specify the qualities and virtues which the French citizen must cultivate in himself and in his children, if he would loyally co-operate with this return to moral discipline.

## I

The first quality that should characterise the good Frenchman whose portrait I wish to trace is care of a right physical hygiene, esteem and pursuit of muscular vigour, and respect for the body and for health. The war has just shown, and in a terrible way, the toll of this bodily robustness, and for four years our country has selected the most vigorous of her sons and sent them to the front to shed the precious blood which flowed in their veins. From that fact results a very noticeable decline in the public health, which is already, by itself, an additional difficulty in the way of an exact observance

of the laws of sexual morality. If it is certain that the formula so dear to gymnastic teachers, *mens sana in corpore sano*, interpreted according to the mechanical idea which too often haunts the brain of these honourable practitioners, is very far from deserving the confidence which they place in it, it is not less true that a right equilibrium of our powers and the normal development of our physiological organs have much to do with our moral life. Since we are spirit enclosed in an animal envelope, it matters much that this spirit should find beneath its sway a body apt to the generous designs which the spirit may have formed, or which at least does not, by its unhealthy state, create a resistance peculiarly stubborn and sometimes insurmountable.

From this point of view, since we can never give young men too many reasons for resisting the temptations which beset them, we should utilize in their education, more than we do, all that is of teaching value—I will venture to say, that is noble and beautiful. This sentiment is easy to arouse and to cultivate in the youth, it means respect for his body, his health, his vigour, the purity of his blood, and he should be reminded that the blood which flows in his veins possesses its qualities and its physiological value only because, before him, his father and mother, his grandparents and great grandparents have been careful to keep it pure from all stain. In the same way, after him this blood must maintain life in the organs and members of his descendants, and he must be taught what responsibility his will be if, impoverished and polluted, it can only transmit a reduced life in which hereditary defects will load innocent victims with the weight of their progenitors' misdeeds.<sup>1</sup> Even independently of those physiological

<sup>1</sup>What beautiful and arresting lessons good-hearted men, who love France, could give on this subject to all our young people at school! Why should there not be one day each year when, in all schools, "the blood of France" should be celebrated? The address or lesson would be given, according to circumstances, by one of the masters or by a stranger, chosen, without reference to his political or religious opinions, for his aptitude to deal adequately with this magnificent subject, the awakening in the minds of his audience the desire to purify their hearts and reverence their bodies.

defects, of which our materialism alone would take cognizance, who shall say what tendencies to licentiousness and vice the father, who has accustomed his body to the most culpable perversions, transmits to his sons? The body is then no longer anything but "the vesture wrought into holes by the passions"—*vestis perforata libidinibus*—of which Clement of Alexandria speaks.

On the other hand, it is only too evident that the maintenance and education of a large family demand good health and special vigour on the part of the parents; during the day they must spare neither labour nor fatigue, and their rest at night is far from being a certainty. From all these points of view one sees the sovereign importance of cultivation of health and physical vigour. If we had taken this care, what reforms in our private life and in our public institutions we should already have accomplished! No doubt some advance was made during the first decade of this century, but how far from what might and ought to have been achieved! Are there not still many young boys whose physical strength is scarcely cultivated at all? Do we as yet find many mothers who, in bringing up their girls, take care to prepare them to support the fatigues of maternity without breaking down? Delicacy and distinction of manners is cultivated to excess, they are left free to fall into an unwholesome and ill-conditioned pettiness, and the higher interests of woman, family, and society, are sacrificed to arbitrary worldly conventions.

Of these three interests, the wife is not always the least to be pitied, and if for her sake alone, we may remark in passing, care for her health ought to be enough to deter people from these injurious anti-conceptionist practices which dishonour the relations of so many couples. Physicians and nerve specialists have many times described the physiological complaints and nervous troubles which arise from these resolutions of systematic sterility, obstinately maintained by so many husbands, and imposed on the wife, or half

accepted by her. The large increase of fibroid tumours may possibly own this origin, and the doctors know also whence arise the greater part of the diseases which they treat in married women. "Anti-conceptionist practices," declared Dr. Etienne at the Nancy Congress, "by repeated traumatism, or the action of cold, diminish the vitality of the mucous membrane of the vagina, expose it to infection, and injure it; thence arise those uterine inflammations which so often develop into veritable disease, and which in any case require long treatment, not to mention the risk of complications." Besides, who can tell the anguish, the terrors and moral tortures endured by countless wives who have remained pure-minded, and who detest the abominable "precautions" imposed by the husband?

Such is the positive injury, *damnum emergens*, as the jurists say; now consider the profit lost, *lucrum cessans*. "Far from always suffering from maternity," declares Dr. Desplats, "maternity is the cause of a development full of charms, of which pregnancy is the starting-point with young wives. Thanks to the new ideas of opotherapeutics, pregnancy may be conceived as one entire opotherapy. The foetus is no longer looked on as a mere parasite attached to the mother and living on her; it is a guest who lives in her and with her. It does not only receive from her the materials necessary for its development, it brings her special stimulations, which awake in her those slumbering activities that will bring about her physical perfection, and sentiments that will become her moral fulfilment."<sup>1</sup>

Dr. Pinard has often praised "that rhythm of harmony, of which the different movements are ovulation, fertilization, gestation, child-bearing, and lactation," and he insistently reminds us that we should not say "women who enjoy good health have many children," but "it is *because* women have many children that they enjoy good health."

<sup>1</sup> Bulletin de la Société scientifique belge, 1906.

## II

This good physical health will naturally lead to the second quality which the true restorers of French vitality must seek : that is, fitness for effort, the spirit of initiative and productivity. Since here we have to row up stream, and to renew our social morality by the conquering action of private reform, it is at once obvious that young men capable of chastity will not be found in the midst of young people who are unchaste, nor will there be husbands who generously accept the duty of handing on the gift of life in the midst of a society devoted to the most obstinate neo-malthusianism, unless we succeed in endowing these young men and these husbands with the very qualities which enable them to row against the current, and so reduce as far as possible the injuries which the law of solidarity automatically inflicts on those who consent to, and those who protest against, the evil. If one is not fit for effort, or has no relish for it, or is insensible to the healthy joys which it brings, it will seem much more simple to follow natural instinct and go with the stream, and this two-fold docility will lead to the usual evasions.

Some twenty years ago an interesting discussion was carried on among Catholics on the subject of the " active virtues " and " passive virtues," and it seemed certain that the latter were too much neglected by teachers who did not recognize that these so-called passive virtues can surround a man with concentrated activity, gathered energy, and a determined and disciplined will. Yet it is still the case that, in our days, the teacher must choose between two completely different, sometimes even violently opposed, methods of formation of character, and that the needs of modern society, especially the demands of the regeneration of manners, require that one be preferred to the other. No doubt the growth of instruction, of the critical and inquiring spirit, the tendency to judge for oneself and

not to trust implicitly the estimates of superiors reputed *a priori* to be judicious, enlightened and honest. All these modern customs and new ways of thought are not exempt from danger,<sup>1</sup> still we cannot but see in them the necessary elements of all true moral education in these days, and the teacher who repudiates them, works in vain and is a traitor to his mission. In spite of all the protests of traditionalism, the fact remains that the life of the child in the family, of the youth in our colleges, in the workshop or store, of the young man in barracks, of the adult in the factory, at the counter, or in the city, is profoundly changed. The family can no longer be the authoritative and stable group that it formerly was; the employer's authority has kept scarcely anything of its former character, and in place of the "subject" who obeyed his prince, the public powers now find before them the "citizen" who controls them by his ballot paper. All these transformations are profound, and the rapidity of the evolution constitutes its danger. Whatever definite judgment our great grand-children will pass on their social value, they are in any case the present "data," which the judicious teacher must ever bear in mind when undertaking to prepare growing boys and girls for the discipline of sexual morality. One cannot but declare the present pedagogic insufficiency of every educative system "borrowed from an epoch when men, firmly enclosed within the rigid control of the family or the workshop, of political and religious institutions, found at every moment of their life a support to sustain them, counsel to guide them, and at times, even, an almost impassable barrier to check them." His effort therefore should be directed to the development of these robust virtues, this moral vigour, these personal and deep convictions, indispensable as they are to the young man who is anxious

<sup>1</sup> On the rights and duties of "free-thought," and the history of the question, raised afresh by the publication, which caused so much excitement, of "Le Disciple," by M. Paul Brouger, in 1887, cf. pp. 59-70 of "L'Evolution des idées dans la France contemporaine," from Taine to Péguy, by Georges Fonsegrive, Paris: Blond et Gay, 1917.



to prepare himself by a chaste life for the foundation of a true home.

From yet another point of view, this aptitude for intensive work and effort, for production and "disentanglement," will be needful for the father and mother of a large family. There is much talk of the exemptions and compensations which should be accorded to parents responsible for the upbringing of several children, and it is not impossible that, in consequence, a few years may produce a veritable emulation between politicians and business men, to multiply, in favour of such parents, premiums, allowances, increased wages, and other encouragements. But for a long time yet these various means of relief would certainly not compensate for the extra burdens, and the best compensation to discount against the expenses of a large family is still that of professional capacity, intense productivity, vigour, hard work, and a spirit of initiative. This compensation depends neither on the vote of an assembly, nor on an employer's regulation, and the worker carries about everywhere the profit of it with himself. The benefit has, besides, a double effect—it is a double-barrelled weapon, so to say—for these same precious qualities, these active virtues which were indispensable to the father in gaining his family's means of subsistence, to the mother in her generous acceptance of repeated maternity, will belong also to the children, and will ensure their success in life.

### III .

These qualities of initiative, laborious activity, and intense productivity, would nevertheless not turn to the gain of moral discipline, if they did not meet with the collaboration of another quality, not less precious, and which tends to become more rare among our contemporaries—the love of the simple life, the glad

acceptance of a modest existence with no glitter about it.

In Chapter II we described, and many other publicists have done so before us, how many different enemies the moral law of loyalty in conjugal relations has to encounter : the excessive pursuit of comfort, the extension of needs, the taste for luxury and display, the vanity which turns away from certain honestly lucrative careers or entices men to unjustifiable expenses, the morbid desire to get rich or to rise in the social scale either for one's own sake or one's children's. All these excesses are but the pathological development of tendencies which in themselves are legitimate and good ; far from being hurtful to social life, they, on the contrary assure its progress ; but still their impulse needs to be tempered by love of the simple life and an exact watch over our desires, our aspirations, and what we naively call our " needs." We should understand, as the moralists of every age have never ceased to remind us, that these desires and needs are capable of indefinite extension, and if we believe, as many of our contemporaries do with more or less sincerity, that the upbringing of a large family is only possible for those who are already possessed of such and such advantages of fortune or professional income, let us have at least the honesty to recognize that this belief borders, in fact, on the stubborn and shamefully selfish resolutions of conjugal sterility or licentious celibacy.

We must transpose the scale of values, and having firmly laid down the first claim of the duties of marriage and fertility, must subordinate to the accomplishment of these the satisfaction of otherwise legitimate desires of wealth and social advancement. But even this subordination will always seem impossible to men who have taken no care to develop the love of a simple and modest life. We must know how to estimate duly the riches of personal life, such as our social condition has made it, above all of the interior life of our soul and intelligence, in order that such appreciation may be independent of the mere ornaments, the exterior

advantages, which it would please us to possess. Every life is good and can be happy which supplies the occasion to bring, according to its degree and its capacity, its contribution to the maintenance and the progress of all society, and it is to be hoped that one of the first signs of French revival, after the war, will be the general growth of this sentiment of contempt which all intelligent citizens ought to feel with regard to these individual indulgences of which the general prosperity in reality pays all the cost. Less than ever will a Frenchman have the right to secure personal advantages to the detriment of society; what matter the "rounding off" of your property or the swelling of your pocket-book, the purchase of your motor car or the sumptuous furniture for your drawing-room, the impeccable correctness of your maid, the "fine marriage" of your son or daughter, if these advantages can only be obtained at the sacrifice of the sacred interests of your country? The advance of individual conditions does not deserve praise except so far as it is associated with the progress of the collective life; it is dishonouring, because it rests on disloyalty at home and parasitism.

Since we must not fear to speak out, it is useless to hide the fact that this appreciation of the modest and simple life, this glad acceptance of salutary sexual disciplines and of the responsibilities of the family, are almost impossible without a certain measure of asceticism. Every man who develops in himself and others the need of what is "comfortable," a commodious establishment, a somewhat large competence, if he does not temper these "needs" by a vigorous moral education, accustomed to ascetic practice, is an enemy, unconscious, perhaps, but formidable, to sexual discipline and the fertile family, he is merely a collaborator with neo-malthusianism.

It is strange indeed that our contemporaries, who display much ingenious perseverance to control the forces of nature, should concern themselves so little with the regulation and discipline of those hidden

forces which, in the inmost part of their being, proceed from their physiological and mental energy, and notably from the instinct of generation, which is largely subject to the empire of the will and the suggestions of the imagination. These interior forces are none the less part of that nature which we profess to cultivate for our service. Now this effort of discipline and rational mastery of ourselves is impossible without the aid of asceticism. John Stuart Mill, whose lack of religious belief is well known, observes that there is little to be proud of in men who have never been accustomed to refuse themselves lawful satisfactions; nothing guarantees, he says, that they will refuse those which are unlawful, and he foresees that, in the future, we shall be brought to submit children and young people to a methodical ascetic training: they will be taught, as in the ancient world, to conquer their desires, to face dangers, to bear pain voluntarily. A better informed pedagogy will undoubtedly ratify this judgment, and it is surprising that we manifest such indifference to the preparation of youth for its specifically human and social part in life, while we devote so much care to the culture of professional talents and the preparation for a "career." And yet, by the side of the business which will be our professional work and our means of livelihood, have we not another, which is simply our business as *men*, the importance of which can no longer be disregarded? Numbers of youths come to the age when they will be exposed to the worst temptations, without any thought having been taken to give their will, by special exercises of self-denial and manliness that strength and vigour without which there can be no victory over sexual desire. We esteem it natural for everyone to enjoy all the lawful pleasures which are within his reach, and it has seemed strange that he should neglect any one of them, as if this voluntary omission, repeated from time to time, were not indispensable to the development of his will. On the other hand, is it not evident that a person, with no such experience in the art of self-restraint and the denial of a lawful pleasure, will

inevitably be permitted to extend beyond the normal limits the range of satisfactions which it is lawful to expect and taste? Sophisms are so seducing when they serve our own interests! Joseph de Maistre somewhere says that every time a human being commands himself, he develops his power, and that thus a man of thirty has more energy to resist the seduction of a woman because, when he was only five or six, he had learnt to go without a toy or a sweet. The remark is perfectly true.<sup>1</sup>

#### IV

Finally, these three qualities must be accompanied by a fourth, which is their crown, and gives them all their social value: I mean the sense of the collective interest and an anxiety to serve it. Several times in the course of these pages I have shown the errors and defects of individualism, and the evil result of all individualistic conception of life, which, fallaciously separating a man from his like, is held to justify him in seeking first of all his personal profit, and in maintaining on all occasions his right to happiness. It is enough, therefore, to note how much easier the acceptance of the successive disciplines of sexual morality must appear to the man who is profoundly penetrated with the sense of the close solidarity which binds him to all his brothers of the human race, as much to those who live in his

<sup>1</sup> May we beg the disciples of Froebel, and the Kindergartens, to take this into account? Froebel's method is excellent: nevertheless it should not, under the plea of better adapting pedagogic methods to the child's psychology, cause him to lose the precious opportunities of early contact with the spirit of sacrifice, renunciation, and mortification. Let us take care: there lies the hidden poison of the Froebelian method, at least in the form given to it by certain kindergarten teachers who, as might have been expected, have secularized the great invention of the master, who on the contrary was full of the thought of God. Early development in the child of the spirit of observation and the faculty of attention, the sense of line and of colour, would be very slight gain at the price of such a surrender.

day as to those who went before, and will who follow him. Far from seeking to isolate himself, to live a separate existence, to trace round himself a circle within which he can enjoy his autonomy at his ease, and display his independence, every one of us ought to be mingling more and more deeply with this suffering humanity, which is every moment in labour with the desire and the need of some new progress. United to our brothers by a more intimate fellowship we understand better the meaning of the admirable precepts of sexual morality ; their sense is revealed to us, and we see them as they are in reality, the corner-stone of all true social progress, the indispensable initiation into all other disciplines, without which no society can be prosperous, powerful, and happy.

When, after long meditation and patient effort, one has realized these strict and subtle inter-relations, chastity and the marriage duty, conjugal fidelity and fertility, they no longer appear only as duties to which a man is bound in regard to himself, or his wife, or his children, but they are apprehended in all their splendour, in the whole extent of their glory, and the soul is moved by a reverent affection for this discipline, which has been, all through the ages, the best collaborator in humanity's most painful work, that of training the animal within us, of mastering the gorilla, and of ensuring the primacy of the spirit and true freedom. A fierce battle, indeed, in which there is never a decisive victory, in which each generation only gains partial successes which do not save the next generation from the renewed offensive of the enemy. When we know what is at stake in that battle, what essential interests of the individual and of all humanity are engaged, how can our soul refuse to take part in it, to fight in her appointed rank and with fitting arms, and must not these great perspectives warm our courage, sustain our valour, and curb our selfishness? Once more, the question is no longer only that of setting oneself free from the humiliating slavery of the flesh ; by that self-

## 476 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

liberation others are set free also ; and not for all the world must we consent to help to plunge the rest of mankind into animality and licentiousness, and to diminish their confidence in the spiritual forces which alone can set them free from the tyranny of the most brutal of our instincts.

## CHAPTER XIV

### RELIGIOUS BELIEF

- “There are more things in heaven and earth, Horatio, than are dreamed of in your philosophy.”—*Hamlet*, Act I., Sc. v.
- “Whenever a man becomes a pagan, he finds himself licentious and hard.—Taine.

