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BIRTH CONTROL

— AND —

THE WAGE EARNER



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By H Scott Bennett. (c. 1917?)

FORWORD.

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Few words, and certainly no apology, are required to introduce the following pages to the reader.

Written for the married, and those about to marry, it is believed that the Pamphlet will be heartily welcomed by many.

For the rest, the hope is expressed that the information given may be the means of brightening the outlook for many "a slave of a slave," and that the cause of fewer and better babies may in some measure be helped.

H. SCOTT BENNETT.

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THE WAGE EARNER

— AND —

BIRTH CONTROL.

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I.

THE question of Birth Control, or family limitation, is a question of no small importance to wage-earners. It is most certainly a matter of very great importance to their wives. Who can pass through the streets of the poorer class of the city and suburbs without recognizing the urgency and importance of the question?

It is a matter of common observation that large families are very largely confined to working-class parents. The mother prematurely old through excessive child-bearing, the children ill-fed, ill-clothed, ill-housed, and the father seeking recreation in his spare hours anywhere but in the house—alas! cases of this sort are all too common in the annals of those who toil!

The families of the professional and middle-classes are usually small thanks to the knowledge which is theirs and upon which they act. What good reason can be advanced for the withholding of such knowledge from the proletariat? Unless it be frankly contended that the workers are expected to bring forth lives in abundance, to the end that there shall be ample material for cannon fodder and industrial exploitation, it is not easy to see just why the undoubtedly benefits of the small family system should be the exclusive possession of the more fortunately situated members of society. That many opponents of the small family system really hold this view, although not publicly avowing it, is doubtless a fact. As Prof. Thomas Nixon

Carver, of Harvard, wisely and wittily remarked: "Foxes think large families among the rabbits highly commendable." Employers who want large supplies of cheap labour, priests who want large numbers of parishioners, military leaders who want plenty of cheap food for gunpowder, and politicians who want plenty of voters, all agree in commanding large families and rapid multiplication amongst the poorer classes.

In very many cases where opposition is raised to the dissemination of hygienic methods of family limitation amongst the workers, the opponents of such dissemination are quite certain that it is not undesirable that the knowledge should be made use of by themselves. The opposition is not to the methods of birth control as such, but to the use of these methods by the workers! An extraordinary position to take up, surely, and one that can only be justified, apparently, in terms of Prof. Carver's explanation.

Other critics are not wanting who take up the position that the dissemination of birth control methods or, indeed, the discussion of the subject of family limitation is "indecent." Fortunately for the cause of social well-being the number of such critics steadily declines, and throughout the world there is to be found to-day an insistent demand for the plain and frank discussion of matters appertaining to this most important subject.

The truth is that the cry of "indecent" proceeds largely from the lips of those who have too long retarded the frank and open handling of vitally important subjects connected with sex. The snigger and the smutty jest too frequently heard in the streets when sexual matters are mentioned, is in no small measure due to the reprehensible manner in which prudish people have treated everything appertaining to the sexual life. Where instruction and guidance have been urgently demanded, a foolish secrecy and false modesty has been substituted, sad mischief being thus wrought in the lives of scores of youths and maidens, men and women.

There is nothing "indecent" or "immoral" about birth control by rational hygienic means. Quite otherwise. Let it be remembered that it is the most effective foe of abortion, although there are not wanting unscrupulous men and women who will insist upon confusing birth control and abortion in the endeavour, apparently, to lead the unthinking to suppose that both belong to the same category. The difference between the two is so plain and, one would think, so obviously dissimilar, as to render confusion impossible. With abortion there is destroyed the already formed foetus or embryo, the fertilised ovum—a human being in the making. By the use of hygienic methods of birth control, however, we merely prevent by chemical or mechanical means the male sperm from coming into contact with the ovum. There is no greater crime or "sin" in this than there is in sexual abstinence, as Dr. W. J. Robinson very truly remarks. And while everybody is, of course, entitled to his or her opinion upon the subject of prevention, nobody has the right to confuse the issues and speak of prevention and abortion as if they were the same or similar things.

To the contention that prevention is "unnatural" let it suffice to say that we daily act "unnaturally" in a thousand and one different ways, if by "unnatural" is meant the turning from animal instinct. Cooking may thus be termed "unnatural," the wearing of clothes is "unnatural," nay, chastity and monogamy being a divergence from animal instinct must be spoken of as "unnatural" likewise! All civilisation, as has been frequently pointed out, is just one long process of controlling and modifying nature.

