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NATIONAL SECULAR SOCIETY

POVERTY:

ITS CAUSE AND CURE.

POINTING OUT A MEANS BY WHICH THE WORKING CLASSES MAY RAISE
THEMSELVES FROM THEIR PRESENT STATE OF LOW WAGES AND
CEASELESS TOIL TO ONE OF

COMFORT, DIGNITY, AND INDEPENDENCE;

AND WHICH IS ALSO CAPABLE OF ENTIRELY REMOVING, IN
COURSE OF TIME, THE OTHER PRINCIPAL SOCIAL EVILS

BY

M. G. II.

"The Diseases of Society can, no more than corporeal maladies, be prevented or cured, without being spoken about in plain language."—JOHN STUART MILL.

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INTRODUCTORY REMARKS.

THIS little tract—made as small as possible in order that, by its moderate price, it may be within the reach of even the very poorest—is written for the purpose of pointing out to the working classes, and indeed to all other classes, the only true means of bettering their condition. Its object is thoroughly practical, since the means we advocate is simple, and requires no self-denial; but, on the contrary, *must* cause a speedy improvement in the circumstances of the parties adopting it. And, moreover, if its practice were universally recognized as a great social duty (as there is every reason to believe it will be in time), it leads us to hope that, besides Poverty, the two other great evils of our country, Prostitution and Celibacy, may be entirely extirpated. We doubt not that at first it will be overwhelmed with contempt and abuse, more especially by the “moralist;” but we firmly believe that after such a calm examination of the subject as its immense importance deserves, it will be acknowledged to be the *only means* of escaping from the manifold evils under which we all, rich and poor, now suffer. We have thought it necessary to precede the communication of this means by a short explanation of the principal cause of the present state of Low Wages, in order that the reader may the more deeply feel that any scheme, benevolent or otherwise, for the abolition of poverty, hitherto tried, *must* either be totally powerless to effect its object, or, if successful, can only be so at the cost of inflicting fresh evils, hardly less grievous than Poverty itself.

POVERTY:

ITS CAUSE AND CURE.

I

"THE life of our working classes is worse than that of most of the beasts of burden. They toil unremittingly, at a laborious, monotonous, and in many cases a deadly occupation; without hope of advancement, or personal interest in the work they are engaged in. At night their jaded frames are too tired to permit their enjoyment of the few leisure hours; and the morn awakens them to the same dreary day of ceaseless toil. Even the seventh day, their only holiday, brings them, in this country, little gaiety, little recreation. . . . Thus have the poor to toil on, as long as their strength permits. At last some organ gives way, the stomach, the eyes, or the brain; and the unfortunate sufferer is thrown out of work, and sent to the hospital, whilst his wife and family are reduced to the brink of starvation. Often, the man, rendered desperate by his hopeless position, plunges into drink, and gives himself over to ruin. At other times, the working classes, in a frenzy of rage at their infernal circumstances, determine that they will have higher wages or perish. Hence result the disastrous strikes, and the terrible social revolutions, that have in recent times so often convulsed society. But they are vain; they are but the blind efforts of men to do something or die, the fruitless heavings of a man in a night-mare. The mountain of misery invariably falls back upon their breast, with only increased pressure; and forces them, worn out by impotent struggles, to bear it quietly for another little season."

The above extract* presents a sad, but too true, picture of the manner in which thousands, nay millions, of our fellow countrymen are forced to pass their lives. That it is not overdrawn, all belonging to the class referred to must be able to testify. Those who earn good wages, and therefore save themselves and families from a personal experience of the bitter miseries of poverty, doubtless know many less favored by fortune, who have sunk and been trodden upon, in the hard struggle for the bare necessaries of life which is going on around us.

* From "The Elements of Social Science; or, Physical, Sexual, and Natural Religion." E. Truelove, 256, High Holborn.