I HAVE enumerated the conditions of a good moral and intellectual hygiene, favourable to the growth of an exact moral discipline. But in spite of the arbitrary assumption which too many teachers and sociologists still imagine they are justified in postulating, in the name of pseudo-scientific conclusions, it is impossible to pretend that the conditions of this hygiene can be realized without the collaboration and concurrence of religion and religious belief. Are they not a preparation for, and an introduction to, the religious sense, and also its fruit? What, in their root, are this respect for the body and its vigorous energies, this taste for and joy in effort, this glad acceptance of persevering work and a simple life, this contempt for mere comfort and the senseless satisfaction of vanity, this care for the progress of the race and of good social service, this persevering will to subordinate personal and immediate interests to the collective and durable interests of humanity—what is all this, *au fond*, but the manifold manifestation of one unique sentiment, the sentiment of religion? Could these aptitudes and these virtues be developed, could they even come to light, in a society which religious faith had not fertilized and fashioned; and, still more, could the virtues of chastity, conjugal fidelity, and continence, of which the others are but



the preparation and the auxiliary, ever expand without the support of this faith? It has been believed of late, and that in a "scientific" age, and some men whose honesty and intelligence cannot be questioned have declared that religion has no longer a part to play in the moral economy of societies that have reached the grown-up stage. In the infancy of the race it had been good in order to "tame the gorilla," to have recourse to those dogmas and rites which by working on their fears, had inspired our ancestors with a salutary dread. But science has, they say, delivered us from those chimæras, and religious institutions, which correspond to a social stage now altogether passed away, ought to disappear, like those discarded machines which we still look at in museums with the respect due to implements which represent a moment in the unending labour of humanity.

The best informed science has not ratified this judgment of the Berthelots, the Taines, and the Renans, and while antiquated politicians, whose moral mediocrity and party spirit condemn them to be always behind the movement of contemporary thought, still persist in repeating the old anti-clerical tirades, free and unprejudiced investigation pursues its work, and corrects these premature conclusions. The sociologists most capable of direct contact with life and of dealing closely with its disconcerting problems have never adopted them, and from Auguste Comte and Frédéric Le Play to Benjamin Kidd, Foerster, and M. Alfred Loisy, they are of one mind in affirming the value and necessity of religious belief and of the religious sense, to "associate" the conduct of individuals, to influence them in one common direction, to direct and co-ordinate them, and subordinate them to the good and prosperity of the community in general.

This is not the place to insist on the general service of religious belief, in its unifying and tonic effect on man's interior life, in its power to direct towards a common point—the general good—the individual activities which would be too prone to follow the centrifugal impulses of passion and selfishness.

It is important, on the contrary, to demonstrate the part and function of religious belief in the work of purifying our domestic morals and institutions, and it will be seen that its part is irreplaceable. This demonstration can be made in manifold ways. Is there not already a serious argument to hand in the statement that the twenty French departments in which the birth-rate was highest before the war, and the divorces and abortions the least numerous, are almost all notoriously religious? In any case, there is not one which can be reckoned as indifferent or hostile to religious faith.<sup>1</sup>

This first statement, of a general kind, is confirmed by the individual observations which each of us has opportunity to make in the society around us.

Even if it be far from true, for instance, that all Catholics, and all practising Protestants respect chastity and conjugal fidelity, or that they have large families, it is true all the same that Catholics and practising Protestants are almost the only people who do respect chastity during their youth or who have a large family, and the few exceptions to this rule that could be quoted would much rather confirm than weaken the statement. On careful inquiry, it would almost always be found either that the person in question has been subject during childhood to the penetrating influence of a religious education, or has himself embraced a wholly personal religion of "Good" or of "Humanity," which by some accident has satisfied his sincere and deep religious sentiments.

Am I not justified, too, in considering as a valid witness—although Catholics could wish it were a

<sup>1</sup> These departments are: Finistère, Pas-de-Calais, Morbihan, Côtes-du-Nord, Seine-Inférieure, Meurthe-et-Moselle, Lozère, Vosges, Nord, Doubs, Mayenne, Basses-Pyrénées, Ille-et-Vilaine, Vendée, Territoire-de-Belfort, Manche, Hautes-Alpes, Haute-Savoie, Corsica, Aveyron. Precise information on these points will be found in a recent pamphlet published by M. G. Callon, retired Inspector-general of Roads and Causeways, Paris: Beauchesne, 1918. It is drawn up with much care, and contains, especially, three interesting tables. It seems to us, however, that the author has not gone deeply enough into the causes which influence morality, and we could not, without serious reservations, adhere to his conclusions.

less interested one—the care shown by so many fathers, who are strangers to all religious belief, to give their sons a Christian education ?

Should we not esteem still more highly the award of the “*Prix Malouet*” to certain professors of the University, who would be the first to affirm that the fervour of their religious sentiments lay at the root of their domestic virtues ? Because they have always taken care to maintain in their souls the flame of an ardent and deep religious conviction, these picked men have been capable of founding the fine families which we so much admire.<sup>1</sup>

To this evidence we could join another which would not be the least in value, and which is supplied by the illustrious and celebrated conversions since the first years of this century. Among these converts several, renewing the Confessions of St. Augustine, have avowed their faults and miseries, and have told us how they were never able to break their chains until the religious perspectives of life revealed themselves before their eyes. The pure divine light suddenly illuminated their souls, and because they could not withdraw their gaze from the sublime realities which they beheld, they knew that they must break with base things and with corruptions that had become intolerable. Reason and logical argument were not lacking in the steps they took, but how often they were surpassed ; *Si scires donum Dei*—“ if thou knewest the gift of God ”—said Christ to the Samaritan woman ; the convert had found his road, and henceforth he “ knew ” the means, by bringing unity into his inward life, to re-establish the harmony between his personal energy and that great collective

<sup>1</sup>“*Le prix Malouet*,” worth 3000 francs, is assigned to a professor of secondary education who has at least four children and is distinguished for his professional attainments. No condition of adhesion to any special philosophical or religious doctrines has been laid down by the founder, and no one will dispute the broad-mindedness of the members of the “*Commission de l'Académie des Sciences morales*.” Yet for four years this prize has always been awarded to a member of the University, the sincerity of whose religious sentiments is no less distinguished than his professional merits and his moral generosity.

life into which he felt, more than ever, the necessity of entering.

I leave these arguments to the reader's meditation and good faith. I am not unaware of the reservations which might be formulated on the subject ; I do not believe these reservations are valid. All the same, I do not insist on these arguments, as I have not space now to enter on the discussions which they raise, and especially because in the mental condition of our epoch they are never sure of obtaining the adhesion which they deserve. Owing to certain circumstances, the controversy is transferred to another field, to which we must, if we are to do useful work, follow our opponents.

## I

When the relations which exist between the Christian Faith and moral discipline are urged before a person without any religious belief, the reply is usually made that such relations are purely historical and contingent ; the names are quoted of persons without religion who lead chaste lives and bring up a large family, and at the utmost it is acknowledged that the diffusion of rationalistic teaching has for the time encouraged the progress of indiscipline and selfish rebellion ; sometimes your opponent will go so far as to admit, as M. Gustave Belot, with courageous honesty, declared at the recent Congress at Nancy, that the Christian Religion occupies a privileged situation for making its faithful accept moral discipline ; but this is said to be only a passing superiority, and that in proportion as evolution develops our society will discover other grounds on which it will lay the foundations of sexual, and of all other, disciplines ; only let us advance a few more decades they plead.

The answer has often appeared adequate ; but never-

theless, I believe it to be totally lacking in scientific value. I have no intention of denying that here and there it is possible to meet with men punctitiously respectful of all sexual moral disciplines, but to whose intelligence all religious belief is nevertheless foreign : their youth was chaste, and since their marriage they have scrupulously respected all the laws of conjugal morality. Let them allow me to tell them, with a complete sincerity that is mingled with much respect, that their example proves nothing : not to mention that it would almost always be easy to show to what religious, and specifically Christian, influences, their childhood, and often even their adolescence, was submitted, they should honestly admit that their "case" is simply the result of a social law on which sociologists have not so far sufficiently insisted, and the forgetfulness of which vitiates nevertheless a great number of sociological studies which are otherwise sincere and methodical. Because of our social solidarity, no one ever submits wholly to the consequences of the positions, doctrines, or acts, whether good or bad, which he has adopted. Whatever we may think or do, we are never utterly isolated ; we go on our way in a troop, and others are beside us who sift, soften, allay, and divert, whether to our profit or our harm, the consequences of our actions and our doctrines. This law of solidarity produces, at every moment and in all directions, incalculable effects. In the physiological order it enables deformed, one-armed, one-eyed persons and cripples to live a fully human life ; in the economic order it wards off from the lazy and incapable a part of the consequences of their ineptitude or their disorganization, while at the same time it deprives the most capable of a good part of the advantages that their capacity and energy deserve. Finally, in the moral order it hinders the complete development of the consequences implied in the acts which we accomplish and the doctrines which we profess.

People who are remarkable both for their irreligious spirit and their complete docility in observing the

precepts of sexual morality benefit, without being aware of it, by the pressure of surroundings which have been traditionally shaped, braced, and kneaded, so to speak, by the very doctrines which they repudiate ; and they are no more justified in proceeding to a possible generalization of their case, than a deformed person would be to maintain that, on looking at his own life, he sees no reason why all men should not be willing to be as deformed as he is. Still more, it almost invariably happens that his case proves his abnormal and exceptional character ; like plants and animals which are prodigies, such people have usually no power of reproduction, of recruiting faithful disciples. On all sides their friends admire without comprehending them, and the very propaganda which they carry on in support of their irreligious opinions is in danger of ending in the very emancipations and licentious practices which they repudiate. Logic once more asserts its rights with their disciples, and while one section, who are adepts in their philosophic doctrines, too often come to treat vexatious disciplines as they please, the other, more attentive to their moral life, experience the need of not stopping where their masters stopped : they search and dig, finding again in their turn the deep layer of religious life that can alone supply their souls with the strength they need.

However unacceptable "the children of the new spirit" may find this statement, they cannot refuse to acknowledge that the spread of their doctrines has encouraged the revolt of young men and adults against moral discipline, and at best has made a compromise between open rebellion and submission. As we have given up being exacting in this matter, we content ourselves with this respectable mediocrity, which at least saves appearances, and after an easy-going youth, ends by handing on life to two or three children and by installing deceit in the normal system of married life. But in proportion as "the perfume of the empty vase evaporates," this moral emptiness becomes more evident, and the most vigorous tempera-

ments and most robust minds make it their business to show it us.

Whatever their former masters may say, these disciples are following their teaching logically, and they are faithful to the directions received. If it is true that man is nothing but a compound of physico-chemical elements, if conscience and the moral life are a mere passing symptom, an efflorescence and trick of the imagination, why should this young man forbid himself to contract with that girl, as well-informed as himself, those free relations of a temporary union which have so much charm for them both? Why should not this girl, who is conscious of the first signs of pregnancy, demand the abortion which will resolve so many difficulties for her? Why should this husband look on himself as indissolubly bound to the spouse whose inadequacy and whose faults he knows only too well? Why should this husband and wife, who agree to terminate their life together, regard themselves as bound in perpetuity by a chain which every year drags more heavily? Why should this couple, who easily and respectably rear their two children, accept the burden of a third, a fourth, a fifth, and even more, when it is so easy for them to resort to practices which our unmodified vocabulary still calls conjugal frauds?

Every day, by our side and in our midst, thousands upon thousands of young men and adults put these questions to themselves; there are none more distressing or more tragic, and on the answer given depends the future of our country and of all humanity. Yet to all these men and women, tortured in their flesh and anguished in their souls, the untaught mind can offer no valid, serious, solid argument, which the briefest criticism cannot dispose of in a moment. It is reduced to babbling a few big words, which it scarcely any more believes, because it is indeed impossible to hold them true for long, and science itself speedily dissolves their content. Nowhere more than in this great chapter of sexual morality does the tragic contradiction between

the extreme urgency of the social need and the impossibility of constraining the individual appear more plainly. Literally, human societies are panting for and imploring the act of discipline without which they cannot live; they demonstrate its urgent necessity, and yet the individual refuses, wraps himself in his selfishness, and under the shelter of the laws themselves, shuts himself up in licentiousness.

He refuses and resists, and it must be added that if the doctrine of irreligion, which the "children of the new spirit" have taught these last seventy years, is true, he is right to refuse. If it is a fact, as Benjamin Kidd reminds us—and who can deny it? that not one of us is inclined to deprive himself of a bucket of coal in order to increase the amount of combustibles for our descendants three hundred years hence, by what right could society require one to abstain from these incomparable sexual enjoyments, or to forbid me to put my lips to this cup of drunken indulgence which is offered me so freely? Shall I be told that in refusing to deny my desires I betray my vocation, neglect to realize myself, and inflict on society so serious an injury that I condemn it to ruin and even desolation? All this is undeniable, but how often these demonstrations are without effect! How often they leave the will, the training of which is in question, absolutely cold; and is it not quite plain that in yielding to such an appeal the individual would merely associate himself with the pretences which exploit him? If it is admitted that our fugitive existence is nothing but a gleam of consciousness between two oblivions, how could the obligation to resist myself be so pressing that I am bound to impose on myself an abstinence which seems so illogical and contrary to nature; and indeed is there any meaning in the "obligation" at all? Besides what title can society assume that authorizes it to pose as a peremptory authority? Brunetière said lately: "A buffalo is not sacred, and a herd of buffaloes is no more so; my earthly existence is worth as much as that of others, and I can spare none of it." As to the abstinences and



disciplines which society would lay upon me, I might perhaps make up my mind to them, if society would at least give me some assurance that it is really interested in their observance and appreciates the admirable fertility it asks for, and if it would give me besides a guarantee that the rest will also consent to submit their sexual instincts to similar rules. But we know how far that would go; far from giving this assurance and this guarantee, one would say on the contrary that society, led by evil shepherds who disgrace it and lead it to the worst disasters, takes pleasure in supplying my licentious deeds with all possible justifications.

The conclusions of irreligious rationalism are plainly contradicted by the methodical observation of social and psychological phenomena, and the sociologist cannot but wholly approve the following fine passage of Benjamin Kidd. Speaking of the necessary subordination of the individual to the interests of society, this profound sociologist writes: "If the moral influences which obtain it were suppressed, we could very well imagine the cynical indifference, or rather the intellectual pride, with which an energetic character would escape from this subordination, which he would then merely regard as a common slavery. If we estimate our relations with the universe from the standpoint of our short individual existence, our intellect can only discover one duty for the individual, namely, to enjoy as much as possible the few precious years of conscious life at his disposal. Any other consideration must seem paltry and absurd. Compared with one suffering avoided or one pleasure secured, any aspiration towards a future cosmic evolution must weigh scarcely more than a feather in the balance. In these circumstances riches and power are what will be eagerly sought. And we must remember that human experience proves, as it has proved in the past, that riches and power, divorced from the control of ethical, supernatural influences, never lead to the search for the highest altruistic pleasures, but rather, evolution has assured

us, to the satisfaction of the instincts which are rooted in the depths of human nature. Voluptuousness and epicurism have always been, and always will be, though under the most refined forms, the accompaniments of irresponsible wealth and power, and of a mental attitude of reasoned contempt towards the lower classes, who are envious of the wealth, and hostile to the power."<sup>1</sup>

"Duty," writes M. Alfred Loisy, "is in harmony with a certain ideal conception of human nature, a conception which rises above the individual instinct, and which ranks in the category of venerable and sacred, even religious, things. In the sentiment which cements this progressive organization of the family and of society, there is something more than mere adaptation to the necessities of a common existence, more than a regularized application of the instincts which tend to the propagation of the race and guarantee its perpetuity. The fact of life in common proceeds from a kind of social instinct and is by no means comprised in physical necessity, but is really mystical in character; the sentiment which inspires this life and sustains it is in harmony with an ideal. It is this ideal which one loves in the society which is the incarnation of it. This ideal which declares itself in desire, which realizes itself by sacrifice, which delights, so to speak, in itself, and expresses its poetry in love, is not a mere vulgar policy of human relations. All of it—duty, devotion, love—is sacred in the religious ideal which it tends to realize. Nothing is clearer than that in this idea of love lies the essential interest of humanity. But it is also equally clear—for anyone who has not previously made up his mind to combine history and human life in a geometrical formula—that this ideal never has been, is not to-day, and undoubtedly never can be, a programme that concerns our reason only, and that is founded on an exact calculation of individual and social interests. It has not been conceived independently of those interests for which it claims to provide, but it has always been,

<sup>1</sup> *L'Evolution sociale*, p. 234. Paris: Alean.

in its very nature, something different from such a calculation. For, in spite of its obscurities, its errors and imperfections, it reflects the mysterious force which governs the progressive education of humanity ; it moves and grows with this ascending life ; and no doubt it is the supreme intuition of the human conscience, expressing itself in the highest esteem, the most religious respect, which it can have for its own dignity."<sup>1</sup>

The sense of moral obligation is a totally different thing from the adhesion of the mind to the rational demonstration of a rule of conduct, to the proof of its legitimacy and utility, and it is logical that the ever-widening extension of abortions and anti-conceptionist practices should not allow itself to be checked by the knowledge, which is every year more widely diffused, of the social consequences of these fatal habits. Nowhere more than in these matters of sexual morality is the insufficiency of this so-called scientific morality more evident ; writers like Duclaux and Henri Poincaré, Edmond Perrier, Bergson, and Foerster have done justice to it, and it is strange that sociology, which has a legitimate claim to be reckoned a true science, should insist on a privilege of which no other science has had the benefit. The wisest course for it would be to take its share and accept the common destiny ; it can, no more than the other sciences, give men valid and sufficient reasons to live virtuously.