Bernard Shaw, in the course of a recent article, lays insistence upon the primary need for a full and frank discussion of birth control. "The taboo," he says, "on all mention or discussion of household sanitation was broken down by cholera and enteric fever. Nobody was the penny the worse and innumerable lives were saved. The taboo against the discussion of birth control must break down in the same way. . . . However the subject

may shock those who are obsessed by the taboo, it must be discussed now, taboo or no taboo. . . . Everyone should be taught that reproduction is a controllable activity, the application of that knowledge being left to the discretion of the couples concerned." Birth control, provided "self control" is the sole means employed, meets with the endorsement of some people, who seem to hold that whilst there can be no adequate defence put forward for ruinously large families, yet contend that "self-control" alone must be relied upon as the preventive measure. The following, in this connection, from the pen of C. Killick Millard, M.D., Medical Health Officer of Leicester (Eng.) may fittingly be quoted :—

"Self-control" within the bonds of matrimony, however commendable in other respects, is practically useless as a preventive measure. The most abstemious and self-controlled of husbands may have the largest families—witness many of the clergy themselves! To recommend the poor to employ an unreliable method in a case like this is to mock them. On the other hand, the employment of artificial means, whilst far more effectual, undoubtedly involves a certain amount of self-control and self-denial, and this is one chief reason why they are not resorted to by the more reckless, selfish and depraved sections of the community."

It is not as widely known as it should be that, for the first and last time in Australia a charge of "obscenity" was laid against Neo-Malthusian teachings in 1888. In that year a Sydney bookseller was fined for selling Mrs. Annie Besant's pamphlet, the "Law of Population." Upon an appeal being made to a higher Court, the conviction was quashed, and Mr Justice Windeyer, in delivering judgment, gave such excellent reasons for refusing to countenance the charge of "obscenity" levelled at works popularising birth control methods that part of the judgment is here reproduced. His Honor said :—

"A court of law has now to decide for the first time

whether it is lawful to argue in a decent way with earnestness of thought and sobriety of language the right of married men and women to limit the number of children to be begotten by them by such means as medical science says are possible and not injurious to health. Of the enormous importance of this question, not only to persons of limited means in every society and country, but to nations, the populations of which have a tendency to increase more rapidly than the means of subsistence, there cannot be the slightest doubt. Since the days when Malthus first announced his views on the subject to be misrepresented and vilified, as originators of new ideas usually are by the ignorant and unthinking, the question has not only been pressing itself with increasing intensity of force upon thinkers and social reformers dealing with it in the abstract, but the necessity of practically dealing with the difficulty of over-population has become a topic publicly discussed by statesmen and politicians. It is no longer a question whether it is expedient to prevent the growth of a pauper population, with all its attendant miseries following upon semi-starvation, overcrowding, disease, and an enfeebled national stamina of constitution ; but how countries suffering from all these causes of national decay shall avert national disaster by checking the production of children, whose lives must be too often a misery to themselves, a burden to society, and a danger to the State.

"Invectives are no longer hurled against those who, like John Stuart Mill, and others, discuss in the abstract the necessity of limiting the growth of the population ; but they are reserved for those who attempt practically to follow up their teaching and show how such abstract reasoning should be acted upon. It seems to be conceded by public opinion, and has indeed been admitted in argument before us, that the abstract discussion of the

necessity of limiting the number of children brought into the world is a subject fitting for the philosopher and student of sociology. The thinkers of the world have so far succeeded in educating it upon the subject, and public attention is so thoroughly aroused as to its importance, that every reader of our English periodical literature knows it to be constantly discussed in magazines and reviews. Statesmen, reviewers, and ecclesiastics join in a common chorus of exhortation against improvident marriages to the working-classes, and preach to them the necessity of deferring the ceremony till they have saved the competency necessary to support the truly British family of ten or twelve children. Those, however, who take a practical view of life, will inevitably ask whether the masses, for whose benefit this exhortation is given, can be expected to exercise all the powers of self-denial without any hope of ever being able to educate and bring up eight or ten children?

