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THE LIMITATION OF OFFSPRING BY THE ARTIFICIAL PREVENTION OF CONCEPTION: FROM THE INDIVIDUAL, SOCIAL AND EUGENIC STANDPOINTS.*

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IT is rather strange that a Society whose members' living depends upon as many children as possible being brought into the world should be anxious to listen to a lecture which is to present arguments for the limitation of children. It is almost as if a Catholic or Methodist congregation invited a speaker to present the merits of agnosticism or atheism. Or as if the National Association of Manufacturers or the coal barons invited a lecturer to present to them the arguments for socialism or syndicalism.

But it is a good sign of the times. It shows that a greater and greater number of people are willing to hear the other side. It shows that the world does move and that many conservatives, while hugging their conservatism or obscurantism ever so tightly to their hearts are at least beginning to admit that there may be some truth in the more advanced and the radical point of view, and that they are at least willing to give it a hearing.

And should I say something which may go against your grain, something with which you may for the moment violently disagree, then try to be tolerant and permit the idea to pass through your mind that maybe the reader of the paper, who has given the subject special attention, is after all right, and maybe it is you that are wrong. I do not ask you to accept my opinions, or anybody's opinions for that matter, on authority, but I do ask you to listen to them open-mindedly, to weigh the pros and cons, to try to digest them, and then reach your own conclusions.

The subject which we are to discuss tonight is one of transcendent importance. I know of no single question that is of such far-reaching, vital importance to the human race. Directly or indirectly it touches every man, woman and child—nay more, it touches not only the living child, it touches the child not yet born. If I have devoted so much time to discussion of the subject by pen and by word of mouth, it is because I sincerely believe that upon the proper solution of this

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question depends, to a great extent, the welfare of the human race, the welfare of those living and of those to come after us.

But before we can discuss any question intelligently we must know just what the subject under discussion is. It is easy to approve or to condemn, but before you have a right to either approve or condemn, before you can do so honestly and conscientiously, you must know what it is I and my followers advocate, what it is we preach and demand.

Briefly it is this. We believe that under our present economic conditions, and under any conditions, human beings should be able to control the number of their offspring. They should be able to decide how many children they want to have and when they want to have them. And to accomplish this result we demand that the knowledge of controlling the number of offspring, in other and plainer words the knowledge of preventing undesirable conception, should not be considered criminal knowledge, that its dissemination should not be considered a criminal offense punishable by hard labor in Federal prisons, but that it should be considered knowledge useful and necessary to the welfare of the race and of the individual; and that its dissemination should be as permissible and as respectable as is the dissemination of any hygienic, sanitary or eugenic knowledge.

There is no element of force in our teachings; that is we would not force any family to limit the number of their children against their will, though we would endeavor to create a public opinion which would consider it a disgrace for any family to have more children than they can bring up and educate properly. We would consider it a disgrace, an anti-social act for any family to bring children into the world whom they must send out at an early age into the mills, shops and streets to earn a living, or must fall back upon public charity to save them from starvation. Public opinion is stronger than any laws, and in time people would be as much ashamed of having children whom they could not bring up properly in every sense of the word as they are now ashamed of having their children turn out criminals.

Now no disgrace can attach to any poor family no matter how many children they have, because they have not got the knowledge, because our society prevents them from having the knowledge of how to limit the number of children. But if that knowledge became easily accessible and people still refused to avail themselves of it then they would properly be considered as anti-social, as criminal members of the community.

As far as a couple are concerned who are well-to-do, who love children, and who are well capable of taking care of a large number, we would put no limit. On the contrary, we would say: "God bless you, have as many children as you want to; there is plenty of room yet for all of you."

And I might as well state here that in this respect we differ from our neo-malthusian friends in European countries with whom we are otherwise in perfect accord. Our European neo-malthusian friends would put a limit to the number of children even of the well-to-do and rich. They claim that the means of subsistence are but limited, that Europe, that is Western Europe, is about as thickly populated as it can be. And they are afraid that the birth of a large number of people, even rich and well-to-do, means the taking out of the bread from the mouths of somebody, from the mouths of the poor. We

are not afraid of it. We know that America can support in perfect comfort millions and millions more of people. This shows how geography and economic conditions influence our opinions. Our neo-malthusian friends across the sea are actuated in their propaganda more by the fear of a famine that will eventually stare the race in the face if the proper check is not put upon the birth rate.

I, on the other hand, was attracted to the limitation of offspring propaganda by the individual sufferings and misery resulting from too many children which I witnessed among my friends and acquaintances and among my patients in the early years of my practice. Not that I do not recognize that eventually in the future the race will, in self-preservation, have to put a strong check upon its birth rate, but I am dealing, I always prefer to deal, with the present, with the living people of to-day. Somehow or other I have always been of the opinion that if we deal intelligently with the present we can safely let the future take care of itself. I even recognize that some countries of Europe are even now so overpopulated that a check has become necessary, but I am dealing with the United States and not with Europe; one country at a time is enough. And with this introduction we may proceed.

THE TWO POINTS OF VIEW.