Were we to ask, "What is the cause, and what the cure (if any) of this sad state of things?" how various and how contradictory would be the replies. Some, and these would be of the richer classes, would attribute it principally to idleness, drunkenness, or improvidence; recommending as its remedy education, the establishment of penny banks, sick funds, hospitals, &c. A large portion of the middle classes, viewing it from religious grounds, would declare it to be a visitation from heaven, sent for our spiritual good; and offer no other hope than that all will be set right in the next world. Others, of a more practical turn, lay it at the door of over-competition, and recommend emigration to the colonies as a cure. From the above, opinions would vary, in proportion as we descend the social scale, through all the gradations of trades unions, associated industry, socialism, change of laws, down to the extreme of red republicanism, and a forcible division of the property of the rich amongst the poor.

Now, in a work of this limited kind, it would be quite impossible to examine in detail all these various schemes for the bettering of the state of the working classes. We must therefore content ourselves with remarking that those among them that are at all practical, and that have had a trial, partial or general, have either been totally powerless, or, at best, have only had a very passing effect, in raising the poor from the mire in which they are sunk. The main question is, "How can we raise wages?" All else is comparatively unimportant—for as long as the present miserable rate of wages prevails (a rate hardly sufficient to keep starvation from a man's door), education, savings' banks, and the like, are but mockeries. Even religion itself is but a poor substitute for food and other necessaries. No; if we could but raise wages to a fair rate, all the rest would follow in time, even to the reformation of our criminals and prostitutes, who are for the most part driven into those wretched paths of life for very bread.

In order to solve the question, "How can we raise wages?" we must first look to the cause of the present low rate. This, it must be evident to all, arises from the fact that the number of hands able and willing to work greatly exceeds the capital for their employment at good wages; in short, that the supply of labor is too large in proportion to the demand. When this is the case, wages will always be low; and all efforts to raise them by such means as trades-unions and strikes can only result in misery to both employers and employed. We do not wish here to discuss the vexed subject of the combinations of workmen against employers for the purpose of forcing up wages; we only state a fact which few will dispute, namely, that this means of bettering their condition is scarcely ever successful, but on the contrary, nearly always leaves those who have taken part in it in a worse condition than ever. Equally powerless for good is the plan, once very popular, of fixing wages by law, at a higher rate than would be warranted by the demand. Such compulsory interference with the labor market was easily evaded; but where enforced, it always had the effect of throwing a number of men out of work. A

moment's consideration will convince us that such *must* be the result. Capital is a certain sum which is divided, in the form of wages, amongst a certain number of men. If, without altering the relative proportion between capital and labor, we forcibly raise the current rate of wages, a portion only of the hands may indeed obtain that advance, but at the cost of depriving the rest of their shares altogether; that is, throwing them out of work, to starve, or rely on charity.

From the above considerations, we believe it will be acknowledged that the only means of raising wages, without at the same time causing a number of hands to suffer by it, would be to increase the capital, and therefore the demand for labor, as compared with the supply.

Now, from various causes, amongst the principal of which we may mention the application of steam to land and sea travelling (that is, railway and steam navigation), the rotation of crops and other improvements in agriculture, &c., this country has increased in wealth within the last fifty years to an extent and with a rapidity hitherto unknown. And yet the working classes have by no means benefited by all this increase of capital. It is quite as difficult for them to gain an honest livelihood now as it was formerly. The very small weekly sums (six or eight shillings, for instance) which we find to have been the current wages two centuries or so back, may seem to give the lie to this; but such sums were in reality equal to double or treble their present value, since food and rent were then not one-half or one-third as high as at present. To convey some idea of the cost of living at that period, we give the following table of the price of some of the necessaries of life about the middle of the 17th century:—

Beef and Mutton, per lb. ...	3 $\frac{3}{4}$ d.	Oatmeal, per quart	1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.
Bacon	" ... 3 $\frac{1}{4}$ d.	Beer, per gallon	3d.
Dutch Cheese	" ... 2 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	Eggs, per dozen	3d.
Best Salt Butter	" ... 4d.	Sack of Best Coals	6d.
Biscuit	" ... 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ d.	Weekly rent of a laborer's	
Cotton Candles	" ... 4d.	cottage	2d.

We have not given the price of wheaten bread, because in the middle of the 17th century it had hardly come into general use, its place being supplied by rye, oatmeal, or buck wheat, whose price bore about the same relative proportion to wages as wheaten bread now does.