Never was this insufficiency demonstrated with more masterly authority, nor under more solemn circumstances, than by Professor F. W. Foerster, in the memorandum which he submitted to the second International Congress of Moral Education, held at The Hague in 1912. "The prophecy of the inevitable triumph of irreligious education," wrote the illustrious pedagogue, "is a common radical theme. It is asserted that the religious basis is only necessary to morality at the mythological stage ; it is foretold that the authority of science will some day take the place of that

<sup>1</sup> *La Religion*, par Alfred Loisy, p. 68 (Emile Nourry.)

of religion in matters of conscience ; the autonomy of the individual and the advance of scientific consciousness will no longer admit of any other foundation of intellectual certainty."

The author of these reflections, who was formerly a supporter of morality without religion, has renounced all the sanguine ideas expressed above, and it is precisely by his observations made in the course of his practice as a moral teacher that he has been led to abandon them. The author of this memorandum has not the slightest doubt that all modern pedagogy will change its mind. The more it has to face the concrete problem of forming an individual character, the more it has to penetrate into the dark riddles of human selfishness, the tragedies of a will divided against itself, the psychology of temptation, the conditions of self-conquest, the more also will religious inspiration be recognized as indispensable, and the modern substitutes be judged inadequate for an effective moral education.

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"Certainly an ethical system can also be based on principles borrowed from natural or social science, and a purely human philosophy. But the radicals deceive themselves by confusing demonstration by reason with inspiration. There are sober arguments which keenly appeal to the reason and are sufficient to establish a scientific conviction, but which are nevertheless utterly ineffective so far as the will is concerned—nay, they even chill enthusiasm by their coldness. This is what the Comtists have felt keenly, hence their cult of humanity as a principle of enthusiasm and a basis for their ethical postulates. But in all this merely human ideal, there is too much alloy of impure humanity, too much of earthly elements. How is such an ideal to be endowed with sufficient force and life to deliver man from himself, and to uplift him to the sovereign dominion of the moral conscience, even in his most secret actions ?

"We must, therefore, distinguish between two pro-

foundly different things : rational demonstration and the inspiration of the will."

This admirable analysis of the psychological reality is valid for all moral precepts ; but how much more is it so with regard to those of sexual morality which rule the " most secret actions." It is very remarkable, too, that the most qualified representatives of secular thought have for long given up touching the greatest moral problem of our contemporary societies, the solution of which, one must not be weary of repeating, is put off to a future time in their history. Abounding in words and eloquence as they are in the recital of so many other duties, most of which are, if one may so express it, mere trifles at the gate, duties that cost nothing, they preserve, on the contrary, silence on the laws which regulate generative activity,<sup>1</sup> and when by chance they venture on explanations which they feel inevitable, one is struck, in reading them, with the futility of the arguments advanced. The reasons are so feeble that the author usually stops half-way, and does not dare even to lay down the rules of which the most elementary sociological knowledge demon-

<sup>1</sup> It is remarkable that neither Ruah, nor Bayet, nor Jacob, nor Durkheim, nor Séailles, nor Buisson, nor Gustave Belot, and other writers like these, and so many others of their imitators or followers, have touched the edge of the great problem. M. Malapert has lately given young men some excellent advice to deter them from approaching prostitutes, but too brief to dissuade them from "free association." More recently M. Ruysen has published, in the *Revue de métaphysique et de morale*, the two articles from which we have made several quotations, and we have told how interesting is the work of the learned Professor of the Bordeaux Faculty of Literature. Nevertheless, our eminent colleague will permit us to say, with all sincere respect for his great talents and his high moral standard, that this study makes evident once more the inability of rationalist thought to deal with the splendid problems of the sexual life. There is not a word about divorce by mutual consent or about abortion. Why? The short passage about "l'union libre" gives us very little confidence: "Mutual consent, if necessary, should therefore suffice, we believe, to give a moral character to sexual relations; for the consent, to be complete, must extend to both immediate and remote consequences. Now these consequences are doubly unjust: first, because they create, to the woman's detriment, a personal and social loss, to which neither her partner or herself should consent; in the second place because this decrease is unequally shared between two agents, of whom the least one can say is that they are equally responsible." This reasoning is very

strates the necessity. Every page reveals the writer's embarrassment: the sociologist within him would need to demand much more than could be conceded by the metaphysician whose emasculated and timid philosophy does not endorse such austere conclusions. Again, one often sees the author take refuge in attorney's quibbles or in side-issues to support a sociological conclusion which he knows to be irrefutable, unless, worse still, he resorts to juggleries little less distressing in such a serious discussion.<sup>1</sup> One would need to have very little knowledge of the happy sincerity of the great popular currents which are sweeping away our modern democracies to believe that arguments so weak as these will suffice for moral discipline.

Demographic observation, again, sadly confirms this proof of impotence. We are told: "Have patience, we are in a period of transition, and it is inevitable that at such a time morality should decline." But if the argument is sound, how is it that we prove that this decline is accentuated precisely in proportion as the evolution advances, and that morality is lowest where the advance is greatest? The French departments where the "new spirit" has been most welcomed are also those in which moral indiscipline is most de-

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encouraging to the amateurs of a temporary "union libre." The two reasons given to condemn it are utterly feeble, since, in growing measure, the consent is to extend to all consequences: the most formidable, that of pregnancy, is easily avoided, and the personal loss is on the way to disappear in proportion as public opinion, "rid of atavic prejudices," pursues its evolution. The learned professor is careful to add the reservation: "we believe." He is not altogether certain of the validity of his benign condemnation; I am less so; and the young men who uphold free love will not be any more so.

<sup>1</sup> A curious specimen is supplied by M. Durkheim's article on *Divorce par consentement mutuel*, already quoted. The article begins with a long discussion on suicide, which has a very indirect connection with the subject, and then goes on to arguments quoted from laws no longer in force which have nothing to do with it. The recent work of Dr. Toulous, the regular chronicler of the *Deplêche de Toulouse*, is also most symptomatic. The sociologist-physician would give advice to young men, but he confines himself to showing them that it is to their own interest and that of society that they should have relations "with few women."

veloped, and if we pursue our methodical inquiry, we find that in these departments the districts, towns, and villages most sympathetic with this spirit are those most affected. In the face of such *proofs*, what avail promises of a better future ?

“ It is a strange thing,” writes Dr. Emmanuel Labat, “ that in Gascony, with a fertile soil, a salubrious climate, and good economic conditions, with none of these great urban centres which attract our strongest—and devour them—without any notable drunkenness, with labour greatly alleviated by machinery, and enjoying vastly improved conditions with regard to housing and clothing, the population seems to reap no benefit. The degeneracy is evident to all who have known the preceding generations. The very expression of the face has lost its energy, the fine carriage given by suppleness and strength is more rare ; the developed muscles have vanished ; many young girls, whose grandmothers with upright figure and firm neck bore heavy loads upon their heads, hide a slight deformity beneath their bodices ; the young men have lost their fitness for marching and for laborious work ; there is less resistance in sickness. In fine, tuberculosis, instead of decreasing, is gaining on the countryside. This, too, is significant : in spite of the progress of general hygiene, the diminution of acute disease, and the extreme rarity of births (and we know that where few infants are born there will be few deaths, since it is the earliest infancy that pays the largest tax to death), the death-rate remains high, higher than the average rate for all France. We have few cradles, but many coffins.”<sup>1</sup>

I have on purpose taken these quotations from authors who do not share my religious beliefs, and whose authority is recognized by free-thinkers.

It may be that, to our misfortune, our humiliating political divisions will still drown, with their noise, for some years to come, these witnesses which so many good Frenchmen ought to hear ; but the proof appears beyond all question, and we may hope that the time is

<sup>1</sup> *L'âme paysanne*, p. 88. Paris : Delagrave, 1918.

at hand when no impartial man will dispute its accuracy.

Yet again : rational proof is one thing, practical adhesion of the heart and will quite another ; and the couple who, at the conclusion of a conference on depopulation and its fatal effects on the inadequate French natality, join the committee for the increase of the birth-rate, and then carefully and perseveringly repeat their anti-conceptionist "precautions," is on a par with the logic of rationalist thought, as did yesterday those middle-class people who prepared their sons for administrative careers in total ignorance of the social crime of a swollen officialism, as do to-day those syndicate secretaries and "intelligent" workmen who, wholly convinced as they are of the absurdity of an indefinite system of rise in wages, which automatically produce a fresh rise in prices which in its turn will demand another rise in wages, would nevertheless blame themselves for letting slip an opportunity for declaring a strike and claiming a further increase. Once more, on the scheme of rationalistic thought, this attitude is perfectly logical.

Shall we be told that patriotism will be sufficient to secure the support of good citizens ? But devotion to the country is far from being so general as the self-interested optimism of present or expectant members of the Chamber would like to think, and the Frenchman scarcely understands the meaning of patriotism except in the military form. How many there are who believe they were truly patriotic, because they were ready to fight, and who actually did fight, for the defence of the country, but "who are, since the war, just what they were before : some idle and useless, through their own fault ; others hard-working, but taken up exclusively with their own affairs ; some followers of all parties who maintain and profit by civil discords ; others are anarchists, incapable of acting in common with any general interest. In a word, men destitute of that civil patriotism which we call public spirit. Let us be outspoken : would military service itself be so generally



performed if it was a matter of choice, if the law did not impose it and public opinion demand it? ”<sup>1</sup>

## II

Only religious belief can supply a complete proof, because it alone gives ontological reality to rules which, resting as they may on irrefutable demonstrations, nevertheless appear to us as the expression of pious aspirations and patriotic wishes, incapable of sustaining the shock of the forces ever enrolled in the service of selfishness and licentiousness. The believer knows that his personal and conscious activity is closely united to an Infinite Being, in Whom are supremely realized the Good and the True, to which it is his duty to conform his conduct. The question is not merely for him to gain a reward, as many publicists who ought to be better informed persist in repeating. What matters to him is to remain in relations of love and obedience with this Infinite Wisdom and Infinite Goodness, Who has in some manner taken the very universe into His care, Who guarantees to each and all the ultimate triumph of good over evil, of self-abnegation over selfishness, of the spirit over the flesh, and Who can also assure, in the order and harmony of the whole, the perfect satisfaction of the most profound aspirations of the individual. Regarded from this standpoint, the obligation to realize himself and the obligation to contribute his share to human progress are in no danger of appearing to the believer as mere symbols, myths, or empty dreams; on the contrary, they are in his eyes the only true realities, to which all other realities, which are in part illusory, must subordinate themselves. He knows that his vocation as man consists essentially in securing this subordination and this hierarchical order, and such subordination is for

<sup>1</sup> Jordan.

him neither slavery nor humiliation. This point has been wonderfully expounded by Professor Foerster :

“ To derive morality from God is simply to feel in the depths of one’s soul, and to clearly understand, that the moral law is not merely a debt due to human society, but on the contrary that all mastery of self, all renouncing of selfishness, restores us to the eternal source whence springs, at once, our spiritual nature and our moral obligation. The angels sing at the birth of Christ : He Who is born in the dark stable, in presence of the ox and ass, is the Sacrifice, something not purely human, but which partakes of heaven. Sacrifice sets free the soul from the sovereignty of the body and of earthly things, it is the birth of spiritual personality, it is the victory of heaven over earth, of mind over unintelligent nature. In the light of the religious ethic, mere human morality is nothing, and remains nothing but a cross without a resurrection. Religion alone puts all sacrifice in relation with the supreme good of the personal life. To feel precisely this personal importance of moral duties, to concentrate oneself on it, and to inspire oneself with it, is to found morality on religion. It is imagined in our days that to renounce all religious basis for morality should be considered a sign of a completely developed personality. The exact contrary is the truth ; there is no real personal morality but that founded on religious conviction. It is religion alone that can teach that we gain true life only by the sacrifice of all life ; it is religion alone that can, not only teach this but make it incarnate, incorporate it in one thrilling Life and Death. Blind instinct is essentially rebellious against the moral law ; the Christian Religion enlightens man by implanting in him profound convictions of the true end of life, and the essence of true liberty, and it is only, when thus enlightened, that man realizes clearly that he can only fulfil the supreme end of his personal life by the sacrifice of himself. It is thus that the Christian Religion alone can reconcile the exterior demands of society with man’s intimate aspiration towards personal

freedom, the restraint of life with life's thirst for satisfaction ; it alone can re-clothe, and with what living reality, obedience with the language of freedom ; it is the inward meeting-place of the individual and society. It is of this function that St. Paul spoke, when he said that Christianity set men free from the servitude of the law. All ethics that are purely human remain the slaves of the law, and scientific ethic is merely the scientific explanation of this servitude. What can it do ? It speaks to man of social necessities, while religion speaks to him of his personality, of *himself*, of his higher origin, of the forces hidden deep in his spiritual being, it awakes in him the desire for perfect liberty, presents that liberty to him in its radiant perfection and shows him moral action as the way that leads to this perfection : such is the religious basis of morality. Our morality, according to Jean Paul, is like a very useful causeway, very wide and safe, that is carried across the country, but only by cutting down the sacred groves of religion. But in the measure that these are cut down, their practical importance for the moral organization of human society will be felt anew, and it will be realized that the modern world has nothing to put in their place. To conquer, even in this world, the soul cannot be content with merely worldly motives ; it must possess the consciousness of its sovereign force in the face of matter, of its higher origin, of its eternal destiny ; this it can only do in the sacred groves. Euckel has rightly insisted on the fact that the Christian Religion extols with the greatest emphasis the independence of the spiritual life. In the formation of character, the question is exactly of this autonomy of the spiritual life which must be defended against material encroachments. Without the conscious communication of the human spirit with its primal Source, all the natural sanctions of this world will not suffice to quicken the conscience. We do not perceive this, but the sole reason is that our consciences, our whole being, still live upon the sanctions and the certitudes of the ancient Faith."

Who can estimate the increase of force, energy, resistance, and courage, which these profound convictions have power to bestow upon the will to combat the summons of the sexual appetite? William James has adhered strictly to the method of observation in stating the force-producing value of religious faith, and nowhere does it manifest this better than here. Rejecting the common formula that "no one is bound to the impossible," the believer no longer measures his duty by his power, but, reversing the order, he asserts, *a priori*, that his duty is never beyond his strength; it is the characteristic of religion, as Benjamin Kidd and M. Emile Boutroux have very well shown, to make us capable of sacrifices which the methodical calculations of reason would have led us to reject, and our spiritual energies are increased tenfold under the invigorating influence of a belief which calms, harmonizes, and purifies. In the earliest ages of humanity the religious soul was invaded by fear; since the message of the Gospel, love has replaced fear, and the religious man loves with all his mind, all his heart, and all his strength, the God Whom he adores, and Whose laws govern all his actions.

He loves Him, and knows himself loved by Him, and because "He first loved us," he no longer conceives any limit to his love but that of human weakness. Thus the whole man, uplifted above nature, becomes capable of fighting the demon of licentiousness, and tends with all the powers of his being towards that ideal of purity of which he has caught the vision.

In this formidable strife, the religious man knows also that he does not fight alone. The God Whom he implores in his misery answers his prayer; and that is what Christians call "grace." By his side, with him and within him, Another fights and gives the victory. No weakness is doomed to defeat, since the sovereign Power is ever at the side of him who beseeches the Divine strength with humility of heart and sincerity of loyal resolution. The faithful man lives in the company and the friendship of God.

## III

Such are the valuable services which religious belief renders to those who are growing up, and those of full age. If we had space, we could easily show how this belief succeeds in resolving—or, to put it better, in dissolving—the objections which are raised against the path of moral discipline. I will, here, limit myself to two remarks.

Pedagogues and moralists have long since noted, as the chief obstacle to the acceptance of sexual discipline, the seductive illusion of the mind, always tending to give the first place to the demands of our physiological functions or the needs of our economic life. Enclosed in matter as we are, we are but too much inclined to seek *first of all* to establish ourselves comfortably in the material elements which surround us, and we are willing to occupy ourselves with our moral and spiritual interests in addition, *after* our physiological and economic needs have been satisfied. Now, religious belief, as philosophers have also remarked, has precisely the effect of reversing the order of our opinions and our estimation of values. It places our activity on another plane: henceforth it is understood that we must, before all else, care for the satisfaction of our spiritual needs and assure the gradual supremacy of the spirit. No other interest can claim precedence over this.

This transposition changes in every respect our attitude towards the sexual appetite. Desire in vain speaks loudly and brutally, we know what it is worth; the new order puts it in its place, which is far from the first rank. There is no more discussion or cavilling over details; the perspective is changed and other lights illuminate the horizon. No doubt the strife will still be sharp and painful, for "the beast" does not let himself be subdued easily, but it is already something that the outlook remains clear, the intelligence healthy, and that it has been possible to postulate

the possibility of a constitutional law which shall respect the primacy of the spiritual life. We escape the deception of dangerous concessions and half-measures : by the same impulse we accept the various demands of sexual discipline, because every offence against one of them offends equally the religious profession to which we adhere.<sup>1</sup> Besides, when good-will rests upon a watchful moral hygiene, success comes to crown this happy confidence, and as the better disciplined bodily powers befriend the expansion of the mental faculties, so a will assured of the obedience of the body is more able to maintain it in good health. Thus in the interior religious consciousness every tendency finds its rightful place and is duly co-ordinated with the rest, as in a properly managed household the various duties are divided, each finding its place and the fitting instruments of its service.

It is, again, only religious belief that can assure the good social service of two qualities of which we are justly proud in our era, but whose development may merely serve the interests of selfishness and irresponsible enjoyment. We like repeating that the good citizen of the modern city, the "super man" as Americans call him, possesses in an eminent degree the faculties of observation, analysis, and judgment ; we praise his unyielding distrust of the prejudices of caste and surroundings, of family and race ; on the other hand, we require his strength of will and character to be on the high level of his intellectual training. What is the use of clear vision, if one cannot *will* ?