The effects of the limitation of offspring might be discussed under two separate heads: the effects upon the individual family, and the effects upon the race as a whole. But this subdivision would really be an artificial one. You cannot injure or benefit the individual without injuring or benefitting the race, and you cannot injure or benefit the race without injuring or benefitting the individual. The race is not something abstract, separate, apart from the individuals composing it, any more than the body is something different and apart from the cells and organs composing it. The body is healthy just in proportion to the health and harmonious working of its individual cells. If in a race of one million people one person is unhappy and inefficient, that race is one-millionth unhappy and inefficient. If five hundred thousand individuals of that race are unhappy and inefficient, then that race is one-half unhappy and inefficient. And if every individual in that race is unhappy and inefficient the entire race is unhappy and inefficient. It is, therefore, the individual and the individual family that we have to look out for, and if each individual is brought to the highest standard of happiness and efficiency we need not worry about the race; the entire race will be happy and efficient.

THE SPECTRE—TOO MANY CHILDREN.

That under our present economic conditions the fear of too many children is a most frightful spectre which terrorizes the ordinary workman and the middle class and professional man, is something which requires no discussion. Anybody who has eyes to see, sees it on every side. There would not be this frenzied search and demand for contraceptive knowledge if this were not so. That an unlimited number of children is a curse also to the poor, requires almost no argument. There is not a physician who has not had cases in his practice of families which started life in a respectable manner but which become quickly demoralized, financially and physically, by children coming in rapid succession. Every physician will tell you the gradual change in feelings on the part of the parents with the appearance of each successive child. While the first child and perhaps the

second are generally received with genuine joy, unless they come too soon after marriage, the third and fourth are met with indifference, while the fifth and succeeding ones are considered catastrophes, and many a father and mother hope for a miscarriage or pray that it be still-born or be carried off soon after birth. And every physician will tell you of cases in which their endeavors to bring to life a still-born child were not at all considered by the parents, by the father particularly, with favor. More than one physician told me that when practicing artificial respiration on a new-born babe he was told by the father to leave the child alone, that it was not worth while bothering about.

That a family of three or four can live better, more comfortably, on a certain sum per week, say twenty-five dollars, than can a family of six or seven, goes without saying. Only the obtusest mind will deny that, and still it is being denied day after day. A workingman should not have more than two children. Every child after the second is individually and racially a calamity. It means that the mother's health is being exhausted, it means that she cannot attend as properly as she should to her first children, it means that the succeeding children are taking away a part of the indispensable food and clothing from the first children, it means that the first children will not be able to get the necessary bringing up and education that they otherwise would, it means that they will be sent to work earlier than they otherwise would, it means glutting the labor market with wage-slaves. In short, in my opinion, too many children in other than well-to-do families is a crime. It is a crime against every member of the individual family, the father, the mother, the first two children and the succeeding children, and a crime against society.

THE BOURGEOIS REMEDY.

This being so, what is the remedy? Two remedies are proposed by our bourgeois philosophers and sociologists. One is that the poor should not marry until they are able to support a family, or they should marry late in life. The advice is as stupid as it is vicious. If the poor, embracing in this term not only the workingman but many professional men, writers, small business men, etc., were to wait until they could support a family properly, they would not be able to marry while alive. They would have to wait until they went to heaven, or until they were in their second incarnation. But if the advice to marry late were universally followed, it would prove an irreparable injury to the human race. It would mean an indescribable increase in prostitution, in sexual perversions, in sexual weakness, and in venereal disease. The fathers would come to their nuptial beds sapped of all vitality, debilitated, infected. And as late marriages among men means necessarily also late marriages among women, the mothers would be neurotic or psychotic old maids, and what children such unions would give rise to can readily be imagined.

The second advice is to abstain—that married people should abstain from sexual relations. To give advice which we know is impossible of being followed is the acme of fatuity. But where married people were foolish enough to attempt to follow this advice the effects were pernicious. For married people to attempt to abstain for any length of time means to lay the foundation for irritability, weakness, nervousness, or even genuine neuroses, and a cooling or even destruction of the affections. It means more, it very often means driving

the husband into the arms of prostitutes, with the possible risks of venereal disease.

Considered from every point of view these two pieces of advice, to marry late or to abstain when married, are useless because impracticable and pernicious, because if they could be followed they would result in untold injury to the individuals and consequently to the race.

But a remedy must be had. We have found remedies for most ills that afflict the human organism, and it is only a matter of time when we will find remedies even for those ills that are still baffling us. The only thing that distinguishes the human being from other animals is his intellect. It is by the aid of the intellect alone that we have been fighting and conquering Nature, wresting from her and unraveling her secrets, balking her at every step when it is necessary for our welfare. The human intellect has given us remedies which, while permitting men and women to marry at the proper age and to live a normal sexual life as Nature intended, still help them to control the number of their children. And to save my life, I cannot see what there is wrong in people who cannot afford to have many children using means which will prevent them from having many, which will help them to have just as many as they wish to have and can afford to have, and just at such times as they wish to have them.