Few will be bold enough to assert that wages have advanced in greater proportion than this. We here speak of factory and other trade operatives. The agricultural laborer has fared far worse, for his wages have never considerably varied, during two centuries, from 10s. per week, notwithstanding the increase in the cost of the principal necessaries. As we should expect, we find his condition to be worse than any other class of honest laborers, and by far inferior to that of the condemned criminals. From Mr. Mayhew's work we learn that, whilst prisoners on hard labor are supplied with a weekly allowance of 254 ounces of solid food—that being the smallest amount which (according to eminent medical men) can be given consistently

with health and vigor—the English laborer can procure for himself, after feeding his family, no more than an average of 140 ounces. That is to say, the honest working man gets hardly more than half as much as the criminal, whose allowance is the smallest consistent with health and vigor. In plain terms, a large portion of the most hard-working of our industrial classes are *half-starved*.

If the case of male laborers is bad, doubly so is that of the females. The miserable condition of the sempstresses and slop-workers for large shops is well known. Indeed, so truly appalling is the life they lead, that instead of wondering at our streets being over-run with prostitutes, we ought rather to feel astonishment that so many young women should be found willing to prefer a virtuous life with sixteen hours' daily toil, and barely enough food to keep life in them, to the degraded course of living on the streets: in which way, however shameful, they can at least generally procure an abundance of food.

After such facts as these, and they might be multiplied indefinitely, let us no longer boast of our civilization, our respect for religion, our wondrous progress in arts and sciences. Such only tend to dazzle us, and to hide with a gilded cloak the vast mass of poverty, over-work, and vice, beneath. If all our glorious achievements cannot lighten the sufferings of our fellow beings, then have they nothing accomplished worthy of being called glorious.

We are now led to inquire into the causes which have prevented the poorer classes from sharing in the great increase of wealth which has taken place during the present century. Such, all our best modern authors declare to be **OVER-POPULATION**. We shall now examine and explain what is called the "Law of Population."

II.

One of the chief propositions of this law is the following:—"All animated nature has a constant tendency to increase beyond the means for its support;" that is to say, that, however great may be the increase in the produce of the soil, it will always in old countries be far short of the increase of living beings, supposing nothing were to prevent their following natural instinct, and multiplying their species unchecked. This applies equally to the human race, notwithstanding the power they possess of immensely augmenting the produce of the soil above the natural yield.

Now, although man's greatest power of multiplication is not exactly known, it can be approached nearly enough for our present purposes. It has been variously stated by different writers at the power of doubling the numbers in the course of every 25 years, to as rapidly as every 10 years. We will choose the more moderate rate, and suppose population capable of doubling itself every quarter of a century. Representing the present population as 1, at the end of 25 years it would be 2; in fifty years it would have again doubled, 4; in another 25 years, 8; and at the end of the century, 16; that is, it would be sixteen times as numerous as at first.

As to the rate of increase of the produce of the soil, it is even more difficult to arrive at a true result, than in the case of population; but one thing we may be certain of, that it is very far indeed behind the latter. For the sake of argument, however, we will suppose that the produce of this island might be increased every twenty-five years, by a quantity equal to what it at present produces. No sane man could suppose a greater increase than this. Indeed in a few centuries it would make every acre of land in the island like a garden.

In the table here given we see these two rates contrasted:—

	Present Time.	At the end of			
		25 Years.	50 Years.	75 Years.	100 Years.
Increase of Food	1	2	3	4	5 &c.
Increase of Population ...	1	2	4	8	16 &c.

By this we see, that, were it possible for man to follow his greatest rate of multiplication, at the end of a century he would exceed, by more than three times, the food for his sustenance. But we know that this would be practically impossible. A larger number of individuals than could procure food would not be able to exist a week after food began to run short; which, in the above example, would occur after the lapse of the first 25 years. We therefore see that the rate of increase of the human race must be limited to the very moderate rate of increase of food; all efforts to exceed that rate being met by a falling off in the necessary supply of food, that is, by famine. But though this must operate to repress excess of multiplication, were there no other checks; still, in point of fact, it is rarely that this is the actual one. It is replaced (especially in more civilized countries) by a large variety of other checks. In describing these, we shall for convenience divide them into two great divisions, the Positive and the Preventive checks. The former consists of wars, vice, disease, misery, and all other causes whatsoever which tend to shorten the duration of human life. The latter, having no direct influence on the deaths, operates in checking the births, and consists in Sexual Abstinence or Celibacy, whatever form it may assume. The priesthood, convents and nunneries in Catholic countries, the large standing armies and navies of most civilized states, to whose members marriage is generally impossible; above all, the class who remain single from motives of prudence, common to all countries, but most numerous in Switzerland, Norway, a few German States, and our own, all have the effect of reducing the number of births, and thus effecting, by opposite means, precisely the same end as is brought about by the positive check, namely, keeping down the population to the level of the food.