<sup>1</sup> Thus in the first days of the Christian era, certain Christians of the highest type at once established themselves in that state of perfect purity at which we gaze in admiration, and immediately declared war against everyone of the manifold forms of sensuality in which pagan Rome delighted. In our own day we observe the same complete renewal in the converts who repudiated all moral discipline. Their understanding is enlightened by a before their return to their Father's house had, like the prodigal son, veritable revelation, which makes them realize at once the misery of their former condition and the splendour of the new truths which they have come to know. A return to their former wanderings seems to them utterly impossible ; they feel, according to the vigorous language of Scripture, that they receive a new birth to a life which they did not suspect existed.

No doubt the high esteem in which we hold these qualities is entirely justified, and I shall not cease to repeat that the "children of tradition" inflict, both on themselves and on society considerable injury in neglecting the first of these faculties. But all the same the possession of them is far from sufficing to make the individual a useful member of society, and it is untrue that our evil-doing has no other cause but our ignorance or the weakness of our will; it is also very often the result of a perverted intelligence which employs these very qualities of lucidity and deliberate tenacity to attain the evil ends which it has set before itself. The domain of sexual activity is above all the field specially chosen for the exploits of this scientific perversion, and cunning wantonness finds only too many opportunities to give itself free scope. This refinement should not astonish us; since we ourselves form part of nature, it was inevitable that our own physiological and mental energy should become an object, like the rest, for exploitation, by this educated barbarism which is the punishment of civilized and irreligious societies. There is not one of us who has not come across some of these perverted monsters, these beasts of prey who only keep themselves in check the better to betray their victims. Happily they are rare, but behind them, at varying distance, how many bad citizens follow the same paths! There is nothing to be gained by enlightening their understanding or fortifying their will; what they need is nothing more nor less than generosity of heart, aptitude to give oneself to other's service, the spirit of abnegation and sacrifice which is true public spirit.<sup>1</sup>

It is quite universally agreed that the glad acceptance of the responsibilities of a large family is only possible if a man, renouncing the complicated fashions of hyper-civilization, abandons himself rather to that simple

<sup>1</sup> Mons. B. Jacob in his book "Devoirs" remarks somewhere that the life of certain business men and great captains of industry is almost always an instance of a will stubbornly attached to the pursuit of one plan, and served by an intelligence clear-sighted beyond the average. And yet how many men of business are but mediocre citizens!

confidence which marks him who is closest to nature and listens most obediently to the mysterious voices which invite him to hand on life with generosity. But if these counsels are anything more than words or a sacrilegious repudiation of the best acquisitions of our modern civilization, must it not be confessed that the sense of religion can alone give them value and significance? In the measure that we bear in mind that we are the children of the heavenly Father, we can have confidence in life and in nature, and there is no other path that can lead us to that fresh vigour of soul, the benefits of which we are extolling.

Finally, religious belief supplies the only valid answer to the ever-seducing argument which our apathy does not fail to draw from the law of solidarity. In the midst of a society so accustomed to violate the various precepts of moral discipline that it deliberately mocks at them, or is even no longer conscious of their existence, it would seem useless enough, even playing the part of a fool, to profess to row against a current which is so powerful and to draw along with oneself the crowd that is given over to the frenzies of licentiousness; logical reason witnesses only too eloquently to the uselessness of sacrifice, and counsels us to join our merry comrades. . . . And yet the religious man, who is fully aware of these evil forces does not let himself be discouraged and, turning the argument round, he finds, on the contrary, in solidarity fresh reasons to purify himself and devote himself. The ransom and liberation of humanity appear to him to be possible by the vigorous efforts of the fighters in the vanguard who, accepting bravely the burden of the common miseries, will smooth the way along which others will be able to follow. Religion shows them the absolute value of individual effort, which it makes responsible for the destinies of all humanity. Thus religion resolves in harmony a sexual appetite which is but too prone to the anarchy of individualism: by its violence and its exclusive search for enjoyment this appetite tends to isolate us, to put us in opposition to



others, to make us look on them as merely instruments for our pleasure. Religious belief on the contrary shows us in this instinct the magnificent method of our association with the work of the Creator by our share in the unceasing series of human generations.

Such appear to the sociologist to be the chief services which religious belief renders to the maintenance or the restoration of moral discipline. To close this brief and sadly dry enumeration, it must be added that these services are very much greater than most men even those whose sympathies are with religious institutions, suppose. But it is useless to insist further, and it is probable that experience, in the years that will roll on after the war, can alone convince the recalcitrant. Our modern societies, seriously affected as they are already, in their prosperity and vitality, by moral indiscipline, are far from having evolved in this direction all the consequences which result from the irreligious principles laid down by "the children of the new spirit," and notably, as I have stated, the development of feminism keeps some innovations in store for us which ought not to surprise any attentive mind. We picture to ourselves that woman is naturally more chaste, more modest, more faithful than man, that she loves children by nature, and while we warble these amiable variations on our favourite theme, nature takes it on herself to show those who are willing to open their eyes, that these precious qualities are no more inherent in woman than in man; that with her they were simply the sweet flower of an age-long religious education. When women have lost the sense of religion they have no more reason than men, and perhaps less, to accept the discipline which demands from them a virtue equal to that required of the other sex.

## CHAPTER XV

### CHRISTIAN MORALITY

"We know that the social order is founded not on force, but on love, that it rests not on a sword drawn upon a throne, but on a cross adored by every fireside." PHILIPPE GOUNARD, *Professor of the University of Paris, killed before Verdun, October 29th, 1916.*

THIS study might come to an end at this point. Sociology is absolutely faithful to its own methods when it declares the necessity of religious belief; but it can go no further, and the demonstration of revealed truths does not belong to it. Yet religious faith in souls is not merely assent to proofs methodically linked together. It is to the benefit of all that such distinction should be carefully maintained; a usurpation, even when well meant, is none the less a usurpation.

However, since this book is written for French readers, and since it is impossible to treat of any religious question in France without our thoughts at once turning towards the Christian Faith, and more especially towards the Catholic Religion, it is, perhaps, well to offer on this delicate subject a few complementary observations.

#### I

It is impossible not to be struck with the extraordinary correspondence which exists between Catholic morality and the laws of sexual morality to which sociological study of the most methodical kind, and most completely apart from all *a priori* religious belief, leads us. By the absolute prohibition of any sexual action outside marriage, by the importance which she attaches to the contract of marriage "which is a great Sacrament," by the strength of which she has given proof, all through the ages, in making men accept, and in defending, the double principle of monogamy and the indissolubility of the conjugal bond, by her persever-

ance in forbidding anti-conceptionist "precautions," of whatever kind and in whatever circumstances, finally by the vigilant respect with which she has ever surrounded the child and the woman, the Catholic Church has rendered, and still renders, inestimable services to moral discipline and to family life. Even the precedence which she accords to unmarried chastity and virginity appears, to the educated sociologist, a valuable contribution. It is natural that in a time like ours its value should be little appreciated or even should be unrecognized, but when our modern societies at last perceive that they have come to their limit, to the edge of the last ditch, and that the intimate connection that binds together all violations of sexual morality will forbid them the cunning and advantageous picking and choosing on which they still have the weakness to count, then the social value of virginity and of perfect chastity will be better recognized, and these will be seen to be, what in reality they are, the indispensable auxiliaries of that conjugal fertility which must at any cost be restored.

Explanations which seem plausible might be supplied with regard to this strange coincidence between Catholic morality and the conclusions of social science; in any case, this agreement is a fact, and it is not astonishing that a Joseph de Maistre, in admiration at the extraordinary coherence of these religious precepts, should have found in them a true apologetic argument, nor that the study of them has brought a Foerster to the threshold of Catholicism. Between these two illustrious thinkers, and at their side, how many men have been like them struck by this same portent, and if in our days the social argument, and the need to secure social cohesion which the vigorous clear sight of a Lacordaire<sup>1</sup> or a Brunetière so clearly discerned, are so important

<sup>1</sup> "I have reached my Catholic beliefs through my social beliefs, and to-day nothing seems to me more completely proved than this consequence: society is necessary, therefore the Christian Religion is divine, for it is the sole means to bring society to its perfect development, taking man with all his weaknesses and the social order with all its conditions." (Lacordaire, *Lettre à un ami.*)

in the eyes of the most thoughtful, and lead to the Church many who had forsaken or opposed her, how could one fail, even at the first glance, to be sensible of this unique power which she possesses to discipline our conduct and consolidate our family life ?

It is, therefore, natural that many acute minds see safety in return to the Catholic Religion. But still it must be stated, with M. Edouard Jordan, that "the phrase is equivocal. It may express a great truth ; it may disclose a dangerous illusion. It may supply a pretext for culpable indolence."

Undoubtedly Catholic morality, known and practised, would restore moral discipline and increase our families ; but to judge from the attitude of some Catholics, who are especially busy ones, one may ask whether the care for this moral standard is the chief reason of the apostolic zeal which inflames them. We may love the Catholic Religion, because it appears to be the most effective means of the moral education of individuals and of society. But one may also love it, because it is seen to be a means to more or less respectable, at least debatable, temporal ends, and thus alongside of the Catholicism which is simply religious, history and daily experience show us many others, which may be called political, diplomatic, economic, commercial, literary, aristocratic, scientific—nay, even anti-semitic or anti-fiscal.

It is, therefore, only too evident that these kinds of Catholicism, which would contribute nothing to the restoration of moral discipline, and are besides sufficiently indifferent to it, hold a chief place in the interests, apparently religious, of a certain number of the faithful, as is proved, notably, by the close alliance, maintained for so long, between one group of Catholics and the party called "conservative," a strange party whose mixed tendencies and equivocal aspirations have many times been exposed by Catholics of every political opinion, but stoutly honest. Beyond all question, as the eminent Bishop of Arras lately reminded us, "the Catholic Church is not an abstraction outside time and

space, whose duty is to propagate abstract truths, to hurl thunders against abstract errors, and to fortify herself in an abstract existence far from the collision of realities."<sup>1</sup> And, therefore, she is obliged, in order to carry out her work of teaching and salvation, to use natural means and "to contract alliances." These alliances enter into her history, and even to a certain degree into her teaching. An alliance with certain philosophical systems and theories, notably with the philosophical system and some of the theories of Aristotle; an alliance with certain scientific concepts which have appeared to her necessary for the safeguarding of some important truths, or to explain some facts in Scripture; an alliance with some political institutions, with certain political, social, and even economical theories, which at certain times she has judged necessary to the maintenance of the natural and divine order; an alliance, and this a continuous and inevitable one, with the men in whom are incarnated her authority and her life, under their manifold forms.

"These necessary alliances have helped the Church to accomplish her work. But the natural and human elements with which she has to ally herself are imperfect. . . . Moreover, the twenty centuries of her life constitute a great glory for her, but also, because of these allies, a certain burden."<sup>2</sup>

Of this burden, and of the injury which it inflicts on the Church whose activity it impedes, one would say that a number of Catholics are unconscious, since they are delighted, in connection with the most trivial incidents of public life, to tie fresh knots and forge new chains. In any case, by the side of the Church, and much more than her, society suffers, for it frustrates its own ends by refusing the very active concurrence which this incomparable mistress of moral discipline would supply. But could we justly throw on "the

<sup>1</sup> *Lettre pastorale de Mgr Julien, à l'occasion de la prise de possession de son siège épiscopal, May 27, 1917.*

<sup>2</sup> *Conférences de M. l'abbé Verdier, sur l'Eglise, Bulletin de l'Association Fénelon, May, 1917.*

children of the new spirit" the whole responsibility of this refusal, when we have so uselessly allied our cause to the destiny of perishable institutions and to doctrines which the "new spirit" is right in repudiating?

What fratricidal quarrels would be avoided if Catholics would only remember that "the laws of morality, of which they assert precisely the eternal value, cannot be always in opposition to social transformations which are good in many respects, and inevitable," and would assimilate Cardinal Mathieu's advice: "Never to turn against oneself a right idea or a generous passion; to study one's era with an open mind, with a pitiless severity towards sophism and an infinite pity for individuals."

No doubt their opponents also saddle themselves with very serious responsibilities, by having so often put forward their inventions and innovations as weapons directed inevitably against Catholic institutions and doctrines; and it is, especially incontestable that the various doctrines of moral indiscipline, which have obtained so much support in our days, would never have gained either the same success in public opinion, or the same official support, if they had not been looked upon as providing a means of attack on beliefs which some people had sworn to exterminate. But could they not, all the same, have shown more clear vision and less party-spirit? <sup>1</sup>

If facts and opinions were examined with more goodwill and more impartiality, it would be seen that the double movement, scientific and democratic, which has renewed so many opinions and so many institutions

<sup>1</sup> A large and very instructive book might be published, but a very painful one to read, if a collection were made of quotations which aim at expressing the most important concepts of our conscience or the most essential institutions of our life. The "children of the new spirit" and the "children of tradition" would appear as if taking parts in a play, each side disparaging to the utmost what the other prizes most. There would be found also on both sides the same mania, if one may so say, to put in motion great principles with regard to the most trifling questions, which needed nothing but an exact and impartial analysis; that would have been enough to make everyone agree; but such agreement was perhaps the very thing that was most dreaded.

in the last 160 years, has also afforded the Catholic Religion many new opportunities of realizing herself and of going forward with a more alert step towards that Kingdom of God which it is her mission to establish.

These are but general observations, designed to invite Catholics who believe, rightly as we judge, that return to the Christian Faith will be the first condition of moral regeneration, to reflect on the conditions of a true re-Christianizing of France; and among these conditions, the first is certainly the clearest distinction between the authentic Catholicism of Christ, His Apostles, and His Church, and all the pseudo-catholicisms which we have just noticed. The diffusion of *these* catholicisms would in no way help the cause of an increased birth-rate and the renovation of the French family; it would be, even, undoubtedly prejudicial, by turning attention away from the moral and religious problems, to deal with which is the Church's mission received from her Founder.

After this weeding-out, there must still be taken the absolutely firm resolution to give, in all its integrity and saving force, the teaching of this sexual morality, against which such powerful plots are daily hatched in both civil and "religious" society and among which silence is not the least formidable.

The circles known as "d'appartenance catholique" are far from being free from practices condemned by sexual morality. In particular, wide diffusion can be proved of those which ensure conjugal sterility, and of the social tendencies which might be said to demand or impose them, or at least encourage, prepare and reward them. Once again I will here appeal to the witness of the learned Catholic professor, whose clear-sightedness and rigorous method of argument no one will question. I shall thus say *almost* all that I have to say, and I shall have the certainty that I am not unjustly wounding any one's susceptibilities:—

"The connection between religion and conjugal morality appears more or less close according to the

circle ; it scarcely exists when the conditions are too adverse to fertility.

“ I should like to be able to doubt what too many observers, well placed for judging, assert : there go forth from our institutions and our free schools generations of skilled workmen or of small business employés, hard-working, economical, sober, steady, of good social appearance, who, precisely because they maintain this respectable exterior, abstain from having children, the expense of whom would make them sink to a lower level. For them, vice is the ransom of real virtues. ‘ I know,’ writes an excellent observer to me, ‘ of parishes reputed “ good,” which have kept their free schools, which possess conservative municipalities, and which tranquilly indulge in malthusian practices, without the curé having dared to raise the terrible question in the pulpit.’ In regard to the middle class in easy circumstances, though their actual evil-doing is, I believe, much exaggerated, even in the Catholic and hard-working section, that is, perhaps, in the social class by which the precepts of marriage are the best observed, it seems clear that perverted consciences are not infrequent. Many often sin through half-voluntary ignorance of the law, and the exact responsibility is very difficult to define in such cases. Sometimes, on the contrary, one comes across a happy ignorance of the evil. This is most frequent among the wives, whom conjugal and maternal love, combined with good instincts, lead to a ready acceptance of maternity. But it would take little to destroy what does not rest on true moral principles. To prove the existence of that state of mind it is enough to mention the astonishment, and even scandal, of many of the faithful when they hear the priest, in the pulpit or elsewhere, touch upon a question, which they seem to have no suspicion that the Church, the guardian of morality, regards as of the utmost importance.

“ The Catholics of another class are quite as much imbued as the rest with customs and sentiments indirectly hostile to fertility ; they work without any



wish to multiply. The directress of a most Catholic work said to me, in reference to a poor woman who applied for relief for herself and her six children : ' One cannot give relief to so large a family.' It is not only unbelieving landlords who refuse to let their houses to couples with children or, which comes to the same thing, leave the decision to their *concierge* to save themselves trouble. It is not only in atheistic circles that people inform themselves carefully, when engaging a gamekeeper or gardener, if he has any children ; or that the very serious question arises of couples in service, whom the force of circumstances still more than the will of the masters, forbids to have children ; and if they have any, forbids them to bring them up.

" Finally, and above all, Catholics are at least as much contaminated as the rest, partly through the hindrance of idleness or at least of some refined occupation, by the puerile contempt felt for many honourable ways of making a livelihood ; partly through prejudice of rank to be maintained, or need of money ; everything must give way to providing the *dot*. And far-sighted parents do not take long to see that the surest way to give a big *dot* to their daughters is to have only one girl.

" Is it necessary to add that it would be very little use to profess the most excellent principles, if they are to remain stored up, so to speak, in a corner of the brain, apart from all the rest ? That these principles only display their virtue by becoming the inspiration of all personal life and all public activity ; that, for instance, fertility itself would be a danger if joined to mere routine or to indolence ?

" Thus, even when Catholics have, personally, nothing with which to reproach themselves in this question, they share responsibility in the collective national sin. They are not the first to have described, studied, and denounced it. Do they yet fully understand, even to-day, its serious character ? Are they making, to combat and repair it, an effort proportioned to the scourge, and worthy of the doctrine which they profess ?