The first objection we are apt to hear when we advocate that the knowledge of the use of preventives be easily accessible is that such knowledge would have dire effects, that it would decrease the population to such a degree that it would soon come to a standstill, then it would begin gradually to diminish and finally to die out—in other words, that the human race would commit suicide. That this objection is worthless we can prove by a consideration of individual families as well as by a consideration of entire nations. Are families who possess a knowledge of efficient and harmless preventives perfectly childless? Of course not. There are hundreds and thousands of families now throughout the world who employ artificial preventives regularly, but very few of them are altogether childless. They have one, two or three or even four children. They regulate the time when they want to have the children and their number, but very few indeed decide to remain barren altogether.

That there is a small percentage of men and women who are so devoid of the parental impulse that they would utilize the preventives so as never to have any children I will admit, but I ask you in all seriousness: Is it not better for the race that people who are so utterly devoid of that something that they call the parental instinct that they do not want to have any children at all, should not have any? Is a child conceived, born and brought up against the will of the parents a spectacle to be enthusiastic over? On the contrary. In my opinion this fact is rather in favor of the use of artificial preventives, that the race can speedily eliminate those men and women who under no circumstances wish to become fathers and mothers.

When I see to what interminable trouble and expense some men and women go in order to have children; when I see to what tortures and risks, endangering her very life—I am speaking of numerous Cesarean sections—a prospective mother will undergo in order to have a living child, I have no fear that the use of preventives will result in the dying out of the human race.

But we have better proofs—proofs unanswerable and undeniable.

Here we have a whole country, Holland, in which the prevention of conception is legally sanctioned, in which the use of preventives is practically universal—and is the country dying out? On the contrary, it is increasing even somewhat more rapidly than before, because we have this remarkable and gratifying phenomenon to bear in mind, that wherever the birth rate goes down the death rate goes down *pari passu*, or even to a still greater degree. This can be proven by statistics from almost every country in the world. For instance, in 1910 the birth rate in Holland was 32 and the mortality 18, in 1912 the birth rate fell to 28 but then the mortality rate fell still lower, namely to 12, so we see that there is an actual gain even in population, instead of a loss. And in New Zealand, where the sale of contraceptives is practically free, the birth rate is now 20 and the mortality rate is 10. Does that look like race suicide? On the contrary, there is a steady increase of the race of ten per cent, while sickness and death of children, with their attendant economic and emotional waste, are reduced to a minimum.

This decrease of the death rate is very easy to understand, because the fewer children a mother has the better care she can take of those she does have. The economic condition of families with fewer children is better than of families with many children, speaking, of course, of the same strata of society. And the mother's health not being exhausted by too frequent child-bearing, nursing and bringing up of children, her health is better and she gives birth to healthier and more resistant children. In short, from every point of view the use of artificial means of preventing unsuitable pregnancy is a benefit to humanity.

I admit that when the knowledge of the use of preventives becomes really universal the rate of increase of the human race will become very much slower. But there is certainly a great difference between a slow increase and suicide. Why is it necessary that the human race should increase in numbers rapidly? I permit myself here to quote a paragraph from another paper of mine on the same subject:

Is an increase in numbers so very desirable? In fact is it at all desirable? Ask yourself that question, if it never occurred to you before. Is there any greatness or any happiness in numbers alone? Is China with its more than four hundred millions any happier than we, who can boast of only ninety millions? And does China from any and every point of view amount to as much as does the United States, which has only about one-fifth of its population? And would not any one of you prefer to be a citizen of Italy, or Norway, or Sweden, or the little republic of Switzerland, which has fewer inhabitants than has New York City, than to be a subject of the brutal, murderous Russian Czar who reigns over one hundred and forty millions? No, there is no honor, and there should be no pride, in numbers merely.

I prefer a commonwealth of five million people, all of them healthy and contented, all doing congenial work, all having work to do, all materially comfortable, all educated and cultured, all free to think and free to express their thoughts, with high ideas of a greater future and a higher humanity, to an empire or a republic of a hundred millions, all fighting, all struggling, all cutting each other's throats, all in fear of starvation, with senseless luxury on one hand and shameful poverty on the other, with killing idleness on one hand and killing overwork on the other, with bursting over-satiation on the

one hand and exhausting starvation on the other; with millions tramping the streets and highways naked and hungry, with millions of human beings illiterate, held in the clutches of superstition, selfishness and brutishness; with thousands and thousands of imbeciles, criminals, perverts, grafters, prostitutes—female prostitutes who sell their bodies and male prostitutes who sell their minds, their ideas and convictions—I prefer, I say, the above-described small to the above-described larger commonwealth.

No, numbers alone, I repeat, do not count. With Spencer, I despise that vulgar conception which considers a large population, large territory, and big commerce as its highest ideal, its noblest aim. With Spencer, I would say that, instead of an immense amount of life of low type, I would far sooner see half the amount of life of a high type.