From the action of one or other of these checks man has had no means of escape. He cannot choose *apart* from them: he can only choose *between* them. If he follows natural instincts without restraint, and brings more beings into the world than can find support (making every allowance for increased yield of the products of the soil con-

sequent on improving knowledge of agriculture, &c.), the surplus must be cut off by disease, vice, or war; unless, indeed, a part of these evils are warded off, as amongst the working classes of England, by fearful efforts of industry, which reduce them to the condition of mere machines. On the other hand, if he exercise that prudence and foresight which is peculiar to civilized man, and restrain himself from begetting offspring until late in life (say thirty), he will by this prudence procure for himself exemption to a very great extent from the evils of over-population: but at the cost, besides an immense amount of unhappiness, of introducing vicious habits.

Had we space we should examine in detail the condition of every modern state in the world, and show how population is repressed in each, either by the positive or preventive check; and how in proportion to the rarity of the one, we shall be sure to find the opposite check in force. However, as such would lead us beyond the limits of a small tract of this nature, we must content ourselves with reviewing two or three countries where their action is most plainly seen. Amongst the most remarkable is Hindostan or India. Here marriage is greatly encouraged by the religious code, which makes the procreation of male children one of the greatest merits. In the ordinances of Menu (their Bible,) it is said, "By a son, man obtains a victory over all people; by a son's son, he enjoys immortality; and afterwards by the son of that grandson, he reaches the solar abode." Thus, marriage in India is considered a religious duty; and therefore, the preventive check operating little, the positive one must of necessity supply its place. The people are so crowded that the most excessive poverty prevails, and periodical famines have been always very frequent. Wars and pestilences have also at times carried off large numbers. So much for the positive check falling on a race but half-civilized; let us see its effect on a people much more advanced—the Chinese.

In China the population is enormous, being upwards of 300 millions, or about one-third of the human race. These vast numbers are owing to the goodness of the soil and climate, the very great attention that has always been paid to agriculture, and also the extraordinary encouragements to marriage, which here, as in India, is considered a religious duty; to be childless being held a dishonor. The preventive check having therefore operated but little, the positive has been the chief one. The most grinding and abject poverty prevails among the lower classes, together with an untiring industry and hard work, (a combination which finds a parallel perhaps in England alone). Famines are very frequent, which sweep off vast numbers, and infanticide is very general. It is in these modes rather than by wars (which, till lately, have not been so destructive in China), that the positive check operates. The check to population from vicious sexual intercourse does not appear to be very considerable in China. The women are modest and reserved, and adultery is rare.

From the above two examples of the operation of the positive check, let us turn to the opposite extreme, where the preventive check

or sexual restraint, is in greatest force, namely, in Switzerland, Norway, and several of the German States. We shall borrow the words of a weekly periodical,* which sets forth in glowing terms the prosperous and happy condition of the people of those countries. "They are certainly in advance of us in England," says the writer. "They have almost destroyed pauperism; they have no ragged children, nor ragged schools; the very boys have such regard for the rights of property, that the orchards are not enclosed, and cherry trees hang loaded over the paths and roads, without being robbed by the pilferer, or watched by the owner; not even watch-dogs are kept; each defends the property of his neighbour as well as his own. The houses are large and comfortable, two stories, and sometimes three, with numerous apartments; and in all the country there are no such cots or hovels as there are in England. The people are all well but simply dressed; and even the few laborers that live on day wages are as well dressed, and as comfortably fed and lodged, as their masters; and work and live in hope that by their savings, which are weekly accumulating, they shall be able to purchase a little farm for themselves, and spend the evening of their days in comfort." We should remark that the writer of the article from which the above is taken, attributes all these beneficial results to the system of "peasant proprietors" there in force; that is to say, the possession by every laborer of a piece of land of from five to ten or more acres, which is cultivated by himself and his family. Now we do not deny that such may be a very useful means of raising the condition of the working classes, giving them, as it does, a personal interest in their work; still we assert that *alone* it would be quite powerless to raise one jot the poor from their miserable condition. In proof of this, we point to the description of the state of the Chinese above given, which shows the results of the above system (for there it is in greatest force, nearly every peasant being a land-holder) when *unaided by sexual restraint*.