Are they the head, and do they form the bulk, in these 'Leagues of Public Good' which are organized to carry on the fight? And if the fight at times turns aside towards false remedies, or comes under the rule of false principles, is it not their fault, who have not taken the trouble to direct it? From whom proceed most of the legislative projects, the insufficiency, and sometimes the danger, of which we have demonstrated? And why have they left to others, with the certainty of harm and error, the merit of initiating at least well-meant proposals?

"We cannot flatter ourselves, therefore, that a return to religious practice would at once raise the birth-rate, and that we are working in an indirect but effective way to heal the evil, by the sole fact that, in a general way, we occupy ourselves in promoting religion. It is an enticing illusion, because it excuses inactivity, and acts as an opiate to the conscience. But in reality nothing can justify refusal to face the question, no matter how thorny it may be."<sup>1</sup>

These discreet words are serious, and deserve the attention of the ministers of Christ, and of the faithful. How many more testimonies might be added! Mgr. d'Hulst made this saddening statement: "Once there were Christian morals, now there are scarcely more than Christian practices. Fifty years ago the great inconsistency was to believe without practising; to-day it is to believe without growing better." And recently M. l'abbé Désers, commenting on Père Gillet's admirable book, "*L'Eglise et la Famille*," wrote thus: "Novels and the stage have created a public opinion which represents the child as an inconvenience. In the most respectable and most Christian, young engaged girls hear friendly voices whisper: 'Above all, no children immediately, or only one.' One would suppose that these assiduous counsellors had a mission to deform these young souls."<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Ed. Jordan, *Contre la dépopulation* p. 20 et. sqq. I remember that this pamphlet was honoured by a foreword, in the shape of a letter from Cardinal Amette.

<sup>2</sup> *Revue du clergé français*, 15 May, 1917.

## 512 TOWARDS MORAL BANKRUPTCY

It is impossible to speak of these humiliating moral collapses without another question at once arising: could such prevarications be possible if the clergy had fulfilled their duty of instruction and training? Has this really been accomplished? It will be understood that on this point we make way for those who are more authorized to speak than ourselves, to religious authorities who cannot be gainsaid: a Bishop, the Superior of a "Grand Séminaire," the Curé of a large Parisian parish, and the Superior of a Religious Order:—

"We do not claim," writes Mgr. Gibier, "that the ministers of religion have always done all that they could and ought to have done to arrest and drive back the scourge of depopulation; too often they have been afraid to say the truth—all the truth. They have treated with too much respect the false delicacy and the false shame of an age that is as ready to permit everything in act as it is to be scared at a word. They have been at times prudent to the point of timidity and silence."

M. Blouet, Superior of the "Grand Séminaire" at Coutances, who quotes this passage to express his own conviction, also quotes and makes his own the following passage of M. Letourneau, Curé of Saint Sulpice, addressed to his brethren in the Priesthood: "You complain that the wound of misuse of the marriage duty is incurable among your penitents. Have you warned them wisely, gently, and patiently? Do you think that, during these last fifty years, the clergy have fulfilled all their duty with respect to this deplorable licentiousness? Do you believe that they have used all the means at their disposal for fighting this plague? Alas! you do not believe so."

And the Rev. Père Desurmond, C. SS. R., devotes long passages of his book "Le Credo et la Providence" to protesting against what he calls, in a vivid expression, "The conspiracy of silence"; "incontestably more alarming in itself than the evil which it is desired to conceal. In proportion," he says, "as the evil propagates itself and becomes worse, one hears repeated

on every side the cry: Let us be silent, let us be silent! Sick as you are, be silent, don't let your conscience speak, send it to sleep, leave it its peaceful illusion, enjoy the privilege of your error. And you, physicians of souls, do you be no less silent."

Following M. Edouard Jordan, who also quotes these witnesses, I can repeat on my own account that it would be easy to "increase this list of public avowals. What would it be if I were to make use of private information and testimony!"<sup>1</sup> And I can assure my readers that there is no exaggeration in this avowal. What heavy responsibility has been incurred, when even in the tribunal of penance certain very necessary warnings have been carefully withheld.<sup>2</sup> Yet did it not belong to the discreet and prudent ministry of the confessional to give instruction which one apologizes for not being able to give in public from the height of the "pulpit of truth"? Sometimes the case was even worse, and I could instance husbands who have found too conciliatory priests to acquiesce in the anti-conceptionist "precautions" which these penitents had introduced into their conjugal life. The Redemptorist Fathers, who for many years have had the wisdom to include these serious questions in their course of mission sermons, know what opposition they have met with from certain clergy who serve parishes which they come to evangelize. It has even happened that strife has broken out between missionary and curé

<sup>1</sup> An ecclesiastical correspondent writes to M. Jordan: I deem the French clergy to have assumed a terrible responsibility." Another declares: "Has the Church done all her duty in this respect?" I answer boldly: *Certainly not!* Neither by preaching nor in the confessional. If there were several confessionals in a church, if questions were asked in one, in the others more "prudence" was understood to be observed; "in certain districts of the South-west where I ministered for two years this aberration had degenerated, to use Huysmans' expression, into a prudery which is positively criminal. There was complete silence in the confessional, as much on the penitent's part as on that of the majority of confessors, on all sexual questions."

<sup>2</sup> Cf. the strange answer "of a very celebrated confessor, lately professor of moral theology in a certain "Grand Séminaire," mentioned in the question addressed to the Sacred Penitentiary (*Analecta ecclesiastica*, 1901, p. 493.

over the expediency of a teaching to which the pastor had had the imprudence to disaccustom his flock.

We need not dwell further on these silences and this complaisancy. Fifty years ago they disturbed the venerable Cardinal Pie, who warned his priests of their grave obligations. "Not only," he cried, "would God have a right to complain of His law outraged, of His grace trampled underfoot, but society itself would justly accuse their ministry of having become the accomplice and abettor of a grave social disorder; with her eyes upon the forty thousand confessionals within her borders, France might well ask herself: 'What are these priests doing, and what end does the confessional serve?' No, Gentlemen," added the Bishop, "our priesthood is not permitted to give up a ministry and an influence which belong to it alone."<sup>1</sup>

Since these words were uttered, the evil spoken of by Cardinal Pie has become greatly aggravated. No doubt pious reasons can be alleged in defence of the tactics adopted, and there is, especially, fear of driving away

<sup>1</sup> *Ouvres*, I. III., p. 59. With what vigour the brave Cardinal refuted the arguments so often put forward:

"You tell me: 'It is distressing for a pastor to make the Holy Table inaccessible to the majority of the men of his parish.' Yes, this is distressing, it is infinitely sad, and all the skill of his charity all the resources of his zeal, must be exerted to avert this misfortune. But, to put it shortly, gentlemen, we must either tear up all theology, or the sacraments cannot be knowingly given to the unfit . . . Besides, gentlemen, do you think that the interests of religion gain anything from this tendency of some of her ministers towards an excessive and hitherto unheard-of easiness? Is it not a fact that the esteem of Christianity decreases among nations in proportion as they witness such lamentable abandonment of principles? A just and necessary strictness, by raising the holy standard of Christian morality in men's minds, would have prepared for future solid conversions, a thousand times better than this deceptive perseverance, which sends souls to sleep in a religious practice which is more than equivocal." (*loc. cit.*, p. 60).

The clear-visioned Cardinal's assurance is fully justified. How many instances might be quoted! I was recently told of a parish priest in Alsace, who followed a curé known for excessive and hardly apostolic leniency. The birth-rate in the parish had fallen greatly. Very judiciously, and with no less tact than firmness, the new curé set himself to the uphill work of restoring the complete teaching of Christian discipline. At the end of some years, conjugal morality was once more known and respected in the parish, and the birth-rate very markedly increased.

from the Sacraments men whom one knows to be inclined to violate the moral law. Truly a pitiful argument; "rash indulgence, if it delays, perhaps, the abandonment of the churches, prepares the way to a more definite desertion of the Church and the Faith."

Thus it is clear, by these testimonies, which it is useless to multiply, that the return to the Christian Faith cannot contribute to this moral regeneration, which France so sorely needs, except under certain precise conditions, for which it is of the highest consequence that nothing equivocal be substituted; not only must the Catholic revival which many desire be a specifically religious and moral restoration, but it is also proved that, in view of the violent currents of sexual indiscipline which are sweeping away our modern societies, these cannot be stemmed except by a complete and insistent teaching of the principles of traditional morality.

## II

To give this teaching the clergy will have only to gather up the most authentic lessons of moral theology, and it is no slight merit on the part of the Roman Church that always through the course of ages, and notably at the present time, she has refused to yield to pressure of which one can scarcely picture the violence and insistence. As she has saved from shipwreck the principle of the indissolubility of the marriage bond, so she has always condemned, with no uncertain voice, every anti-conceptionist practice, of whatever kind. Since the first Fathers of the Church and St. Augustine to the last decrees of the Sacred Penitentiary, it has always been taught that the voluntary abnormal use of marriage is an act forbidden by the natural law and intrinsically evil, "a horrible and unmentionable crime, an abominable conspiracy of two determined homicides

against an innocent being to seize its rights without pity on life's very threshold." "Truly," says St. Francis of Sales, "the nuptial intercourse, which is holy, just, to be commended, and useful to the State, is nevertheless in some cases a danger to those who practice it, for sometimes it makes their souls seriously sick with venial sin, when it is carried to simple excess, and sometimes it is the melancholy occasion of their spiritual death by mortal sin, when the order established for the production of the dear creations of our good God is abominably violated and perverted."<sup>1</sup>

In the Meaux Catechism, for the use of children preparing for First Communion, with a saintly courage which it is to be hoped that our catechisms will soon win back, Bossuet puts this question: "What sins must be avoided in the use of marriage? Answer. The unjust refusal of the marriage duty, the use of marriage to satisfy sensuality; and to avoid having children, which is an abominable crime." And the great Bishop did not fear to threaten all maledictions on homes where such abuses secured an entrance.

In the 18th century St. Alphonsus de Liguori, speaking of husbands who in any way or at any time directly try to oppose themselves to the work of nature, declares "that they are acting against the chief end of marriage, and that nothing can excuse them, not even the imminent danger of poverty, not even the most serious fear for health or life."

Conjugal onanism the theologians state to be *turpissimum et gravissimum scelus*, which must rank next to murder; "it is worse than a sacrilegious attack on purity, because it is against the order of nature, and because the natural order has more ancient and deeper roots in man than has the supernatural order." Marriage, far from covering everything, only aggravates the crime, according to what St. Augustine declares in vigorous words, which Catholics should know better

<sup>1</sup> *Introduction à la vie dévote*, part II., chap. xxxix.

than they do: "Execrabiliter fit in meretrice, sed execrabilius in uxore."<sup>1</sup>

It is clear that these emphatic statements will be enough, when there shall be a sincere desire, to protect the doctrine against all equivocation. Who will assert that the spread of such teaching does not respond to the most urgent needs of our modern society? It must therefore be wished that this teaching be widely diffused, under all forms, in every way, and by all possible and fitting means.

"A prolonged, determined, flexible, and varied, provident and thorough education would not be too much to prepare, well in advance, young men and young women for the serious obligations which await them, and for the combats they will have to wage against themselves and others. We should always be thinking and often speaking of this. Family training, catechisms, institutions, study-circles, sermons, pious meetings, the whole religious and moral machinery, directed to one and the same end, ought to be a preparation, at first remote and indirect, later on immediate and direct, for marriage and its needs. No one must be afraid that thus the objective would be too limited in its scope, if two things are true: one, that the restriction of natality is the greatest danger that threatens the white races; the other, that respect for the laws of marriage is far from being sufficiently assured by religious practice; it is, on the contrary, the criterion by which to judge of the intensity and reality of religious convictions, and the higher standard which it is of the first importance to assure to Christian people.

<sup>1</sup> With St. Augustine's words one might compare this curious passage of Pascal, which is also too little known: "It is not only absolution which remits sin in the Sacrament of Penance, but contrition, which is not true contrition if it does not seek the Sacrament. Also it is not the nuptial benediction which prevents sin in generating children, but the intention of bringing them up for God, which is only possible in marriage.

"And as a contrite sinner without the sacrament is more fit for absolution than one impenitent with the Sacrament, so the daughters of Lot, for example, who had simply the desire for children, were purer without marriage than married people who have no wish for them." (*Pensées*, Brunschweig's edition, t. III., pp. 362, 363.



Everything lies in, or can enter into, this question for those who can recognize and place it there. At every epoch of history there is thus one duty which takes precedence of all others in difficulty as in importance, and which can become the centre of Christian life and education."<sup>1</sup>

Engaged in this vigorous and truthful teaching, the ministers of Christ would not fear to approach the great problem, *famosissima quæstio*, that of conjugal hyperfecundity, and to prepare young men and married people for conjugal continence. An implacable logic from which they will not escape, any more than the "children of the new spirit" will escape the obligation to explain themselves some day as to conjugal morality, forces us to speak out clearly on the realities of which we do not rid ourselves by lispings a few vague formulas, that about "providentialism" being the least puerile. Silence exposes young people of both sexes to prompt and terrible disillusion, which leads them straight to revolt against moral rule and to contempt for religion, the teaching of which leaves so astutely in the shade realities so certain, so well-known, and so tragical: a wife whose health needs repose, cannot at the same time bring into the world 15 or 18 children in 22 years, on an income which cannot support such an expense. It is absolutely necessary to teach chastity before marriage, and the brave acceptance of paternity, and faithfulness in all conjugal relations. But this done, the whole task has not been accomplished, far from it, and moral teaching is not worthy of honour or efficacious unless it is complete. Young men and husbands and wives must still be informed that what is permitted—and indeed obligatory—in order to accomplish one of the chief ends of marriage, "is often impossible or to be avoided for reasons so strong that they become morally binding. In all becoming and reasonable married life there must reign a certain equilibrium between the courage of fertility and that of continence. They are equally

<sup>1</sup> Jordan, *Natalité et Religion*, p. 65.

indispensable. They are in turn the necessary condition for the due observance of the laws of marriage. If one is lacking, too much will have to be demanded of the other. If children are not desired, how, among all the occasions of life in common, will an impossible continence be maintained? If one is incapable of continence, how is an excessive number of children to be avoided? Impossibilities accumulate, and too often they are only escaped by the path of conjugal fraud.”<sup>1</sup>

I entirely endorse this courageous declaration, in support of which I could quote many confidences which have been made to me during twenty years. One understands how in sight of the most justifiable anxieties caused by the collapse of natality in France, most well-intentioned publicists have demonstrated, above all, that the Catholic Religion taught *par excellence* the duty of fecundity and of large families. But this means of defence, if isolated from its complementary truths, is far from being without danger, and I must repeat, until there is a willingness to listen, that it is the most active collaborator with the neo-malthusian propaganda. From the fact that Western societies are exposed to the worst disasters because of the voluntary sterility of their members, it by no means follows that the monster, whose secret was guessed by the clear-sighted pastor of Aylesbury has been exorcised. The drama could be worked in two scenes simultaneously : the scene of social and public life, and that of the domestic conjugal life. The exploits directed by anti-conceptionist lasciviousness have, for the time, closed one of these scenes, but in the other the conjugal drama continues to be played, and one must be wilfully blind not to see the catastrophes that take place there. How much more wisely inspired is Father Vermeesch, S.J., when he writes : “More than one superficial observer, seeing the ardour of bishops and priests in rising to defend large families, and in celebrating so eloquently the blessings which it has pleased God to heap upon

<sup>1</sup> Jordan, *op. cit.* p. 66.

them, has misunderstood the true intentions of the Church, and has imagined that she commended the intensive and forced culture of offspring, and assumed the office of a great purveyor of children. He would be right to oppose to such misunderstanding the verdict of economic science, which, in our European countries, holds with a regular, but controlled, increase of population ; and he would also show some surprise at seeing the same Church preach natality and extol celibacy.

“ In reality, the Church regards the question from a higher standpoint. Adapting herself to St. Paul’s counsel, she pledges husbands and wives, generally speaking, to use their matrimonial rights : she reassures them as to their action. But with what end in view ? Less to multiply children than to safeguard the honour and happiness of the home. Men’s weakness, and the happy effects of a regular natality on the union of the parents and the education of the children, teach us that there are no better means to enlist on the side of virtue. Virtue and duty, these are what the Church preaches resolutely, and without reservation, full of confidence in God Who rules the world, and is able, therefore, to render service to man and to society. How much more, in fact, she deserves from them ! What salutary virtue there is in her dilemma ? either chastity or fecundity ! . . .

“ We fully subscribe to these words which Bastiat (*Harmonies économiques*, p. 446) puts into the mouth of the priest : ‘ God has not commanded man to increase without judgment and moderation, to unite himself with his mate, like the beasts, without any thought for the future ; He has not given reason to the creature of His predilection in order to forbid its use under the most solemn circumstances ; He has indeed commanded man to increase ; but to increase he must live, and must have the means to live ; therefore, in the command to increase is implied that of providing the means of existence for the young generations.’ ”<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup> *Le problème de la natalité en Belgique*, pp. 56, 60.