There is one point, however, that should give all true friends of humanity cause for alarm. While the birth rate has decreased markedly in every civilized country in the world, in those countries in which the discussion of the use of preventives is prohibited, and in which the obtaining of preventive means is most difficult, the decrease in the birth rate has been most marked in the higher and in the well-to-do middle and professional classes. In other words, in countries like England and the United States, the most marked diminution of the birth rate has been among the aristocracy, among the cultured classes, among artists, lawyers, physicians, clergymen, merchants, etc., while it has been but slightly diminished among the workmen and among the poor and very poor. In fact, you can take it as an axiom that the number of children is in inverse ratio to the social standing, culture and earning capacity of the parents. In still other words, it means that those best fit to breed children, those most likely to transmit a desirable heredity, and those most able to bring up children, are breeding less and less, while those least able to and least capable of bringing up children and giving them a decent education and a decent start in life, and those most tainted with disease, with alcoholism, mental instability, epilepsy, insanity, moronism, etc., keep on breeding unrestrainedly. What that means for the future of a nation the most sluggish thinker can easily perceive. It means that if no check be put to this state of affairs eventually the mental and physical standard of the race will be lowered, that the race would begin to degenerate.

This is something which no true friend of humanity can contemplate with equanimity. But what is the remedy? To exhort, beg or command the better classes to become more prolific is, as you all know, perfectly fatuous. Nobody whose economic means or inclinations are against having many children will sacrifice himself or herself and have six or eight children instead of two or three, just in order to save the race. Nobody who has acquired the knowledge of limiting his offspring will throw that knowledge away, for altruism has not reached and never will reach this stage, and besides every man and woman will think: Oh, our two or three children will not make any difference. In other words, the better classes, or if you prefer the so-called better classes, will continue to have a very limited number of children—so the only remedy we have at command is to instruct the lower classes to make use of the same means so that they may not by their unrestricted brooding overwhelm the better elements, pollute the race-stock and add to human misery.

IT WILL LEAD TO IMMORALITY.

This objection seems to be the strongest one in the opinion of some even otherwise very rational thinkers. I have heard it from freethinkers, from socialists, and from some very sincere, cultured and educated men. People who have gotten over the "race suicide" bugaboo still consider this a serious objection to the popular spread of the knowledge of contraceptives. They are deeply afraid that if this knowledge became universal, immorality, by which they mean female unchastity, would become universal. They are convinced that what keeps our girls and other husbandless women chaste is the fear of pregnancy and nothing else. In other words, they openly acknowledge that our entire adult womanhood is mentally unchaste and what keeps a large proportion of them from physical unchastity is not morality but the fear of consequences.

To this argument, which next to the race suicide argument, seems to be the most formidable, and to a good many the most unanswerable, leaving out the answer that virtue which is such by fear is no virtue at all, and that virtue that needs continuous guarding is scarcely worth the sentinel, my answer is that the fear of pregnancy is not the chief deterrent. What keeps most of our unmarried women chaste is the general bringing up, the general and religious education, the custom of the country, hereditary influence, and the general monogamous tendency of the female.

On a certain percentage of the female population all these factors exert no influence now, and the only result the knowledge we advocate would have is that illicit relations would be entered upon with less terror, perhaps, with less anxiety than they are now, but far from increasing immorality it would rather diminish it. I will explain what I mean. The fear of pregnancy may act as a deterrent in a number of cases to the performance of coitus in the natural, normal way, but instead of that it leads to numerous perversions of the sexual act, which are as a rule extremely injurious to the health of both partners. I know whereof I am speaking. I see daily the results of these sexual perversions in married couples, in engaged people and men and women who just keep company, and in men and women who are just acquainted; and I can assure you that while the fear of pregnancy, as I said, does act as a deterrent in many cases, say even in a large number of cases, it does not act as a check against sexual immorality. On the contrary, it increases it, because I consider sexual perversions entered into out of fear of pregnancy more immoral than natural relations.

And if some women are bound to have illicit relations, is it not better that they should know the use of a harmless preventive than that they should become pregnant, disgracing and ostracizing themselves and their families, or that they should subject themselves to the degradation and risks of an abortion, or failing this take carbolic acid or bichloride, jump into the river or throw themselves under the wheels of a running train? I may be wrong, my views may be strabismic, but I know that I am kinder and humaner than those cruel bigots who demand that any woman who has indulged in illicit relations should expiate her "crime" by death or by all the humiliation, ostracism and suffering which are now imposed upon the mother of an illegitimate child.

No, I am quite sure that the knowledge of the use of preventives will not increase immorality, using that term as a synonym of female

unchastity. It will merely change perversions and injurious practises into natural relations, which is a gain and not a loss.

IT IS INJURIOUS.

This objection we still meet quite frequently, and we hear it not only from the laity, who are not supposed to know any better, but from physicians who are supposed to know better. A whole catalogue of ills are given which are likely to result from the use of preventives of conception: congestion, inflammation, cancer, nervousness, etc. This statement is unqualifiedly false. Physicians who make such statements do it either because they are ignorant or because they know only of some methods that *are* injurious, or confuse prevention of conception with abortion, or they do so deliberately to mislead the people, to prevent them from engaging in what they call an immoral, ungodly and demoralizing practice.

There is absolutely nothing injurious in the proper modern methods. More than once has it been noticed that women who suffered with congestion, leucorrhea, catarrh of the cervix and vagina, were improved by the use of modern contraceptives. Of course there is no doubt that there are injurious methods of prevention, that certain mechanical devices and poisonous solutions are in use which may in time produce injury to the parts. But are you going to condemn harmless methods because there are methods which are not harmless? Because decomposed food is injurious are you going to condemn all food? Because an alkaline soap is irritating are you going to condemn the use of all soap? It is absurd, and still this is the kind of argument the opponents of the limitation of offspring have recourse to.