"The Protestant world rejects the idea of a celibate clergy as incompatible with purity and the safety of female virtue, though the ecclesiastic is strengthened by all the moral helps of a calling devoted to the noblest of objects, and by every inducement to a holy life. With strange inconsistency, the same disbelievers in the power of male human nature to resist the most powerful instincts, expect men and women, animated by no such exalted motives, with their moral nature more or less stunted, huddled together in dens where the bare conditions of living preclude even elementary ideas of modesty, with none of the pleasures of life, save those enjoyed in common with the animals—expect these victims of a social state, for which the educated are responsible if they do not use their superior wisdom and knowledge for its redress, to exercise all the self-control of which the celibate ecclesiastic is supposed to be incapable. If

it is right to declaim against over-population as a danger to society, as involving conditions of life not only destructive to morals but conducive to crime and national degeneration, the question immediately arises, can it be wrong to discuss the possibility of limiting births by methods which do not involve in their application the existence of an impossible state of society in the world as it is, and which do not ignore the natural sexual instincts in man.

"Why is the philosopher who describes the nature of the diseases from which we are suffering, who detects the causes which induce it and the general character of the remedies to be applied, to be regarded as a sage and a benefactor, but his necessary complement in the evolution of a great idea, the man who works out in practice the theories of the abstract thinker, to be denounced as a criminal?"



II.

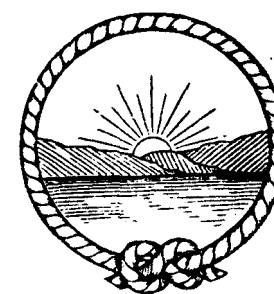
It is hardly necessary to state that it is not for a moment contended that the adoption by the wage-earners of the small family system will provide a solution for all the social problems that press upon us so insistently to-day. Nothing less than the common ownership of the principal means of producing the means of life can accomplish that. Let that be understood. But the position we have to meet to-day, the question that has to be faced and answered is this: Shall the workers continue to produce multitudes of children who, if they do not die in infancy, will become material for industrial exploitation; shall this be allowed to go on until capitalist economy is abolished, or shall we show the wage-earner how his family may be limited, thus enabling him, freed from at least the carking cares inseparable from large families to more actively participate in the work of social reconstruction? Surely the latter course will commend itself to every thoughtful person! Or is it believed, as has well been asked, that the weary and the wretched are better able to reform the world than the strong and the cheerful? That the misery of the poor is "motive power"! Could there be a more lamentable delusion? To talk so is really to make out that misery is more progressive than comfort, and sickness wiser than health! Misery may rebel but it cannot reform! Only wisdom joined with strength can compass that.

To tell a poor woman, exhausted with several labors and with the bringing up of six or eight children, says a physician who is also a Socialist, one who, with bitter tears begs to be saved from another pregnancy, that the prevention of conception is not a panacea against wage-slavery . . . that capitalism will find means of keeping her and her children in subjection and in misery all the same; that by the operation of the "iron law of wages"

her husband's wages will be diminished as soon as the capitalists find that they require less to live on, etc., is the acme of cruelty and bigoted ignorance.

The contention to the effect, touched upon in Sec. II., that if the worker's family is reduced, his requirements will be less and consequently his wages must fall to the smaller need, involves a host of improbable suppositions. Doubtless, if the workers were foolish enough to refrain from raising their standard of comfort the contention would carry some weight. It is surely far more reasonable to assume, however, that there would be a raising of the standard of comfort; an appreciable improvement all round for the fewer children; better food, better housing and better clothing.

View the question of birth control from whatever angle we may, the worker will gain by the adoption of the small family system, and the world-wide movement of Labour ceaselessly striving to secure the product for the producer and the harvest for the husbandman, will find its strength increased, not weakened, in the fight for the common good.



III.

**THE BEST, SAFEST AND MOST HARMLESS MEANS
FOR THE PREVENTION OF CONCEPTION.**

The hygienic methods of family limitation that are given in the following pages are the best, safest and most harmless. With but reasonable care in their application they *can be relied upon* to give satisfaction. Just which method shall be adopted is, of course, a matter for the individual to decide.

SOLUBLE PESSARIES.