In preparation for this salutary discipline the ministers of Christ will be led, no doubt, to recommend to the faithful these renewed and prolonged abstentions during certain times of the year, specially consecrated to penance, which were formerly held in honour among Christians. The solemnizing of marriage is forbidden in Advent and until the Sunday in the Octave of the Epiphany, during Lent and the Octave of Easter, during the three days of Rogation, and the Octave of Pentecost, and during these periods it is explicitly recommended, nay, even prescribed, to husbands and wives not to demand the fulfilment of the marriage duty.<sup>1</sup>

I do not deceive myself as to the judgment which some readers will pass on reading these lines; they will think such advice absolutely chimerical at a time like ours, and will accuse me of "illuminism." I confess that I am by no means disposed to engage them in a discussion which, in our present condition of rank materialism, could lead to no useful result. I limit myself to referring these unbelieving ones to an objective and methodical analysis of the social reality, not one of those superficial analyses of which our cowardly society is so fond, but to one of those *close, keen, pressing* analyses, which should alone count for anything with truthful and loyal people, and if they apply themselves to this task they will see that what is truly chimerical and infected with "illuminism," is to believe that the birth-rate can be raised in a country in which husbands and wives consider themselves free to decide when the family expenses already incurred give them the right to resort to anti-conceptionist "precautions"; what is chimerical, is to act as if

<sup>1</sup> "Propter praeparationem ad communionem, illo tempore sumendum; quia actus matrimonialis, quamvis culpa careat, tamen rationem deprimit, propter carnalem concupiscentiam hominem reddit inaptum ad spiritualia, et idem in diebus in quibus Spiritualibus praecipue est vacandum, non licet petere debitum" (St. Thomas, *De debiti redditione*, Pars. III., suppl. 9, lxiv., art. 7 et 10).

[The discipline with regard to the solemnization of marriages is more relaxed in Great Britain than in France. The decree of Pope Pius X. on Daily and Frequent Communion must be taken into consideration in dealing with this part of the author's argument—*Translator.*].

the phenomena of hyper-fecundity were not normal, regular, indisputable, facts, borne witness to by all serious men of good faith ; and as soon as this chimerical opinion is repudiated, it is still "illuminism" to believe that husbands and wives who have contracted such habits during six, ten, or twelve years of married life, and who are plunged in customs which have become second nature, will be able all at once, and as soon as they agree in all sincerity that another pregnancy is at present out of the question, to resolve on the necessary abstinence. If a fitting discipline has not prepared them, if times of impulse have not been treated with judicious care, their fall is certain, and they will have no other resource but fraud or the worst catastrophes.

In proportion as we pursue the great and necessary work of the restoration of a coherent sexual morality, we find ourselves more urgently compelled to go the whole length of the road which seems too hard to-day. Once again, the implacable logic of social forces rules us and will not let us go ; all through the ages it has triumphed over many other obstacles, and it cares nothing for our cowardice. The clear vision of the holy Bishop of Geneva was less afraid : " I further note," writes St. Francis of Sales, " that various circumstances, besides long sicknesses, separate husbands from their wives. That is why married people require two kinds of chastity : one of absolute abstinence, when they are separated on such occasions as I have just alluded to ; the other of moderation, when they are together in their ordinary home life." <sup>1</sup>

When we have recovered the habit of giving and receiving this manly teaching, the easier shall we find it to combat, as we go along, the faults which, no less developed in Christians than in other people, are directly opposed to fruitful marriages and respect for conjugal loyalty : I refer to the proneness to indolence and laziness, which are regarded as a mark of distinction,

<sup>1</sup> *Op. cit.* Part III., ch. xii.

the cult of snobbishness and vanity, often of the most idiotic kind, the race after a dowry and a rich wife.<sup>1</sup>

A devout Christian father said to me, with a resigned melancholy, some years before the war: "You know well that really thoughtful young men very seldom marry a girl who is one of a large family."<sup>2</sup>

Is it not also true, that among these worldly people, who are bound to the most humiliating slavery of folly and vanity, there is a great portion of Christians? In their estimation, it is impossible to belong to Society—with a big S—unless one persists in a long series of rites, of manners, customs, and opinions, unworthy of a reasonable man; and the contradiction between these customs and actions and the growth of fine, healthy, and fertile families is as certain as it is formidable.

In giving in its invigorating thoroughness this beautiful evangelical teaching, the ministers of religion need not fear being rebuffed, discouraged, or of giving umbrage, nay if I may bring forward testimonies which I have personally gathered, I have, on the contrary, the right to say that this coherent and logical teaching, which so wonderfully unites a beautiful trust in the providential care of our Heavenly Father with the most

<sup>1</sup> The Lent observances included continence on the part of married people, and the prohibition of marriages.

St. Basil, as early as the 4th century, recommends such continence during Lent (*De Jejunis*, hom. I.).

St. Augustine gives the same counsel several times (*Sermons* cv., cvii., cviii., cix., cx.).

St. Caesarius of Arles insists on it especially.

At the end of the 8th century Theodulph of Orleans mentions it as a duty binding on married people.

The Bulgarians, when only just converted, considered that every infraction of this law deserved punishment. Pope Nicholas I. decided the question by deciding that the bishops should judge of the special circumstances (*Responsa ab consulta Bulgarorum*, c. ix.).

In fine, this rule of conjugal continence, which is extremely difficult to verify, seems to have assumed the form of an urgent counsel rather than that of a strict precept.

(Cf. *Dictionnaire d'Archéologie*, by Dom Cabrol. Art. "Carême.")

<sup>2</sup> I would invite the reader to make his own little inquiry, and to count the number of "really thoughtful" young men whom he knows who have married girls belonging to a large family: the result will be very suggestive.

certain scientific conclusions, brings to the souls of both young and grown up people, a joy and peace, a light and strength, which are beyond words. No more concealments, no more equivocations, no more traps ; we know where we are going, and if it is not true that there are nothing but roses to pluck the whole length of the road of married life, at least we are prepared to face the difficulties, and shall not throw ourselves desperately into the middle of the thorn bushes. "A difficulty brought into the light, analysed and discussed, is the best stimulant for moral courage, and it is proved that, if many of the faithful unfortunately seek—and find)—indulgent confessors and relaxed solutions, an increasing number mistrust this easy-going treatment, and desire instead a sincere and clear instruction, which will confirm from without what their conscience tells them within, and judicious direction which may supply them with a grip on life."

This encouraging response of the faithful soul to the sincere and truly educative efforts of Christ's ministers should not in the least surprise us ; it is entirely in harmony with the most recent conclusions of the two sciences which have the right to be called "human" *par excellence*—psychology and sociology. As their researches proceed, these sciences appear to tend to an interpretation of human life utterly different from that lately announced by materialistic psychology, and still more recently by a sociology which in spite of its rationalistic theory, was obviously irrational. How often Georges Sorel loves, and rightly so, to quote that fine passage of William James, the strong light of which throws into shadow the pale caricatures of human nature which the men who extinguish the stars would have had us accept. "A profound and irradicable instinct exists in every one of us which forbids us to look on life as a simple farce or an elegant comedy. No, life is a rough tragedy, and what is most bitter in it has the keenest savour. On the world's stage it is heroism, and only heroism, that plays the great parts. We are conscious that in it lies hidden the mystery of life. A man is of

no account if he is capable of no sacrifice. And on the other hand, whatever a man's weaknesses may be, if he is ready to give his life for the cause which he has at heart, his heroism so enobles him in our eyes that it makes us pass over all the rest. Though he may be inferior to us in many other ways, if we cling on to life, while he parts with it as one throws away a flower, we feel that his superiority to ourselves is beyond all dispute. Each one of us in his conscience is deeply persuaded that it would redeem all his faults if he could treat his own life with this splendid indifference. It is a metaphysical mystery of which even our intellect has some intuition, that in embracing death one lives a higher, a more intense and perfect, life; a profound truth of which asceticism has ever been the faithful champion. The folly of the Cross which the mind refuses to understand holds fast for ever its profound and living significance."

Besides it is only right to state that in the last few years a great movement has appeared in the bosom of the Church of France, and most serious efforts have been carried out in order to promote the better moral discipline of growing boys and girls, of young people, and adults. More than twenty episcopal charges have been devoted to this question, which only lately it was thought to be impossible to approach; and it is such Bishops—men who can speak with the greatest authority among the Episcopate—who lose no opportunity of returning to this important question, the relations of which with the deepest elements of the Christian life they have discerned. Cardinal Mercier's admirable charge "*Pour l'honnêteté conjugale*" has been reprinted, and while the parochial magazines spread far and wide among the faithful a most necessary instruction, Fr. Bouvier wrote, for the exclusive use of the ministers of the Sacrament of Penance, an excellent pamphlet which the Bishops have distributed among their clergy, and the 50,000 copies of which will undoubtedly exercise a salutary influence on the direction



given in the confessional.<sup>1</sup> Finally, three of the most influential priests among the Paris clergy founded in 1918 "L'Association du Mariage Chrétien," the object of which is "to prepare young people for the great vocation of marriage, by drawing their attention to this essential point of their future, and directing their vital powers towards the matrimonial union considered from the Christian standpoint. Its aim is also to help Christian husbands and wives to remain faithful to the laws of marriage, by uniting them in common prayer and the common will to obey." All these beginnings, and many others which cannot be noticed here, deserve the most earnest attention, they were explicitly encouraged by Pope Benedict XV,<sup>2</sup> and Catholics ought to be convinced that there is nothing which can do them more honour or attract more esteem, respect, and sympathy towards their religious faith. The Gospel message was not brought to men to teach them the best way to produce wealth, to collect taxes, or to constitute public authority, but to remind them of their supernatural destiny, and its moral and religious conditions. Among those conditions none in our day is more compromised than that of moral discipline, and this danger to the institution of the family lays all society, at the same time, open to the most appalling catastrophes. How could civil society refuse its esteem and sympathy to men who showed they were able to solve, in the way best for the interests of all, the most formidable and most distressing problem of our contemporary social life?

A similar movement is drawing the Protestant

<sup>1</sup> The Society of St. Vincent de Paul has also published a "Souvenir de Marriage," a kind of religious certificate of marriage in which the duty of conjugal loyalty is plainly set forth.

<sup>2</sup> In a letter addressed to Fr. Matteo Crawley, 17th April, 1915, the Pope condemned those who "teaching the shameful practice of procuring enjoyment by defrauding nature, injure the very source of the human race, and defile by their abominable practices the sanctity of the marriage bed." (*Ac probrosam praedicantes petiundae voluptatis naturaeque fraudandae, impie generis humani fontem rarificiunt, ac thalami sanctitatem impurissimis moribus conquinant. Acta Apostolicae Sedis, vol. xii., p. 204.*)

churches towards an effort, which ever grows more definite, for the moral education of the young and of adults. In proportion as the logical evolution of our contemporary manners pursues its way, these churches appreciate more fully the moral and religious value of the principles of the indissolubility of the marriage bond and of perpetual celibacy, and at the Congress of Nancy in 1919, the Protestant section of the second Commission has left no doubt on this point: "That, for every Protestant worthy of the name, the voluntary restriction of births for a selfish end is to be condemned and involves a great sin, which it is the duty of both pastors and laics to scourge." This same section asked that every favourable occasion might be taken to promote and develop the sexual education of parents, young men, girls, and children.

In order to give this education, the ministers of the Protestant cult will have, in most cases, only to insist in their pastoral instruction on the moral principles which guide their own homes. How many of them set a salutary and noble example! And at the end of this book it is most consoling and right to bear witness to those fine families of pastors which I have many times met; almost always the salary is modest, and private means scarcely increase it. Yet the family is large; the moral discipline of all its members, and their frugal ways bring the expenses to the level of the income, and the family budget meets demands which many others would declare far beyond their means.

The free-thinkers are also beginning to feel the necessity of resisting certain currents of pretended liberty, and of recognizing that one of the first conditions of real freedom is precisely the loyal submission to an exact moral discipline. Under the impulse of M. Gustave Belot, "La Ligue d'Education morale" thinks of organizing, in our colleges and great schools, associations of young men who would bind themselves to respect the law of chastity and so prepare better to fulfil their family duty. As I have already said, I believe that this enterprise, just so far as

there is a genuine desire to realize its aim, will lead its authors much further than they imagine, and to the very threshold of religious affirmation ; but, in any case, the effort is interesting, and when one adds it to many others it does not seem unreasonable to think that our French society has reached the lowest point of the curve of sexual indiscipline, and is getting ready to ascend the incline again.

Among the middle class, at least, a movement of renewal has begun, and the natural generosity of the "popular" classes, combined with a better civic education, should dispose the manual workers to follow this example. The ideal of true democracy which "seemed to be political machinery, becomes once more the principle of moral life. Democracy seemed something accomplished ; it is shown to be rather a path to be trodden and a programme of far-extending duties,"<sup>1</sup> and among these duties we know that those of moral discipline must take the highest rank.

<sup>1</sup> *Les victoires nécessaires de la paix*, a lecture by M. Gustave Belot.

## CONCLUSION

“The whole future does not consist in a defeat or a victory; defeat does not stay the course of countries which are rising; victory cannot bring back life to those which are dying.” HENRY DE ROURE.

“France, beyond her graves, seeks her cradles.” M. PAUL DESCHANEL, *President of the French Republic.*

DURING this long study, I have invariably compelled myself to be faithful to the strictest demands of the scientific method. Nevertheless, it is probable that some readers, who are aware of my Christian faith, will think that the moral teaching of the religion to which I adhere has influenced my inquiry and my conclusions. This suspicion neither surprises nor troubles me, and it is inevitable that in the midst of the moral and intellectual disorder that troubles our time, some free-thinkers should believe that a Catholic cannot enter on certain methodical studies with an impartial mind, just as it happens that some Catholics have gratuitously failed to recognize the intellectual honesty of various scholars whose scientific labours have led them away from the Church and the dogmas of the Faith.

This rash judgment, which is even a calumny, is one of the most malicious forms of the present evil; on both sides of the barrier there is a refusal to see the grave arguments which justify, in the eyes of those on the other side, the maintenance of their positions, and each group thus deprives itself of indispensable lights, while at the same time it robs the nation as a whole of the best securities for its progress. I have taken scrupulous care to remain absolutely loyal to the evidence which appears to me to result from the methodical observation of the facts, and I believe—under the distinct reservation of mistakes in analysis into which I may have fallen—that every observer, whatever may be his metaphysical doctrine or his religious convictions, must arrive at the same conclusions, if only he takes the firm resolution to shake himself free of the verbiage of which sociological

treatises have not a monopoly, but in which, all the same, they indulge immoderately. Sociology can only justify its legitimate claim to be reckoned among the sciences so far as it shows itself capable of those rigorous, deep, and penetrating analyses of the most complex realities which have secured their wonderful discoveries to the other sciences.<sup>1</sup>

After this general remark, a few short observations will be enough to set forth the essential conclusions which it seems well to recall. If I am not mistaken, there are three which dominate all the rest, very numerous as they are, that emerge from this study.

The first concerns the certain, peremptory, indisputable impossibility for France to go on living in the state of moral indiscipline in which the military mobilization found her on the 1st of August, 1914, and in which the Treaty of Versailles left her on June 28, 1919. Nothing is gained by cavilling: a nation which associates such customs of sexual indiscipline with the ordinary, every-day life of the immense majority of her young men, and which founds the conjugal life of her adults, and thus her entire social life, upon systematic sterility and conceptional or post-conceptional abortion, is condemned to weakness, to forfeiture, to unutterable suffering, to the road of irremediable disaster. A hard truth, which we must have the courage to face, and in recalling it to Frenchmen we give proof of a patriotism of a better sort than by joining the chorus of professional wheedlers of the public conscience.

If France does not reform her habits, not only

<sup>1</sup> I may be allowed to add that many pages of this book should in any case be enough to prove the scrupulous honesty of my scientific investigation, and notably that it would have been thoroughly agreeable to the founder and president of "La Ligue pour la Vie," which for more than twenty years has pursued its ardent propaganda for the restoration of French natality, to associate himself with the easy-going refutations which it has been usual to oppose to the teaching of Malthus. It has seemed to me impossible to do this. It could happen that my witness to the 'Principle of Population' may be exploited in opposition to my most essential conclusion, and I can do nothing to hinder this, yet nothing can prevail against the certainty that every cause, the greatest as well as the least, is best served by absolute fidelity to the truth. On both sides this rule has been greatly forgotten in the France of our day, and everyone can recognise the deplorable results of these supposed clever strokes of policy.

will her glorious victory bring her no benefit, but on the contrary the war will have accelerated yet more the swiftness of her fall and will bring nearer the hour of her final ruin. To bleed white the young manhood of a country which already reckons more coffins than cradles ; to develop venereal diseases in that country ; to submit its young womanhood to the wear and tear of the workshop, diverting them from family life and instilling in them the loose morals which hitherto seemed to be by preference reserved to the other sex ; in fine, to depopulate the country districts, and to increase yet further the attraction of the towns, so ill-fitted to a healthy family life and to natality ; these are four achievements of capital importance and deserve the most serious attention. That we can still meet with Frenchmen who do not see the peril, or when they have seen it pass on with indifference, is their affair ; but for my part, who have seen it and understood its tragic meaning, I cannot be hindered from bearing my witness, and from bearing it with the most vigorous emphasis, that my weak voice may carry as far as possible.

The peril is immense, and it is close upon us. To exorcise it there must be employed the uttermost application of all the powers at our disposal, and the cumulative employment of legislative, economic, and moral remedies. When one reflects on it, one sees that the task is nothing less than a revolution. Under the present régime, the collective machinery is at the service of systematic infecundity ; the question now is to make the individual decide to accept the responsibilities of a family, and to secure a family that shall be fruitful, vigorous, and stable, in co-operation with the institutions which have hitherto opposed it. Once more, it is a revolution, and even a double revolution.

Outwardly it takes for granted some profound legislative reforms, which all good citizens ought to claim with their utmost energy. I have explained these reforms and need not return to them. This is not to disparage them, but to prove their insufficiency,

and I adjure all good citizens, whatever their philosophical or religious opinions, to listen to the latest witness of one of our most learned physicians.

"One fact is evident," writes Dr. Doléris: "the present multiplication of relief agencies, the new organizations for help, the extreme liberality of pecuniary grants—all of them to assist wives and pregnant girls—have proved a complete failure.