IT IS NOT SAFE.

Our opponents claim that there is no absolutely sure means of the prevention of conception, that the best of them fail once in a while. This is true and isn't true. It is true in the sense that there is not one single means that is suitable for everybody, but it is not true that a certain means will not prove absolutely efficient in a certain given case forever.

And this uncertainty is due to the fact that the whole thing is done secretly, clandestinely, as if a crime were being committed. If the thing was free and legal, if the matter could be discussed freely in the journals, the best methods would be learned quickly enough, and each one would have no difficulty in finding the means most appropriate to herself.

But even as it is now, the methods are infallible in 98 or 99 per cent of cases, and while this may be no consolation to the hundredth case who happened to be caught, we do consider that for the race as a whole it is even now a means of the most wonderful potency for good.

IT PRODUCES STERILITY.

This is another one of the fallacies which are heard frequently from clerical and medical opponents of the limitation of offspring. It could have only originated from the confusion of prevention of conception with abortion, or again perhaps from the fact that those opponents have only known of methods which were particularly brutal and atrocious.

We know that the proper methods of prevention have absolutely

no effect whatever in causing sterility. As long as woman uses the preventive she is safe, as soon as she gives up the use of the preventive she becomes impregnated. Sometimes a single omission of the use of the preventive causes impregnation, as many women have found out to their sorrow.

IT IS AGAINST RELIGION.

I am not dealing here with pious hypocrites, but some very earnest and sincere people have brought up this objection, that the prevention of conception is reprehensible because it is against religion. I know of no place in the Bible where the prevention of conception or limitation of offspring is prohibited. I do not claim to be a great student of the Bible, but when I spoke recently at St. Mark's Church this point was brought up and the minister said distinctly that he did not know, at least he could not think at the time of any place in either the Old or the New Testament which contained anything condemning the use of preventives.

But assuming that it did contain an explicit injunction against their use, I would simply ask those whose conduct is guided by the Bible to refrain from using those means but not to attempt to force their conduct upon people who are guided by different standards of morality.

And besides when a man brings in religion as an argument then no further discussion is possible. I do not sneer at religion, I can even sincerely respect a sincerely religious person, for I know that many of them are both earnest in their convictions and humanitarian in their endeavors, but I simply say that this is a question which we cannot discuss. Religion is a matter of faith and not reason; you believe so and so and that is all there is to it. Another man believes differently. Let him get his salvation in his own way as long as he does not injure you.

IT IS IMMORAL.

This argument is the same as the religious argument. It all depends on what you call immoral. Why the use of a harmless mechanical or chemical agent before or after coitus is more immoral than the use of the same or similar thing by a woman suffering with leucorrhea, I cannot for the life of me see. Immoral is something that is injurious to the community, to another individual, or to the person himself. As I am showing in this paper by the use of irrefutable arguments and figures, the use of such contraceptives is not injurious to the persons who are using them, they are certainly not injurious to one's neighbors, and far from being injurious to the community they are helpful to it by raising the hygienic, eugenic and economic standards. So wherein does the immorality consist?

I am afraid that those who bring up the immorality argument have created a fetish which they would find great difficulty in maintaining on its pedestal if forced to present real arguments. But, again, as I said in discussing the religious argument, some people have peculiar ideas as to what is moral and immoral, and if one has made up his mind that a certain action is immoral it is no use discussing matters. Such people are generally impervious to argument. As to those men who go even further and say that wives who use preventives are nothing but monogamous prostitutes, and I have heard that argument from apparently sane people, one of them even calling himself a social-

ist, I can only say that with such people it is useless to argue. We can only give them tit for tat by calling them imbeciles.

THE MORAL STANDARD OF THOSE WHO MAKE USE OF OR ADVOCATE THE USE OF PREVENTIVES.

Philippics have been delivered and pamphlets and books have been written against those who make use of preventives and against those who advocate the rational limitation of the number of offspring. They have been called immoral, decadent, degenerate, egotists, low creatures devoid of responsibility.

It would be easy to answer by slinging epithets back at our critics and calling them fools and imbeciles incapable of logical reasoning, unwilling to be convinced and crawling into a corner when they are presented with arguments which they are unable to answer, when they are shown proofs which they are unable to refute. But calling names, while a great personal satisfaction occasionally and an excellent safety valve once in a while, is no argument.

I will admit that among the upper classes, and among a certain percentage of the middle classes, the decision to limit the number of children or to avoid having any at all, does not flow from very high motives, that this decision is even selfish, egotistic in the common sense of the term, that it flows from a desire on the part of the parents not to have their comfort or personal pleasures interfered with, that they do not want to have to go through the trouble of bringing up children. But this accusation is distinctly untrue when applied to the vast majority of the middle, professional and working classes. Far from being due to a lower morality, it is due to higher morality. Far from being due to a lack of responsibility, it is due to a heightened sense of responsibility. The animals, and the people nearest to them, have no such responsibility; they breed unrestrictedly, leaving nature or God to take care of their offspring or to kill it off as they may see fit. Thinking parents, however, are so imbued with the sense of responsibility in bringing a human being into the world under our present social and economic conditions, that we cannot blame them, but we must praise them for refusing to bring too large a number.

