

THE PREVENTION OF PREGNANCY.—Great crimes never leap full-fledged into the world. They are evoked by a gradual deterioration of the public sentiment, and but keep pace with the public education. They are, therefore, to a certain extent, typical of the age in which they occur. Isolated instances of depravity are not heré referred to, but the general tendency of the masses in a particular direction.

From the days of our forefathers, when it was considered the duty of man "to multiply and replenish the earth," to our own degenerate times, there has been a gradually growing sentiment toward an escape from the responsibilities and cares of child-bearing and rearing. This feeling, at first confined to the few, has by degrees encompassed the many; until in our day, it is quite the rule to use every art which our advancing intelligence has given us, to snap the ties which so pre-eminently link the duality of the man and woman into the unity of the husband and wife.

To such proportions has this evil grown that it threatens to undermine the very foundations of our social fabric, and calls in tones of thunder for the most vigorous measures of suppression.

To say nothing of its influence upon the world's population, and the incentives which are presented for illicit intercourse, both in the married and single, the penalties upon the woman's organization are so inevitable and so surely blighting in their results, as to demand a speedy return of the world to one of its primitive and most essential duties.

The influence of such efforts as Dr. Storer's *Why Not*, or *The Evils of Forced Abortions*, and the various other articles which have been written upon the subject, is already being felt, and is erecting itself as a barrier against this surging wave of sin and folly. But there is another factor of the crime against infancy and humanity which, though equally pernicious in its effects, has as yet scarcely been touched upon. We allude to the *prevention of pregnancy*.

The instrument almost universally used to bring about this result is the *syringe*. While the effect of the practice is even more injurious to the moral constitution of society than that flowing from the induction of abortion, its effect upon the female system, we are satisfied from long observation, is quite as damaging in the end. We have had a pretty large experience for several years in the observation of the diseases peculiar to females, and are prepared to assert that fully *three-fourths* of the cases which we have met of the various forms and effects of inflammation of the uterus and its appendages in the married women, were directly traceable to the habitual prevention of pregnancy. Those who have been accustomed to regard the prevention of conception by means of the injection, as perfectly harmless, and perhaps as rather invigorating than otherwise, will doubt the correctness of this observation. A fair knowledge of physiology and a little calm reflection will, however, serve to convince us of its truth.

Firstly: The child-bearing function exercised at proper intervals, is not only a physiological constituent of the female economy, but is, in the immensely large majority of cases, *a necessity to her perfect health*. We have no space for elaborate argument, but must content ourselves at this time with a statement of facts. In the whole range of our observation, there are no females who

enjoy a greater degree of health, other things being equal, than those who at reasonable intervals become pregnant, give birth to children and assume their care. We of course have no reference to women whose constitutions are vitiated by disease, or whose lot in life subjects them to the utmost hardship and privation. We mean women ordinarily circumstanced in life, and constituted in an ordinarily healthy way. We are prepared to maintain this assertion on a physiological basis.

Secondly: The articles often used to impregnate the injection, and which are popularly supposed to kill the semen, are productive of the worst results. The most common of these is alum, though other astringents are employed. When the female organs are turgid with blood after the venereal excitement, and the glandular apparatus is pouring out its secretion as a conservative effort of nature, it is easy to imagine what effect must ensue from the closure of the mouths of the ducts by cold and astringents. Temporary congestion must follow, which by frequent repetition will become permanent, giving rise to vaginitis, cervicitis, &c. These consequences are the same, even when simple water is employed; for the sedative effect of the cold obstructs exhalation, and the sudden alternation of temperature is sure to excite sooner or later congestion and inflammation. We have known of women who, immediately after copulation, have risen on a cold winter night and injected water whose temperature was little above the freezing point, into the heated vagina. Will any sane person contend that this is an invigorating measure? It is plain to us that even where the female does not participate in the venereal orgasm, though the effect is not so directly hurtful, it must follow with equal certainty.

Thirdly: The knowledge that venery can be indulged with impunity, leads to great excesses in its practice. These excesses not only exert their baneful effects upon the man, but, even though the woman does not participate, she will experience the evil consequences of the frequent mechanical irritation in the ultimate establishment of inflammation and ulceration. This irritation will arise not only from the admission of the male organ, but the frequent introduction of the syringe.

We have spoken thus minutely and plainly of this evil, because we consider it to be fully as damaging to the health and morals of the people as the crime of abortion, and vastly, vastly more widespread in its practice. We should be glad to go more fully into its consideration, and having some interesting notes bearing upon it, at some future time shall probably do so. In the meanwhile, will not Dr. Storer and other humanitarians who have done so much to stay the ravages of its twin-crime, level their anathemas against the practice of an outrage only exceeded in enormity by that of Onan of old?