"The wives of the Paris working-class decline maternity more and more the lighter its burden becomes. . . . Many wives have no wish for the responsibility; they will not have it at any price, and prefer the attractions of mere pleasure, nay, even of licence, a passion of ever-increasing and unbridled independence, and freedom from the highest social duty."<sup>1</sup>

The new era which is dawning demands of us something more than external legislative and economic reform. We think ourselves clever, and so we are to some extent, but our cleverness falls short of that of nature, who also takes her "precautions." What she demands of us is a renewal and development of our spiritual energies, which can put our consciences in order, purify our hearts, and strengthen our wills. "The action of laws will be ineffective," declared M. Paul Deschanel, President of the Republic, at the Nancy Congress, "unless it is seconded by our ways of life. It is a moral work that is in question, the mental hygiene which must be improved; the sterility of souls which must be reached; it is a sickness of thought, a crisis of will, which must be healed."

Here we touch the moral problem, that moral reform always demanded by the best citizens of this country, and always delayed by the action of our unfortunate political divisions. Are we still going to put it off, when such pressing arguments urge us to undertake it, and so many wonderful opportunities for successful

<sup>1</sup> *Néo-Malthusianisme maternité et Féminisme, Education sexuelle*, by Dr. J. Doléris, of the Academy of Medicine, and Jean Bouscatel, p. 107. Masson et Cie. 1918.

action are offering themselves? Not to resolve the problem would spell disaster; the sacred bond that unites us, sealed by the blood of the trenches and the terrible anguish of the past days, deserves something better than a temporary, and doubtless ineffective, association of mutual respect and reciprocal tolerance. Both our duty and our interest demand much more than this: we have to unite, for a common work of national reconstruction, these two French parties which for 160 years have vied with and faced each other, giving, each in turn the incontestable proof of their irreplaceable worth and of their insufficiency. Each "France" boasts that it is the sole depository of the formula of life, and alone possesses the secret of national prosperity: how is it that people do not see that this is nothing but boasting, which merely results in the most lamentable disappointment?

In behalf of this sacred union, understood and practised as I have just stated, in which everyone, conscious of the insufficiency and gaps of their own doctrines, will endeavour to get rid of his narrowness and his prejudices and to enrich himself with the wealth of his ally, could we not ask of the "children of the new spirit" to recognize at last that the individual's moral formation is closely connected with religious belief, and, especially that the exact observance of moral discipline is only possible in a society subject to the beneficent influence of a vigorous religious education? Whether the question concerns the law of chastity or the prohibition of abortion, divorce by mutual consent or the laws of conjugal morality, the conclusion is everywhere the same: from the standpoint of the individual the precept must seem unacceptable, if religious belief does not direct his gaze towards the sublime prospects of the supernatural life, if his heart is not filled with emotions which awake the ideals of which religious faith is the guardian and the best support.

For my own part, I cannot believe that the "children of the new spirit" will for long persist in refusing to



recognize a truth which the most methodical investigations of psychology and sociology appear to confirm more strongly every day. By all appearance the often-quoted phrase: "A little knowledge estranges from God, much knowledge leads back to Him," is true in yet another sense besides the ordinary. It seems scarcely doubtful that the development of science and the critical spirit must end henceforward in restoring religious belief to men's minds and exhibiting its indispensable function. Nowhere does this influence of faith, hope, and love, play a more salutary part than in the operation of the laws of sexual discipline; but, as a fact, all the most fixed and most reasonable tendencies of our modern civilization claim no less the moderating counter-poise of religious faith. Whether the question is of hygiene or comfort, of feminism or the spread of education, of the democratic movement or the development of needs, of increased leisure or the desire to rise in the social scale, the right to dispose of one's own self or the search for happiness, always and everywhere, these tendencies cannot but appear extremely perilous when once separated from the sincere religious belief which controls their ardour and purges their excesses. More than ever humanity is travelling along a steep road; and cannot preserve its equilibrium without the help of a religious faith capable of penetrating the soul and the whole life.

On the other hand, may we not also hope that the "children of tradition" will, in their turn, realize the heavy responsibilities which lie equally on their own shoulders, and will repudiate the mistakes and the stubbornness which have so largely contributed to the development of this moral crisis in which present-day society is struggling? However that may be, it is evident that science will hold a considerably more important place in the economy of our undertakings and our thoughts than they supposed, while justice no less requires sympathetic reception of the democratic claims of which the legitimately insistent ardour and the remote repercussions are continually disregarded.

The traditionalists have too often sought salvation nowhere but in adherence to the principles of a class hierarchy, of obedience to an external authority, of a docile deference to teaching which the people ought to accept without understanding it. These methods, as a fact, acted beneficially for the human race, during long ages, in the organization of the family, the workshop, and the city; but it is rash to say that they are now the only ones possible, when we have a glimpse of others: in any case, it must be obvious that it is to involve oneself in an essential contradiction if we assert the splendidly audacious claim to formulate and define the principles of eternal morality and dogmatic faith, and, at the same time, the necessary permanence of institutions which nothing justifies us in thinking are exempt from the laws of contingency and relativity. Human societies are living organisms, and as such are subject to the double law of exhaustion and renewal: no doubt innovation and invention cannot produce their fruitful results except by entering into an established tradition, but at the same time this tradition must be sufficiently flexible and receptive to encourage their efforts towards progress. Otherwise, how many modern institutions would have been condemned which the human race will certainly not give up, and which the "children of tradition" would be the last to be able to do without! They have made their way in spite of resistance, but, to their ill and our own, they have developed without those moral controlling elements which were indispensable in order to secure their benefits. At any rate, their development is a fact which the most belated can no longer dispute, and how far we have advanced from the scanty concessions which the traditionalists, who imagined themselves generous, yielded without enthusiasm! Our modern democracies have proved to be more exacting, and history will say that they were right in not being content with so little.

Is it too much to ask of the French people, to give to their sacred union this extension and this fruitfulness?

I do not believe so ; each party can recall enough defeats and enough victories for the remembrance of the first to dispose it to the necessary concessions, and of the second to protect its legitimate pride. How many institutions lately declared unacceptable have nevertheless been accepted ; how many reforms once considered definitive and beyond interference have foundered, to see the re-birth of the very things they claimed to have replaced ! In submitting to these inevitable evolutions, the new generations have neither inaugurated a counter-revolution, nor been guilty of treason, as the partisans of the Right and Left accuse them, in order to excite their distrust ; they have only accepted the teaching of practical life, which has shown them in what way they could effectually carry on their fathers' work.

I am confident that these simple and fruitful thoughts will in the end prevail, and that France, victorious on the battle-fields, will be able to win another victory over moral indiscipline and animalism. On this condition only will she recover her strength and prosperity, and hold among the nations the place which her glorious history and her courage make her own by right ; on this condition only will she escape the trials which must otherwise be her lot. Because we have suffered much for five years, we think ourselves justified in counting on a period of happiness and compensation ; a complete mistake. Nature, more merciful, demands the elimination of the blemishes which dishonour our national life, both public and private, and so long as this blemish—the most serious of all—of moral indiscipline is not expelled, the pitiless laws of sociology condemn us to weakness and suffering. Whatever may be our private wishes and our mental dispositions, our business is to restore to France strength and vigour, and there was never a strong nation which consisted of enfeebled families. It is fine to assume the part of defender of the right, but of what use is this if one cannot put at the service of the right forces which are capable of securing respect for it ? And how can such a profession be

looked on as sincere by foreign nations, when the nation that makes it appears indifferent to the most serious diseases, which are draining its substance and vitality ?

Once more I am confident that this other victory will be gained, and if it is only too true that some social circles are sunk in the ever-growing disorders of a licentious life, it is also unquestionable that other circles are beginning to reflect and to open their consciences to laws, of which neither they nor their fathers any longer suspected the supreme importance.

When our modern societies shall have learnt again the lessons of moral discipline, they will enjoy a peace and prosperity which they cannot now imagine, and their condition will be better than it has ever been. This is the profound meaning of an admirable text which our cowardice deters us from meditating on and speaking of : " *Oportet hæreses esse,*" says the Apostle ; for heresy is necessary in order that the true dogma may be thoroughly explored and its inestimable treasures brought to light.

We like to think that human progress could pursue a straight line of advance, if only our race would listen to those whom we call " the honest people." God forbid that I should wish to question that many evils would be thus avoided, but progress would certainly become impossible. Joseph de Maistre said : " I do not know what the mind of a rogue can be like, but I do know what that of an honest man is, and it is not brilliant." In the same way it might be said : " I do not know what the intelligence of a fool or an ignorant man may be like, but I do know what that of an educated and judicious man is, and it swarms with mistakes." By contact with denials and contradictions we are led to bring our teaching to completion, and especially to examine better the character, the worth, and the conditions of the institutions which we have been innocent enough to believe were automatic and indestructible. Taught by the hard lessons which have been given us, our descendants will know that there is nothing disastrous in the fact that men desire marriage

and paternity, and that our homes are peopled with large families; they will know that if "song is the nightingale's nature," it is not a natural instinct of the same kind that secures the purity of virgins, the loyalty of spouses, the fecundity of mothers. These good and beautiful things, and many more besides, are not "natural" to man, and in a sense the critical spirit and civilization tend to eliminate them; they can only develop and be maintained where society watches with jealous care over the advance of spiritual energies and the preservation of the ideal in the soul. Thus our descendants will have less to attend to in exploiting nature than in cultivating man, his character and his moral life; no citizen will be in their eyes worthy of esteem if he cannot first of all secure within himself, by the control of his appetites, the dominion of the spirit over the flesh, and the discipline, at once austere and joyous, of true liberty.

By all appearances, our modern societies are on the way, at a swift pace, towards profound transformations. I am not one of those whom these changes alarm, and the injustices which our social and economic institutions tolerate, or encourage, are numerous and grave enough to make us rightly wish for progress; and undoubtedly a day will come when we shall find a way, now wholly unseen, out of our difficulties between the stolid repose of a contented middle-class and the childish solutions of a revolutionary collectivism.

But whatever solution may be offered, let us be quite clear that its happy results can only show themselves in a society more careful of moral discipline and more capable of appreciating its inestimable benefits; and let us repeat, with no fear of self-deception, this fine saying of Tom Mann's: "The future is for the nations who are chaste."

# INDEX .

## A

- Abortion, 25-35 ; extreme frequency of, 26 ; prosecutions for, 30 ; among married people, 73.
- Adam, Paul, 111, 112.
- Adultery, 76-78, 82 ; increase since the war, 99 ; greatly increased by divorce, 352, 358n.
- Advertisements, immoral, 16.
- Agriculture, French and German, 192, 195, 196.
- Alcoholism, increase of, 83n.
- Allgemeine Electricitäts Gesellschaft, 189, 190.
- Alliance between anti-moral teaching and rationalism, 122, 123.
- Alphonsus, St., 510.
- Amette, Cardinal Archbishop of Paris, 87.
- Anti-conceptionist practices, 93-120, 418, 424, 438 ; increase since war, 99 ; find support in divorce, 356 ; their physical evil, 466, 467 ; Dr. Etienne on grave mischief of, 467.
- Arras, Bishop of (pastoral letter quoted), 505.
- Aristotle, 376, 506.
- Asceticism, absolute necessity in some degree, 472-4 ; urged by a free-thinker, 293.
- Augustine, St., 516, 517 (on conjugal fraud).

## B

- Bataille, Henri, 112.
- Beal, Sir Lionel, 263, 264 (on Chastity).
- Bebel, German materialist, 135n.
- Belot, Gustave, 223, 481, 527, 528.
- Benedict XV, Pope, 526.
- Berthlémy, Prof. H., 97 (on "free union").
- Bertillon, Jacques, 228, 234n.
- Births, illegitimate, 1851-1913, 21.
- Birth-rate, decreased. *Vide* Race Suicide ; German, 180, 181n ; selfishness supreme enemy of, 237.

- Blionne, Mme. de, 341n.
- Blouet, M., Superior of Grande Séminaire, Coutances. 512.
- Bossuet, 87, 299, 300n. *Vide* Meaux Catechism.
- Bourgeois, *passim* ; a comparatively small number, 435.
- Bourget, Paul, 149.
- Boutreux, Emile, 497.
- Bouvier, R. Père, 525.
- Brieux, Eugène, 142.
- Broca, Dr., 393n.
- Brunetière, 485.
- Buisson, Ferdinand, 207.
- Bulot (Procureur-Général), estimate of prostitution, 16.
- Butler, Josephine, author of "Avant l'aurore," with preface by M. Bureau, 255.

## C

- Canada, immense fecundity in, 409n.
- Café-chantants, abuses in, 44.
- Cahors, Bishop of (Pastoral Letter), 165n.
- Cambrai, Archbishop of. 446.
- Carpenter, Edward, 417.
- Catholics, alliances of, with Conservative and other interests, 505, 506 ; errors of, in methods of social controversy, 506, 507.
- Celibacy, Religious, 288ff. ; at the root of all great religious movements, 295 ; necessary for many undertakings, 289 ; performs great social services, 289 ; especially to the family and to marriage itself, 290 ; growing appreciation of, among Protestants, 295 ; pre-eminence of, affirmed by Council of Trent, 297.
- Chamber of Deputies, over 200 unmarried members of, 85.
- Chapelin, Emile (malthusian writer), 137, 139.
- Chastity in the unmarried, Chap. VI ; effects of, on the individual, 261 ;

Brussels International Conference on, 266.

Children, loss of affection for, 74, 75.

"Children of the new spirit," 502 *et passim*, especially 533, 534.

"Children of tradition," 500 *et passim*, especially 534, 535.

Christian Faith, return to, the first condition of moral regeneration, 508.

Christiania, Medical Faculty of University of, witness to Chastity, 266.

Civil Code of 1804, 304, 343n., 347n.

Clarke, Sir Andrew, on Chastity, 265.

Clement of Alexandria, St., 466.

Clergy and Race Suicide, 512-515.

Cobden, on Law of Wages, 428.

Collectivist régime, a supposed solution of the recruiting of the nation, 247.

Colonial Dominion, French, 174, 175.

Commerce, French Foreign, 177-179.

Comte, Auguste, 88, 123, 201, 241, 291, 356, 364.

Condorcet, 382n.

Conference, International, of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis (Brussels), 266.

Congrès National de la Natalité, (Nancy, 1919), 222, 467, 481, 527.

Congress of Moral Education at the Hague, 1912, 488.

Conjugal Fraud. *Vide* Race Suicide.

Continnence, Perpetual, Chap. VII; essential place of, in married life, 293, 338, 400, 410, 419-422; observed for material reasons, 419; much more widely observed formerly, 405; necessary for working-class, 431-433; urgently recommended at certain times, especially in Lent, 523n.

Constantinople, 174.

Contraceptives, use of. *Vide* Race Suicide.

Converts to moral discipline, testimony of, 480.

Courts of Law condone vice, 19, 48, 49.

Cousin, Victor, 408.

"Coutume ouvrière", 424.

Crawley, Fr. Matteo, 526n.

## D

Defence of Morality, weak, 147.

Depopulation, scourge of later Roman paganism, 377.

Deplats, Dr., 467.

Désérs, M. l'abbé, 511.

Deschanel, Paul, ancien Président de la République, at Nancy Congress, 532; quoted, 529 (motto to "Conclusion").

Desourmond, Rev. Fr., C. SS.R., 512, 513.

Diderot, quoted, 103.

Discipline, Moral, gradual development of, 306.

Divorce, 78-83; introduced by Revolutionary government, suppressed 1816, re-established 1884; Comte on, 78, 123n.; campaign on behalf of, 1876-1884, 108; by mutual consent forbidden by statute, but notoriously frequent, 81; practically allowed at the will of one party, 81, 82; never legal by mutual consent, even Revolutionary legislators finding this impracticable, 342; wild decrees as to, had to be repealed, 343n.; admitted by most modern legislatures, 341; by mutual consent="free union", 343; for specified grievances, 349; has helped to debase Marriage, 352; quadrupled in less than 30 years after law of 1884, 353; by consent, the practical usage in the Courts, 353-355; consequences of, 355-358; urged as necessary in certain extreme cases, 359; which is a total fallacy, 359-363.

Dolérís, Dr. J., 532.

Domestic sentiments, easily perverted, 298.

Dreyfus, Ferdinand, 19.

Drysdale, Dr. C. R., founder, in 1877, of first neo-malthusian league, 131.

Drysdale, Dr. G., author of "Elements of Social Science," 1854, in which he recommends use of contraceptives, 130.

Dual moral standard, 90 *seqq.*

Dubois, Dr., 265.

Dumas, Alexandre *fiis.*, 78.

Dumont, M., 370n.

- Dunoyer, Prefect of Somme, his circular of 1838, 126.  
 Durkheim, M., his naturalistic theory. 292; on divorce by consent, 354n., 491n.

## E

- Education, Family, its incalculable value, 313-318.  
 Education, need of moral, 236.  
 Education, State, would hopelessly injure a child's best powers, 316; and tend to moral disaster, 317.  
 Elizabeth of Hungary, St., 299.  
 Emigration, discontinued, 172.  
 Employers, duties of, 445-447.  
 Encyclopædists, their anarchic idea of freedom, 103.  
 Escande, Dr. Franck, 263, 282n.  
 Etienne, Dr., on anti-conceptionist practices, 467.  
 Eugenics, 296.  
 Eugerard, G., on German natality, 181n.  
 Evils, three great, in France, 2.