WHAT LIFE MEANS AT PRESENT TO THE MILLIONS.

I am not an extremist, I do not take one stratum of society, namely the lowest, and try to make believe that all humanity is as wretched as that lowest stratum. I always pride myself on my sane and well-balanced radicalism, and I am certainly not a pessimist. To me personally Fate has not been particularly cruel, in fact many think that it has been particularly kind. I am distinctly an optimist. I believe that this world is going to be the most glorious world to live in and there will not be an unhappy creature in it, but to assert that this is the best of all possible worlds at the present time, is to make a statement which is stupidly, palpably false. Its falseness can be proven in five minutes by going outside and just looking about us.

I know that there is plenty of joy, plenty of happiness, plenty of pleasure in this world, but isn't it true that the pain overbalances the pleasure in this world many hundredfold? Is it not true that we have many millions of working people in our country who have really nothing to live for, working from morning to night merely for their material necessities, merely to keep body and soul together, but without any refining influences, without any artistic or intellectual pleas-

ures? Is it really reprehensible for a working family that earns eighteen or twenty dollars a week to refuse to have more than two children, because they know that if they have more than two the first two will have to be neglected to a certain extent, and to a certain extent will have to be deprived of food and clothes which they need? Could you blame them even if they refused to have any children, because having no pleasures whatever in life, disgusted at the continual, monotonous drudgery of their work, they refuse to bring other creatures into the world that would have to live the same cheerless, hopeless life?

What is there for the intelligent class-conscious workman, holding a twelve dollar or fifteen dollar job, or having to hunt for a job half of the time, to induce him to bring more wage-slaves into the world? And talk to the really intelligent middle class or professional man, the man who has learned to look at the world with clear eyes. You will find that he complains as bitterly, some of them even more bitterly, than does the workman. Until twenty-five or twenty-eight he has to prepare for a career. With our increased educational requirements the age at which professional men graduate and begin to earn a living is advancing further and further from year to year. For ten or fifteen years it is a bitter, hard, sixteen- or eighteen-hour a day struggle to build up a practice, to get a clientele, or to build up an independent business. And in this desperate struggle nine-tenths fail, and lead to the end of their days the lives of drudges, just merely making a living. About ten per cent come out victorious, get to the top; but when they have reached the top they find by looking at the family Bible that they are already forty-five or fifty years old, that they are already on the decline, or will approach it within very few years, and that the material independence, position, fame, etc., do not give them the same pleasure and satisfaction that they expected to enjoy when they were struggling for them so ceaselessly and perhaps so relentlessly.

That there are a few people who seem to have been born with silver spoons in their mouths, for whom everything is prepared, who have nothing to struggle for, and to whom life seems to be an inexhaustible source of fun and pleasure, I admit. But their number is so small as to be entirely negligible, and is much more, is a thousand times, overbalanced by the men and women on the other end of the scale to whom life is a continuous source of suffering, pain, nay agony and torture, from the very day they are born until they are put away in a cheap pine coffin in the bosom of dear mother earth.

I believe that to become convinced that this is not the best possible of worlds, and that for many millions of people this life is nothing but a round of monotonous, senseless drudgery even if devoid of actual pain and suffering, it is only necessary to take a trip, not to the slums, but just in the subway, during rush hours. I thank my fates that it is but very seldom that I have to ride in the subway, but when I do, particularly if in the rush hours, the spectacle fills me with inexpressible sadness.

Just look at the faces—not a happy, contented face in the ten cars of the express train. Just analyze them. Tense, gloomy, dissatisfied, grouchy, distinctly unhappy, cruel, stupid or vapid, such are the expressions of practically all the faces you see there. And what are they all doing there? For what reason are they jostling or being jostled, crushing or being crushed, trampled or being trampled upon,

twice a day, morning and night of every week-day? For what reason? To go down into factories or shops or offices to do useless and disagreeable, or useful but uncongenial, or in general injurious work for eight or ten or twelve hours a day. And what for? Merely to make eight or ten or twenty dollars a week, just to support the body sufficiently to be able to work again. It is work to have what to eat and drink, eat and drink to be able to work. And this grind goes on day after day, week after week, year after year, without any prospect of change for millions of people.

It is to me one of the great tragedies of our present system that people have to spend almost, if not the entire day, merely to earn enough to make a living. The work necessary to make a living should be the incidental work, and it certainly should not take away more than four hours a day from any man or woman. Of course, if a man loves his work that is another matter. Then he may work eighteen hours a day until his eyes close in sleep from sheer exhaustion.

No, this is not a pleasant world to live in at the present time, and it is a sign of a putrid morality and a petrified mentality to curse and to throw stones at those members of the middle and working classes who believe that it is their duty to themselves, to their children, to humanity at large, to limit the number of their offspring within narrow bounds. Far from being a sign of low morality the conscious control of the number of children is a sign of high morality. And I will repeat what I said before, that far from being a sign of a lack of responsibility it is a sign of a high sense of responsibility, of foresight, of love, of the true feeling of humanitarianism.