The true cause of this prosperity we find in the custom of late marriages and celibacy, more general in those countries than in any other in Europe. Indeed, so much is it felt to be a duty to refrain from wedlock until the man is able to maintain a wife and children, that in some of the states alluded to, a law is enforced which requires every person intending to marry, to prove before a magistrate that he possesses the means of supporting a family; otherwise he cannot marry. However repulsive such a law may seem to us Englishmen, born and bred in an atmosphere of liberty, there can be no doubt that it has effected in those countries all the improvements so remarkable of late years.

We shall now turn to our own country, and endeavour to solve the question put in the first part of this work, "What are the causes

* "Family Herald," for the week ending Feb. 22, 1857, article, "The World but little known."

which have operated in cutting off the working classes of England from their due share of the vast increase of wealth, which has taken place in this country during the present century?" To this we boldly answer, *early marriages and undue procreation*; and in this we are supported by all the greatest modern writers on the state of the poor, to wit, Messrs. John Stuart Mill, Malthus, McCulloch, Dr. Whately, and others too numerous to mention. We are so impressed with the idea (which has descended to us from the ancient Hebrews), that to rear a large family is a very meritorious act, that it may seem startling when we lay at its door all the poverty, misery, and even crime, so rife amongst the poorer classes. And yet from the facts before passed in review, namely, the existence of universal poverty in all those countries whose inhabitants do not practise sexual restraint, and, on the contrary, its rarity in proportion as sexual restraint is exercised, we can no longer shut our eyes to the conclusion, however harsh it may appear, that the large families common amongst the working classes have not only the effect of dragging down and crippling the parents who have to toil for their support, but are also the great cause of the present state of low wages, ceaseless drudgery, and early death, consequent on an over-crowded population, and too great a supply of labor in proportion to the demand. As long as the number of hands seeking work is greater than the capital for their employment at fair wages, it is vain to expect a rise in wages; just in the same way as when the population of a country exceeds the food for its comfortable support, it would be impossible for all to get enough sustenance.

III.

From what we have said in the preceding chapters, it may be thought that we would wish to impress upon the poor and working classes the duty of exercising moral restraint; that is, sexual abstinence. This is the view of the question taken by Mr. Malthus, Dr. Chalmers, and many other writers; and no doubt whatever can exist as to the power of this means, if it could be adequately practised, to remove poverty and want in England. But, with all due deference to such eminent authorities, we cannot refrain from expressing our firm conviction that such a remedy for poverty is almost, if not quite, as bad as the disease it would cure. Our endeavours should be not merely directed to the removal of poverty, which is but one form of human misery, but to the much larger question of a removal of *all* the causes of unhappiness. If we remove one only to replace it by another as bad, then have we done no real good.

This subject—the evils of moral restraint or sexual abstinence—will require a little careful examination; as, although we all feel by instinct that it is an evil, yet (from its very nature causing its victims to hide their sufferings) it is much less capable of being clearly defined and put down in black and white, than is that of over-population, and its natural result—poverty.

In order the better to explain this subject, we shall borrow a few

passages from the work already quoted from, which, being written by a student of medicine, who has evidently carefully studied this branch of physiology, is entitled to our serious attention.