Soluble pessaries can be obtained, ready made, at about three and sixpence a dozen. They may, however, be made at home from any of the following prescriptions:—

Salicylic Acid	...	...	...	...	0.12 grams
Boracic Acid	...	...	...	...	0.6 grams
Quinine Bisulphate	...	...	...	...	0.2 grams
Chinosol	...	...	...	...	0.12 grams
Glycerine Gelatine	...	...	...	...	6.0 grams

Another vaginal tablet may also be made from

Boracic Acid	...	...	...	...	10 grains
Cocoa Butter	...	...	...	...	20 grains

The following ingredients make an excellent tablet that is extensively used in France:

Salicylic Acid	...	...	...	...	2 grains
Boracic Acid	...	...	...	...	10 grains
Quin. purol (alkal.)	...	...	...	...	1 grain
Chinosol	...	...	...	...	2 grains
Cocoa Butter	...	...	...	...	90 grains

Another tablet that is highly recommended may be made from

Boracic Acid	...	...	...	...	10 grains
Salicylic Acid	...	...	...	...	2 grains
Quinine Bisulphate	...	...	...	...	9 grains
Cocoa Butter	...	...	...	...	60 grains

When this has been made into paste, allow it to spread out and solidify. It can then be cut into tablets of the required size (2 grammes each).

Care must be taken, of course, in using soluble pessaries to allow them to dissolve in the vagina before each occasion.

THE VALUE OF THE DOUCHE.

If the douche is used as quickly as possible after the sexual act it can be relied upon as a very excellent preventive. It must, however, be used promptly and thoroughly.

Not only will it be found effective for the immediate purpose in view, but it has much from the view-point of health to recommend it. There are a very large number of solutions that can be used for the douche. Some of the best and least expensive are here given.

DOUCHE.

Mix four tablespoonsfuls of salt in a quart of warm water. (Cold water can be used if preferred.) Dissolve thoroughly.

BICHLORIDE.

One tablet of bichloride to about two quarts of water will be found to give satisfaction. Condy's Fluid, a small quantity in water, will also be found to prove effective.

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VINEGAR.

A large number of women use vinegar with satisfactory results. It will be found that one glassful to two quarts of water will provide the necessary strength. Douche well afterwards with cold water.

Suitable syringes can be bought at any chemists for a reasonable sum. The whirling spray syringe is recommended.

There is much to be said for the fountain syringe, and every woman should, if possible, obtain one. The fountain syringe is hung upon the wall and secures a steady cleansing flow. However, many women find the bulb form of syringe quite satisfactory, and if the directions that accompany them are attended to, nothing but satisfaction should ensue. Water, by itself, is not recommended. It may prove satisfactory, on the other hand there is the danger that it will not. The solutions mentioned can be so easily obtained that it is not advisable to take any risks.

THE SHEATH.

The use of the sheath, or so-called "French Letter," is, with due care, a very effective preventive. The sheath is probably the most generally used of all preventives. On the part of many men, however, its use is objected to on the ground that it interferes with the pleasure of the sexual act. However, there are several kinds of sheaths now made that, in a large measure, overcomes this objection. Sheaths should not be used more than once, or if they are, they should be always washed in some antiseptic solution before being allowed to dry.

SPONGES AND COTTON PLUGS.

A sponge with a tape attached, the sponge having previously been soaked in some antiseptic solution, is found by many to prove satisfactory. Sponges of suitable size can easily be obtained. A solution of three per cent. carbolic and glycerine will be found useful. It must always be remembered that an antiseptic douche

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should be used before the sponge is withdrawn. Cotton plugs can be used in the same way. A solution of boracic solution can be used if this is preferred to the carbolic-glycerine solution. It has been already remarked that amongst the peasantry of France and others vinegar is used for this purpose. But whatever solution may be chosen, the antiseptic douche should always be used before either sponge or plug is removed.

THE PESSARY.

The pessary used to cover the neck of the womb is without doubt one of the safest means that can be employed. Little difficulty should be experienced in adjusting it if the directions given with the pessary are followed. There is no discomfort experienced and, as the uterus is protected from the entrance of the male sperm, there is no need for the wearer to leave her bed to take a douche. In the morning a douche should be used before the pessary is removed, to be followed by a thorough cleansing. With ordinary care a pessary will last for years, and has therefore the merit of being cheap and safe. Pessaries vary in price, the prices usually running from seven and sixpence to ten shillings.

A word or two should be added concerning "coitus interruptus," that is, the withdrawal of the male organ from the vagina before the completion of the sexual act. That this method of preventing conception is very commonly employed is well known, and, whilst the majority of medical men incline to the view that it is probably non-injurious to the man, yet it is not to be recommended. Apart from the fact that the woman's nervous system may become impaired from the practice, there is always the danger of some semen becoming lodged in the vagina. There is no need for "coitus interruptus." The hygienic methods given will be found safe and effective.