THE PREVENTION OF CONCEPTION AND ABORTION.

To this point I must devote a few lines, for the greatest obstacle we meet in our prevention of conception propaganda is the confusion, both on the part of physicians and on the part of the laity, of prevention of conception with abortion.

Just as the statute books speak of the two in the same sentence, meting out the same severe punishment for both, so the physician and the layman often speaks of the two as if they were one and the same thing practically, as if the one were as objectionable or as criminal as the other, and as if believing in one necessarily meant accepting the other.

This almost universally prevalent confusion is, as I said, one of the greatest obstacles in the spread of the prevention of conception propaganda, and it is important to clarify this confusion and to shed some light on the subject. Not only do contraception and abortion not belong in the same category but I can truthfully say that one of the principal reasons, one of the strongest motives that makes us advocate contraception so persistently and so assiduously is because we want to do away with the evil of abortion as far as we can, for we do consider abortion a terrible evil.

Not being engaged in the lucrative practice of the abortionist, never having committed an abortion myself, I am free to speak of the subject calmly and frankly and am not under obligation to become hysterical in condemning it publicly as are many of those who are practicing it secretly. I say frankly that there are cases, many cases, in which not to induce an abortion is much more cowardly, much more cruel, much more dishonest, than it would be to induce one. The peace of mind, the honor, the very life itself, and not only of one person but of several persons, very often depend upon the artificial

emptying of the uterus. And under our present social and economic conditions the professional abortionist, much as we may despise or condemn him, has more than once proved a real benefactor, in saving the sanity, the health and the life of a frantic young woman and her frantic family.

But admitting all that, I still consider abortion a real, a serious evil. It is degrading and humiliating to the woman. It is always accompanied with some risk, if not to the life at least to the health of the person (though the dangers of the operation when performed under proper conditions have been greatly diminished they have not yet been entirely eliminated and it is a question if they ever will be) and it is apt to lead to abuses. For this and various other reasons all true humanitarians are endeavoring to do everything possible to diminish the evil of abortion, which is constantly on the increase. And one of the most effective remedies to diminish the evil is the universal knowledge of the proper means of prevention of conception.

And just as it is disgraceful for our statute books to speak of prevention and abortion in the same sentence, meting out the same punishment to both, so it is disgraceful for any physician to get up and talk of the two in the same breath as if they belonged to the same category.

Doesn't any person with any sense see that the two are entirely different, not only in degree but in kind? In inducing abortion we destroy something already formed; we destroy a fetus or an embryo, a fertilized ovum, a potential human being. In prevention, however, we merely prevent chemically or mechanically the spermatazoa from coming in contact with the ovum. There is no greater crime or sin in this than there is in simple abstinence, in refraining from sexual intercourse.

And while everybody is, of course, entitled to his opinions and anybody may entertain any opinions on the subject of prevention that he chooses, nobody has a right to confuse the issues and speak of prevention and abortion as if they were the same or similar things, and I trust that in the discussion that is to follow my esteemed opponents will bear this point in mind.

If I were engaged in a debate on the subject, I would thus summarize the case for the defense, and I believe that my opponent would find himself in great difficulty to contradict or refute my arguments. I would say:

1. The reason many men marry now at such a late age is because they are afraid they would not be able to support a wife with many children. If the men knew that by safe and harmless means he could limit his children to the number he wants to have and to a time most convenient, they would marry much earlier and they would marry much oftener; and this would necessarily have a great effect in diminishing the number of bachelors and old maids. This would in its turn have a great effect in diminishing prostitution with its terrible concomitant evil, venereal disease.

2. Every physician knows that too frequent child-birth, too frequent nursing, and the sleepless nights that are required in bringing up a child, exhaust the vitality of thousands of mothers, make them prematurely old or turn them into chronic invalids. The knowledge of prevention would do away with this evil.

3. On account of our vicious laws, which prevent a free discussion of preventives and which make the imparting of knowl-

edge on the subject so difficult, many women use improper and injurious methods of prevention and thereby injure their health or risk their very lives. Were a free discussion of the subject permissible this evil would be done away with.

4. Similarly there are numberless thousands of men who have become pitiable weaklings, pitiable sexual neurasthenics, from coitus interruptus, or from other injurious methods which they practice through ignorance of better and harmless methods of prevention. Universal knowledge of the proper means of contraception would save these men from a deplorable fate.

5. This would be one of the most important points in summing up my case. The evil of abortion is one of the most terrible evils in our society. It kills thousands of unmarried and tens of thousands of married women. If it does not kill, it often infects, maims and weakens for life. The public will never know just exactly how many victims are sacrificed every year to this terrible Moloch. For, to the honor of the medical profession, be it said, that the physician who is called in to treat a girl or woman dying from a criminal abortion, very often at great risk to himself, protects the good name of the poor woman, and does not give on the death certificate the true cause of death. And whenever I hear of a case of a woman dying from an abortion, as I do not infrequently, I blame not the woman—on the contrary, my heart goes out in pity to the poor victim of our brutal laws—but my blood boils with indignation at society or the state, which mercilessly and pitilessly sacrifices every year so many of its mothers. The knowledge of the prevention of conception would do away entirely with the evil of abortion, or would reduce it at least to a minimum. Every investigator has found that wherever means of prevention of conception are most difficult to obtain, there abortions are at their highest. Where preventives are easy to obtain, where their sale is permitted by law, there both abortion and illegitimacy are reduced to a minimum.