"It is most unwise," he says, "to suppose that our chief duty with regard to our appetites and passions, is to exercise self-denial. This quality is far from being at all times a virtue; it is quite as often a vice; and it should by no means be unconditionally praised. Every natural passion, like every organ of the body, was intended to have moderate exercise and gratification. . . . At the present, in this country, abstinence or self-denial, in the matter of sexual love, is much more frequently a natural vice than a virtue; and instead of deserving praise, merits condemnation, as we may learn from the mode in which all-just nature punishes it. Wherever we see disease following any line of conduct, we may be certain that it has been erroneous and sinful, for nature is unerring. Sexual abstinence is frequently attended by consequences not one whit less serious than sexual excess, and far more insidious and dangerous, as they are not so generally recognised. While every moralist can paint in all its horrors the evils of excess, how few are aware that the reverse of the picture is just as deplorable to the impartial and instructed eye." Those who require a more detailed account should consult the work itself, where also are shown in vivid colors the hundred times more ruinous effects resulting from the abuse of this part of our frames, whether in the form of self-pollution, or that of prostitution, with the melancholy list of diseases in their train; both of which vices are *sure* to be rampant wherever great obstacles to marriage exist.

Let us now view moral restraint or sexual abstinence from a lower, but, to the majority, more influential point of view; that is, its effect on the every-day comfort of the working man. It is here that would be found the greatest difficulty in its adoption; for to a young operative a wife is a *necessity*, if he would obtain any of those innumerable small comforts, without which, however trifling they may be thought by some, this life is hardly worth the having. Unable to hire a cook or housekeeper, as is done by the more wealthy bachelor, he would find it impossible to procure comfortable meals, nor even any degree of cleanliness in his home, engaged as he is from morning to night at work, probably far away from home. If the life of the unmarried working man is comfortless and dreary, ten times more so must be that of the unmarried woman after a certain age. Indeed, amongst the poorer classes, such a person is quite in the way; she is felt to be a burden to her family if she remain at home; and it is hardly possible to support herself independently in lodgings, except in the most miserable way. Thus, apart from any other reason, marriage is felt to be an absolute necessity to both sexes, soon after their reaching full growth, for the sake of that dearest of all things to an Englishman, no matter how miserable it may be, a home. The last remaining objection to moral restraint and late marriage, namely, the deprivation, during the flower of man's life, of the two dearest objects for which human nature yearns—to love and be beloved by a

wife and children—is too evident from the unhappiness it is universally acknowledged to produce, to need illustration. Suffice it to say that by this, the lot of the greater part of the middle classes, especially the female portion, is rendered so comfortless and dreary, that many of them would joyfully exchange their comfort and wealth, enjoyed in solitude, for the poverty of what are called their less fortunate neighbours, who at least are not deprived of all outlet for the social and domestic virtues with which we are all endowed. Indeed, so utterly cheerless and miserable are the lives of most of that much to be pitied section of the middle classes, called in ridicule “old maids,” that we could not have the heart to wish to see the like state amongst the poor, who, God knows, have as it is but very few pleasures.

“Is there no escape, then,” we are tempted to cry in despair, “from the miseries inflicted on man by want of food, love, or leisure.” “There is none,” cries the orthodox political economist; “none,” repeats the disciple of Malthus; “none,” echoes the religionist. “If such be the case then, if ordinary political economy, Malthusianism of the ascetic school, religion itself, can do nothing but tear from us all hopes of improvement in this world, and content themselves with croaking resignation and patience under our afflictions: then will we have none of them.” But we truly believe that human affairs are *not* so hopeless, else should we have refrained from opening afresh the many wounds which torment us. No, there *is* a means, the *ONLY* means, by which the evils of want of love, equally with those of want of food and leisure (those three great necessities of our nature), may in course of time, be entirely cured. It may appear at first sight, perhaps, ridiculously unequal to such gigantic results, perhaps immoral, perhaps unnatural, but we are confident in being able to meet and refute any objections which can be made to it, and prove it to be the only solution to the question nearest to the interests and happiness of mankind—“Is it possible to obtain for each individual a fair share of food, love, and leisure?”

IV.

The means we speak of, the only means by which the virtue and the progress of mankind are rendered possible, is PREVENTIVE SEXUAL INTERCOURSE. By this is meant, sexual intercourse where means are taken to prevent impregnation. In this way love would be obtained without entailing upon us the want of food and leisure, by overcrowding the population.