## F

- Faculty of Medicine, Paris, a shameful thesis approved by, 151.  
 Failure to apply existing laws, 234, 235.  
 Family, the large, makes for unselfishness and discipline, 369, 370; benefits immensely both the individual and the race, 371.  
 Family, the monogamic, 311-313.  
 Faure, Sébastien (neo-malthusian writer), 142, 143.  
 Fecundity, one of the chief obligations of marriage, 367-372.  
 Feminism, 90-93; stands for two directly opposite things, respectively to be admired and condemned, 92; the evil kind a great aid to neo-malthusianism, 144-146; certain consequences of this, 502.  
 Féré, Dr. (physician at Bicêtre), 265.  
 Foerster (great German sociologist) on true education, 243, 244; on voluntary celibacy, 291; on asceticism, 294; on the family and State education, 315, 316, 317; on the marriage relationship, 322, 323; on illegitimate maternity, 328; on

the idea of penance, 330; on prescribed formula and personal liberty, 336; on monogamy, its immense social and educative value, 345, 346; on the same, as developed by Christianity, promoting deepest love, 346-349; on results of using contraceptives, 416; on necessity of Religion in moral education, 488-490; on the Divine origin of the moral law, 495, 496; on sexual education, 456; his own conversion, 504.

- Fonsgrieve, Georges, 146, 147, 312.  
 Foreigners, number of in France, 175, 176.  
 Forel (Swiss psychologist), 264, 327.  
 Fourmière, Eugène, 68.  
 Fournier, Professor Alfred, on Chastity, 256, 266; on syphilis, 269.  
 Francis of Assisi, St., 289.  
 Francis of Sales, St., 87; on self-control in Marriage, 338; on continence when approaching the Sacraments, 405n.; on misuse of Marriage, 516; and necessity of continence for married people, 522.  
 "Free Union" ("Union Libre"), 94-98, 258, 259, 275; not the same as "free love," 332; great social danger of, 333.  
 Freedom, the grandeur of its burden, 278; absurdly claimed for immorality, 270; 18th. century idea of, 272-274.  
 Free-thinkers, beginning to be aroused to necessity of moral discipline, 527, 528.  
 French language, 172-173.  
 Froebel (Kindergarten system), 474n.  
 Frontier, fortunes of a family on the French, 171, 172.  
 Frontiers, influence of French civilisation beyond her own, 171.

## G

- Gallicanism, 304.  
 Gascony, moral, physical, and economical deterioration of, 492.  
 Gaucher, Professor, on Syphilis, 271.  
 Gemähling, Paul (sociologist), 196, 431.



German population, increase of compared with French, 213, 214n.  
 Germany, enormous increase of both population and wealth, 186-195.  
 Gerocracy, 198.  
 Gibier (Mgr. l'Evêque), 511, 512.  
 Gide, Charles (eminent sociological writer). 164n., 167, 168, 204-206, 213, 234n., 240.  
 Godwin, William, author of "Inquiry concerning Political Justice," 1793, 382n; and of "Essay on Avarice and Prodigality," 1797, which inspired Malthus, 382.  
 Goethe, 341n., 365.  
 Gohier, deputy, on marriage formalities, 331, 332.  
 Gonnorhea, 269.  
 Grassart, Dr., 330, 331. "Outside of the family it is impossible really to produce men."  
 Gregory of Nazianzum, St., on chastity of the married, 341.  
 Guyau, M., author of "L'irréligion de l'avenir," 71.

## H

Hamp, Pierre, on indifference of legislators, 223.  
 Hauser, Henri, Professor at Dijon, 215, 216.  
 Health, injured by indiscipline, 182, 183; by premature sexual activity, 268; greatly benefitted by Chastity, 283.  
 Herschell, 389.  
 Hertz, Robert, on depopulation, 206, 207.  
 Hesse, Landgrave of, his polygamy sanctioned by "reformers," 292.  
 Houses, French and German, 191.  
 Hygiene, physical, in relation to moral discipline, 464-470.

## I

Immorality and drunkenness, a political propaganda, 124.  
 Indissolubility of Marriage, 76; Chap. IX, *throughout*.  
 Industrial activity, French, declining, 196.  
 Initiative and activity, spirit of, essential to moral restoration, 468-470.

Interdependence of rules of morality, 328 *et passim*.  
 International position of France greatly decreased in consequence of neo-malthusianism, 169.

## J

Jacob, B., on life of business men, 500n.  
 James, William, on power of religious faith, 497; on sacrifice the interpretation of life, 524, 525.  
 Japanese journal on French decadence, A, 209.  
 Jayle, Dr., 226, 227n.  
 Jerome, St., 289.  
 Joly, Henri, on large families, 197, 198.  
 Jordan, Edouard, Professor at the Sorbonne, on neo-malthusian practices, 65, 411, 412; on the silence of some clergy, 147, 148; on the French Publishing Trade, 173n.; on Malthus' doctrine, 387, 408; on French "patriotism", 493; on continence in marriage, 421, 518, 519; on unedifying Catholics, 505; on social evil among Catholics, 508-511; on need of instruction in preparation for Marriage, 517, 518.  
 Julien, Mgr. *vide* Arras, Bp. of.  
 Juvenal quoted (race suicide in pagan times), 61.

## K

Kendrick, John M., Professor at Glasgow University, on Chastity, 281.  
 Key, Ellen, anti-social feminist, 327, 423.  
 Kidd, Benjamin (sociologist), 485-487, 497.  
 Krupp of Essen, 187.

## L

Labat, Dr. Emmanuel, 165, 492.  
 Lacordaire, 505; *ibid.*, note.  
 Lassalle, Ferdinand, 393, 428.  
 Lasseur, Emile, 210, 393n.  
 Lavergne, Léonce, 393n.  
 Leaflet ("Feuilleton"), specimen of neo-malthusian, 136.  
 Lecombe, Sébastien, 115.

- Leipzig publishing trade, 173n, 189n.  
 "Le Lys," play by MM. Pierre Wolff and Gaston Leroux, quotation from, 117-120.  
 Lemâitre, Jules, 180.  
 Lent, continence enjoined on married persons during (so SS. Basil, Augustine, and Cæsarius of Arles), 523n.  
 Leroy, Maxime, 424, 437.  
 Letourneau, M., curé of St. Sulpice, 512.  
 "Ligue d' Education moral, La" (organization of free-thinkers), 527.  
 "Ligue pour la Vie, la," 246.  
 Loisy, Alfred, 487, 488.  
 Louis, St., 314.  
 Love, conjugal, only possible to maintain and develop when pure, 338.  
 Lysis, on immense increase of commodities in Germany, 191.
- M**
- Maeterlinck, Maurice, 112, 113.  
 Maistre, Count Joseph de, 504, 537.  
 Malthus, Thomas Robert, 125; his "Essay on the Principle of Population," published 1798, 2nd ed., 1803, 126 *seqq.*; moral restraint his cure for over-population: an impossible burden *as expressed by him*, 128; the inevitable result, 129; immediate cause of publication of the Essay, 382n; the theory, consisting of two parts, the "Law of Population" and "Moral Restraint," 383-386, 395; "Preventive" and "Positive" checks, 384; moral restraint, 385; all artificial means of sterility condemned, *ibid.*; where he failed, 395, 406—by ignoring of moral conditions, and separation of moral and economic activity; "Prudence" his watchword: moral himself, his disciples were not, 396n; consequences of his principles, 396-403; danger of his doctrine, 406; and so developed for evil by his successors, 407.  
 Margueritte, Paul and Victor, advocates of unlimited divorce, 109.  
 Marriage, statistics of, 52; definition, 52; sordid, and worse, motives for, 50-57; indissolubility of, 76 *seqq.*; declared merely a civil contract by law of September, 1791, 104; normal state for great majority, but for many impossible or undesirable, 288; only socially beneficial when maintained on a high ideal, 290; obligations of, Chap. VIII, 302, 324, 326; universally recognized as differing from all other contracts, 303; Modestin's definition of, 303; assaulted by Protestantism in 16th century, 303; definition of, from sociological standpoint, 304; wonderful social services rendered by, 305 *seqq.*; maintenance and recruitment of the race through, 305; agent of the most effective training of mankind, 320; monogamic, 311-323; marriage duty, the, 337, 405; loyalty in marriage, 339 *seqq.*; indissolubility of, not arbitrary, 344; no grievance as to, for 1,000 years, 359; not solemnized at certain times, 521.  
 "Marriage Chrétien, l'association de," 526.  
 Marriages, increase of, not necessarily cause for satisfaction, 82, 83.  
 Married people, conduct of, Chap. II.  
 Marx, Karl, 393.  
 Maternity, benefits of, to wife, 467.  
 Mathieu, Cardinal, 507.  
 Meaux Catechism, 510.  
 Mercier, Cardinal, 209; charge of, "Pour l'honnêteté conjugal," 525.  
 Military position of France, 169, 170.  
 Mill, John Stuart, on low birth-rate and wealth, 84; desired fall in birth-rate, 390; a monstrous sentence of, as to the poor, 390n.; on over-population, 402, 417n., 418n.; on necessity of ascetic practice, 473.  
 Mirabeau, 171.  
 Misme, Mme. Jane, 246.  
 Missions (Parochial), 147.  
 Monod, Leopold, 199, 200.  
 Moral Discipline, triple alliance against, 134.

Morality, Sexual, Precepts, of. 250  
*sqq.*, *Vide* Prescriptions.  
 "More coffins than cradles," 64, 208,  
 492.  
 Motherhood, illegitimate, 259; legiti-  
 mate contrasted with illegitimate,  
 327-331.  
 Mun, Comte Albert de, 434.  
 Musset, Alfred de, 105.

## N

Naquet, Alfred, 78, 110, 111.  
 Necker, 378.  
 Neo-malthusianism, rise of, 129-144 ;  
 practices of, 65 ; authorized teaching  
 of, 131 *sqq* ; propaganda, 152-155 ;  
 result on population of Normandy,  
 164, 165 ; defence of deficient  
 natality, 180 *sqq.* ; its practices  
 never seriously defended, 411 ;  
 always goes with divorce and the  
 rest of sexual indiscipline, 414,  
 415 ; frightful quotations from its  
 disciples, 415 ; involves destruction  
 of society, 415 ; propagandist  
 efforts amongst manual workers,  
 424, 425 ; especially during strikes,  
 426 ; spells utter destruction to the  
 working-class, 436-445.  
 Newspapers pander to vice, 15.  
 New York Bureau of Social Hygiene,  
 223.

## O

Oesterlen, Professor at Tubigen, on  
 Chastity, 263.  
 Ozanam, Antoine-Frédéric, 393n.

## P

Paget, Sir James, on Continence, 264,  
 267n.  
 Pamphlet, a neo-malthusian, 137-139.  
 Pascal, 517n.  
 Pasteur, 34.  
 Patriotism, French, as a rule only  
 military, 493.  
 Pedagogy, its advantages and limits,  
 314.  
 Pelletier, Madeleine, (anti-social fem-  
 inist), 140, 141.  
 Périer, Dr. E., on Chastity, 264, 265.  
 Peril, France's terrible, witnesses to,  
 206-210.

Perrier, Edmond (Director of the  
 Museum), 207.  
 Pestalozzi, author of "Legislation and  
 Infanticide," 330 ; and of "Leonard  
 et Gertrude," 364.  
 Photographs, pornographic, 41.  
 Pie, Cardinal, 514.  
 Pinard, Dr., 467.  
 Pius X., Pope, Encyclical on First  
 Communion, 12.  
 Physical Culture, Benefit and Danger  
 of, 458n.  
 Plato, 370.  
 Planicol, Professor of Law, on Divorce,  
 353.  
 Political parties, French, 533.  
 Polygamy, almost achieved by divorce  
 legislation, 76 ; unsuccessful prop-  
 aganda for its open establishment,  
 120, 121.  
 Population, causes of restrained, in  
 the Middle Ages, 377 ; "Preventive"  
 and "Positive" checks on, 384 ;  
 Malthus' Law of, 388.  
 Pourésy, Emile (on abominable photo-  
 graphs,) 42 ; 45n.  
 Precocity of French modern youth, 12.  
 Prescriptions of Sexual Morality, the  
 Five, pp. 250-422 : (1) Chastity of  
 the Unmarried, Chap. VI., VII ;  
 (2) the Duty of Marriage, Chap.  
 VIII. ; (3) Conjugal Fidelity and  
 the Indissolubility of Marriage,  
 Chap. IX. ; (4) Fecundity, Chap.  
 X., (5) Continence in Marriage,  
 Chap X. ; their absolute solidarity,  
 413 *et passim*.  
 "Prix Malouet", 480.  
 Prostitution, 14-21, 255, 256 ; legally  
 encouraged, 100n ; private, 257.  
 Protestant efforts towards social re-  
 form, 526 ; Testimony at Nancy  
 Congress, 527 ; pastors' families, 527.  
 Proudhon (opponent of Malthus),  
 127n., 386, 394.  
 Proust, Dr., on too early marriages,  
 262.  
 Prudish delicacy, evil of, 320n.  
 Puberty, age of, 262.

## R

Race Suicide, 58-64, 152, 153-157,  
 169, 202, 204, 526n

- Reclus, Elisée (denied) authority of State to legislate as to Marriage), 332.
- Recruiting Law, abuse of, 55n.
- Religious Belief from the social standpoint, Chap. XIV; alone gives ontological reality to moral laws, 494; social necessity of, 498-502.
- Remedies for depopulation suggested, 222 *sqq.*; legislative, 223; "vote familiale", 224; military service, 226; abatement of direct taxation, 227; equitable re-arrangement of indirect ditto, 227, 228; State aid to large families, 228; better housing, 229; system of wages, 232; associations to aid families, 232, 233; all, or most, suggestions excellent in themselves, but *by themselves* quite inadequate, 233-247.
- Renan: "France is dying", 206.
- Revue, 45.
- Ribbing, Professor, Lund University, 264.
- Ribot, M., 191.
- Ricardo, on Law of Wages, 427, 428.
- Richet, Professor Charles (in Report of Commission on Depopulation), 398, 399.
- "Right" to sexual enjoyment claimed, *and does not exist*—a mere sophism, 271-273, 368, 414.
- Riverol, in 18th cent., foretold "disappearance" of Marriage, 302.
- Robin, Paul (neo-malthusian), 136, 143n., 150, 180n.
- Rochefort, Henri, 343n.
- Romantic School, 105.
- Rommel, Dr. (Swiss), 207, 208.
- Roosevelt, Theodore, 209.
- Rossi, 376, 391, 392.
- Rossignol, Georges (sociologist), 191, 222n.
- Rousseau, 10, 231.
- Roussel, Mme. Nelly (feminist opponent of social morality) 248-250, 256.
- Ruyssen, Th. (celebrated sociologist), on prostitution, 8; on sexual emotion, 9; on dual morality, 91, 92, 181; on physical results of continence, 267; on effects of a first fall, 280, 281; on the problem of overfecundity, 376; on "l'union libre" 490n; on the marriage relationship, 416; on continence in marriage 433n.

## S

- Sacrifice, a social necessity, 261.
- Saints make ordinary Christians possible, 297.
- Sand, Georges, 105-108.
- Say, Jean-Baptiste, 381.
- Schaudinn (bacteriologist), 269.
- Schopenhauer, story of, 8.
- Séailles, Gabriel, on false liberty, 279, 280.
- Sexual function, danger of premature use of, 268; no *necessity* for its satisfaction, 263, 282.
- Sexual instruction, evil effects of, 455, 456; the right sort of, 456-458.
- Shame, right sense of, 456, 457.
- "Sillon, Le", 458n.
- Simon, Commandant, 68, 124n.
- Simple life necessary for moral discipline, 482, 501.
- Slavery, effect of, on population, 376.
- Smith, Adam, his "Law of Wages," 378-380, 427.
- Socialism, 402, *et passim*.
- Solemnities, surrounding Marriage, 331-336; required by Civil Code of 1804, 332; of immense service to the spouses, 334; and to society, 335.
- Solidarity, Human, a fact like light or heat, 273, 274; character and inevitable consequences of, 273-278; sense of, necessary to moral reformation, 474-476; law of, 482, 501.
- Spencer, Herbert, 396, 397n.
- Stendhal, 145, 146, 340.
- Sterility, Conjugal, 65, 66; systematic, 67; encouraged by award of scholarships, etc., 72n; by social customs and official action, 85-87; connection of, with wealth, 185; closely allied to other forms of immorality, 241; deliberately encouraged by the possibility and ease of neo-malthusian practices. *Vide* Race Suicide.
- Sterilization of the "unfit," 242, 243.
- Strikes, 426, 428.
- Sully, 314.

Surbled, Dr., on evils of incontinence, 265.  
 Syphilis, 269-271.

## T

Taine, on the mortal sickness of France, 206; 395n.  
 Tarde, Gabriel (sociologist), 68.  
 Technical Schools in Germany, 194.  
 "Temperament" usually another word for weakness, 364.  
 Theatre, abominable license of the, 43, 44, 211.  
 Thyssen, enormous ironworks, 188.  
 Toulouse, Dr., on a sensual fiction, 363, 364.  
 Trade Congresses and neo-malthusianism, 424, 425.  
 Trade, decline of French foreign, 174.  
 Trent, Council of, 297.  
 Tuberculosis, 183.  
 Turenne, 314.  
 Turgot, 378.

## U

"Unions libres," extra-legal and temporary, 94-98.  
 Unnatural crime taught, 122.

## V

Venereal diseases, 100, 183, 267-271.  
 Verdier, M. Fábbe, 506.  
 Vermeesch, Fr., S.J., 519, 520.  
 Vestals, 295.  
 Viry, Dr., on physical effects of continence, 267.  
 Vischer, on sense of shame, 436.

## W

Wage, extra family, 445, 446.  
 Wages, Law of, 378, 427, 428.  
 War, neo-malthusianism on, 215.  
 War spirit, development of, in Germany, 216, 217.  
 Wagner, M. le pasteur, on domestic happiness, 323n.  
 Wealth in France, decreasing, 195.  
 White Slavery, 20 *sqq.*; immense organization and methods of, 19-24.  
 Working-class family, the, chap. XI; birth-rate of, 423 *sqq.*; interests of, bound up with those of the whole country, 434.

## Z

Zanta, Madlle., 145.  
 Zeiss, Karl, Factory, 188n.  
 Zola, 149.



1