6. We know that a good many married men who patronize prostitution do so not on account of wickedness merely, but to a great extent they are driven to it by the fear of impregnating their wives. And what is more—and this is an illuminating commentary on our pitiful social conditions—many wives know it and not only say nothing, but actually encourage their husbands to visit prostitutes, only to leave them alone, such is their terror of another and another and another pregnancy. Only last week I read in a German publication that it is not an infrequent occurrence among the lower classes in Germany for the wife who earns her own money to give a part of it to the husband in order that he may go to other women and leave her alone. What this means in increased risks of venereal disease needs no detailed discussion. A knowledge of the means of prevention would obviate this terrible evil. Not only our sanitarians but our moralists who care more for man's soul than for his body, should from this point of view alone be in favor of prevention.

7. We now come to an extremely important point. The word eugenics is on the lips of everyone, people who know what it means and people who have the most fantastic notions as to the purport of eugenics and what eugenicists stand for. We know perfectly well that there are people whom it is a crime to permit to bring children into the world. About the unquestionably insane, imbeciles, morons, and

perverts, we need not worry in this respect. Society will have to take care of them by sterilizing them or segregating them. But there are people who can very well get married, provided they do not bring children into the world. Among such we may mention people suffering with tuberculosis, epilepsy, perhaps cancer and certain mental abnormalities. We have no right to deprive those people of any affection in their lives. And besides, it would be worse than useless to do so. If you raise the barriers for entering matrimony too high, if you make your requirements for a marriage certificate too rigid, those people will be sure to enter into illicit unions, and this means an enormous increase in prostitution and illegitimacy, two undoubted evils. But teach those people the proper means of prevention of conception and the problem is solved. For of one thing we may be sure, leaving out of consideration the imbeciles, morons and degenerates who could not be taught to use any precautionary measures, and whom, as I said before, society will have to protect itself against in a different way, there are no parents who would deliberately bring children into the world whom they had reason to fear would be tainted with hereditary disease. No sane parents wish to bring into the world handicapped, maimed and deformed children.

What I said just now also applies to thousands of syphilitics. There are thousands of syphilitic men and women who are perfectly safe as far as their partner is concerned, but are not safe enough to become parents. They cannot infect but they must not give birth to children for fear that the children may have the taint in them. The use of preventives settles this problem and saves the world from thousands of pitiable hereditary syphilitics.

Or is it better to permit tainted parents to bring syphilitic, epileptic and insane children into the world than to use preventives? One reverend gentleman who criticised my teachings said that it was. He said it was much better to have the streets full of syphilitic, maimed and defective children than to accept the doctrines of Dr. Robinson.

And in speaking of the subject of hereditary syphilis I cannot refrain from mentioning a case that I saw but three days ago, namely last Friday. It was the young mother's fifth child. The first two children were born dead, the third and fourth died very soon after birth, and at last the distressed and unsophisticated mother was overjoyed at giving birth to a child that lived. The child is a year and a half old now. It would have been better for it and for society if it had been born dead or died soon after birth—much better, of course, if it had never been conceived. For it was one of the most pitiable, one of the most sickening objects that we are called to look upon in our practice. I know of no more pitiable spectacle than a baby suffering with hereditary syphilis. This child was full of sores and ulcers, the lip was eaten away, it had a characteristic syphilitic snuffles, breathing loudly and with great difficulty, in short it was a pitiable sight. The cause of all this misery is the brutal father. The mother has, of course, also become syphilitic.

Now what are you going to do with that couple? Tell them to abstain? Just try to make such a brute abstain. He would simply go to another woman, infecting right and left. The only way you could make him abstain is by locking him up in jail. If you cannot do that, then in the name of decency and common sense teach such

couples, of which there are thousands in our broad land, at least not to bring any more wretched, diseased creatures into the world.

8. Then again there are thousands of women who suffer from diseases which are not hereditary, which are not dangerous in themselves, but become dangerous only when pregnancy occurs. Such are cases of advanced heart or kidney disease, cases of very narrow or deformed pelvis, cases of tendencies to eclampsia or puerperal convulsions. As long as these women do not become pregnant they get along very well. To impregnate them means to aggravate their disease, to hasten their end or actually to drive them to the grave. As I have to tell many a time to some men, to impregnate their wives would be equivalent to murder. The knowledge of the prevention of conception would obviate these potential murders.

I could present many more points for the defense, but I believe even with the points I have presented so far, my opponents would have a very hard case to refute or demolish. I therefore feel perfectly justified in repeating and concluding with my motto, namely that: There is no single measure that would so positively, so immediately, contribute toward the happiness and progress of the human race as teaching the people the proper means of the prevention of conception.