Two questions here arise: First, “Is it possible, and in what way?” Second, “Can it be done without causing moral and physical evil?”

In answer to the first question, we reply that there are several means which have been adopted in this country, and more especially on the continent, for the purpose of checking the increase of an already numerous family without the exercise of perfect continence; but we shall chiefly recommend the following, as most of the others are more or less injurious to the health or nervous system of the parties adopting

them. The following, however, has none of these objections, being perfectly harmless, easy of adoption, and at the same time not in the least diminishing the enjoyment of the act of coition. It consists in the introduction of a piece of fine sponge, slightly soaked in tepid water, and of sufficient size, in such a way as to guard the womb from the entrance of the male semen during sexual connection. This might be followed by an injection of tepid water.

By this means a fruitful result would be rendered impossible. The other means of preventing conception which have been employed or proposed, are, firstly, withdrawal before ejaculation; secondly, the use of the sheath, or "French Letter;" thirdly, the use of injections immediately after intercourse; and fourthly, the avoidance of connection, from two days before, till eight days after, the monthly courses—at which time impregnation is far most likely to occur. Of these, the two first are the most certain preventives: but the two last, as well as the sponge, are the least open to objection in other respects.

The second question was, "Can preventive sexual intercourse be used without causing physical or moral evils?" We firmly believe that it can, or at least, that if there be any evil results, such would sink into insignificance beside the present ones, which, arising as they do from over-population, are otherwise irremediable. We think a calm consideration of the principal objection which may be urged against the adoption of this invaluable means, will enable us to convince the reader that it is founded on error. We allude to the idea that many entertain, of preventive intercourse being a kind of murder or infanticide. In order to do this, we must pause to explain the nature of the act of generation, which, though one of the simplest, and at the same time most beautiful operations of nature, has often been considered as a deep mystery and a subject never to be mentioned.

The future human being is formed by the union, in the womb, of two very minute cells, of opposite sexes, invisible to the naked eye, called the sperm (male) and germ (female) cells, which is effected by the act of copulation. When once this union has taken place, the embryo, as it is then called, possesses *life*, which is as sacred as that of the adult's, and the destruction of which would truly be murder. But to prevent this union from taking place is a totally different matter. Before coition the seminal fluid is no more than a secretion, like the saliva, perspiration, &c.; and consequently it is a total confusion of ideas to associate its loss with infanticide, as it cannot be murder to destroy that which has never existed as life. Moreover, the curious discovery has recently been made, that every time a woman menstruates (that is, has the monthly illness), one or more of the germ cells or eggs is spontaneously discharged, and, if sexual coition have not previously taken place, *it is wasted*. So that, if we go on the principle that to prevent a birth is murder, we might with equal justice accuse those persons who remain unmarried during the time of potency (namely, more than 30 years) of the murder of all

the children who *might have been born*, had they married. Far from being murder, preventive intercourse is the only possible means of preventing murder; for that is hardly too strong a word to apply to the bringing into the world of such a number of beings as we know could never find support should they all reach manhood. Let us see if facts do not bear us out in this assertion. In this country, amongst the poor, 53 in every 100, or more than one-half of the children who are born, die in infancy. Now in spite of this large amount of mortality, those who survive to manhood, perhaps not more than one-third of those born, still find it next to impossible to gain a livelihood. What, then, would be the result, think you, were it possible, by improvements of dwellings and other means of health, to save those children from an early grave, and throw upon the already overcrowded labor market a triple number of hands? *Famine.*

Thus, if we know that, as at present, twice or thrice as many beings are brought into the world as can by any possibility find food, instead of a crime, would not preventive intercourse rather be the greatest virtue we could possibly practise, since it would save nearly two-thirds of our fellow-beings from the death by slow starvation, poverty, or neglect, which is otherwise *inevitable*?

For the satisfaction of those who may feel timid in adopting anything which they suppose to be new, it will be as well to mention that Messrs. Francis Place, Richard Carlile, Robert Dale Owen, Dr. Knowlton, and the author of the *Elements of Social Science*, have, in the journals or books edited or published by them, strongly recommended the adoption of preventive intercourse. It is also openly advocated by a number of the most eminent foreign writers, some of them holding high positions in the universities of their respective cities.

With regard to the extent to which it should be practised, that must of course depend greatly on the present state of population of the country, or of the class adopting it; but we believe we should be near the mark in saying that, under existing circumstances, married persons should *in no case* allow themselves more than two children, at least in this country. Indeed, considering the fearfully overcrowded state of England, it would be a noble sacrifice on the part of married persons to refrain from having any for the present, until the rate of wages has somewhat risen.*

The day will come, and soon too, we hope, when the having a large family, far from being thought a virtue, as at present, will be looked upon in its true light—that of a great social wrong; and although this tract is more particularly addressed to the working classes, as they are probably the greatest sufferers by the present state of things, and the least aware of its true cause, we nevertheless believe limited procreation to be a duty equally binding on *all classes*, rich or poor.

Mr. Malthus, the discoverer of the great Law of Population, laid it

* Or until the price of the necessaries of life—as bread, house-rent, clothing, &c.—has fallen; which, as we have before shown, is practically the same as an increase of money-wages.

down as a duty strictly binding on all, "Not to bring beings into the world for whom one cannot find means of support;" but what would be the result of following that course? Why, to give the rich a monopoly of those blessings, or rather those *necessaries* of life, love and offspring, cutting off the poor from what is now often their only solace. Instead of the above, we should rather say, "It is a sacred duty for us *all*, by the use of preventive means, to limit the number of our families, in order that we may not prevent our fellow beings from obtaining their share of love, food, and leisure," any one of which is, in the present age of celibacy and large families, quite unattainable without a proportionate sacrifice of the two others.

Preventive intercourse, then, is the only means by which it is possible for mankind to make any real or satisfactory advance in happiness; and were it to be universally practised, it could not fail to cheapen food, raise wages, and remove the greater part of the vice and disease for which, in spite of all our boasting, this country is remarkable.

But although preventive intercourse is the main remedy for poverty amongst the poor, and celibacy amongst the rich, there are some other schemes which, tried with the above, would doubtless do much good. Amongst the foremost is associated industry, that is, the system which gives every working man in trade a direct interest in the success of his labor, and a share of the profits, raising him from the condition of a mere machine to that of a kind of junior partner. In a similar manner, there is no doubt that to raise the country laborer from his present condition of a hired drudge, to that of an owner of land, however small in quantity, would have a very beneficial effect in improving his state, moral and physical. This would require an alteration in the laws regarding freehold land, which now render its acquirement almost impossible for any but a rich man. However, as such reforms are for the most part out of the reach of the class to whom this work is addressed, and are, after all, of little consequence compared with the duty of limiting procreation, we need not longer pause to consider them.

In conclusion, we call upon all to throw away false prejudices, and unite in the adoption of preventive sexual intercourse. By such means the state of ideal happiness for which we all instinctively yearn, may not be in time so unattainable; meanwhile, the working classes can, by the practice of the above simple and harmless expedient, very much better their condition with regard to wages: in which it is vain to expect a rise as long as the supply of labor is so great in proportion to the demand, as is the case in these days of large families and over-crowded population. Working men! your salvation is in your own hands. If you allow yourselves to turn from it and lean solely upon socialism, red republicanism, and trades'-unions, your condition is indeed hopeless; but we sincerely believe that when once you learn the true remedy for your ills, you will not be slow to adopt it: and by using every effort in your power to spread the knowledge of it amongst your fellow workmen, will be the means of raising the class to which you belong, from the state

of semi-slavery, with ceaseless toil and scanty food, which is but too commonly their lot, to one of comfort and independence.

POSTSCRIPT.

The reader is earnestly requested to do all in his power towards making widely known the contents of this tract. This he might do with little or no trouble to himself, by lending it amongst his friends or fellow workmen, or by leaving it on the tables of coffee-houses, mechanics' institutes, and other public places. It must be evident that unless the duty of limited procreation be almost universally recognized, any good effected by its practice in raising wages, will be liable to be counteracted by the earlier marriages and increased procreation of those not adopting it.

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—*The British Journal of Homæopathy*, January, 1860. (Published Quarterly, Price 5s.)

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