

IS IT REASONABLE TO EXPECT THE SAME MORAL STANDARD FROM MEN AS FROM WOMEN?

(Extracts from a speech delivered at the Conference of the British Dominions Woman Suffrage Union, London, June, 1918, by Dr. Edward Beadon Turner, F.R.C.S., Chairman of Representative Body, British Medical Association; Chairman of Medical Committee, National Council for Combating Venereal Disease; Member of Advisory Board to Ministry of National Service).

I presume that you have asked me to speak to you on this subject because I am a physician, and I am going to give the view of a doctor in the matter. I shall also touch on the point of view of a man of the world who has been intimately mixed up with young men, and who has taken a great interest in these subjects for a long time.

I will begin at once by telling you that it is absolutely reasonable and possible to expect the same moral standard from men as from women. Of this I am certain. I am sure that it is quite possible that both sexes should attain the same ideal standard. I have never known any healthy man, an absolutely healthy man, go wrong in health because he has lived a perfectly clean life.

Some of you may have known men who have been in hard training for some athletic contest for six months or more, during which time they have kept their bodies in temperance, soberness, and chastity. They are not broken-down men by any means, but come out of training in the pink of health and condition. Therefore, if they can live a pure life for six months, there is no reason why they should not do so indefinitely.

There are some persons to whom this does not apply. I have known a very few men who have practically been almost sexually insane, and the results have been disastrous; but it is an extremely small minority in which this obtains. Such conditions are abnormal, and do not affect the great mass of ordinary men.

Perhaps, on the whole, it may be rather more difficult for men to keep straight than for women for various reasons. I do not think, however, that there is really a very great difference in this matter between the two sexes. I presume that in speaking of an equal standard for men as for women, you are expecting that the standard for men shall be at least as high as that for women. If you mean to approximate the two standards by degrading that of woman to the level of that of the ordinary man, then I am "right off it"; but provided your aim is to raise the man's standard so that it shall be the same, then I am entirely with you.

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If it be possible these things should be altered, both men and women should demand equal morality the one of the other. How are you going to set about it? It will take generations to accomplish, for it is hard to eradicate that which is bred in the bone. Legislation is of no use. If every woman had every vote in the world you could not accomplish it by any law that might be passed. Unless caught in the act, it is impossible to prove that a man is immoral. There is no physical change in him, as in a woman. But though law can do nothing, I believe that the solution lies entirely in your own hands. But you must begin at the very beginning. You must begin with the mother, who must take her sons and teach them; discuss with them these matters; discuss them healthily and cleanly, reverently and devoutly, teaching them to reverence both themselves and the other sex. Then you must alter the sentiments of an enormous number of women towards immoral men—a man who is notoriously immoral should not be allowed to be the honoured guest in any drawing-room—and you have finally to convince the mothers in this Kingdom, and the Empire, and also an exceedingly large proportion of their daughters, that chocolates, diamonds, furs, and motor-cars are not the "be-all and the end-all" here, and that a coroneted millionaire with a lurid past and a dozen discarded mistresses is by no means the most fitting mate for a pure young girl, and that she probably would be much better with a clean young man as a husband, who may have his way to make in the world.

Correspondence.

(The Editor is not responsible for opinions expressed by correspondents.)

THE POOR AND NEEDY.

(To the Editor.)

Madam,—The war and the epidemic have opened our eyes to a lot of things. But they have shown most that our social methods require a lot of altering. The general conditions of "the poor and needy" are a blot on our common-sense and moral professions.

It does seem to me most unjust that because a child is born of certain parents, he should be penalised.

We all profess to believe that we are the children of the Creator, and to exemplify our profession we should at least try to see that all children born get fair treatment.

We are all failures, and because a child is born of parents who are also financial failures, it is not his fault, and he should not be penalised.

Which precludes that, I consider that we should humanise our treatment of all the aged, invalid, widows and children. It is a dreadful thing to know that because of "red-tape regulations" certain aged infirm must die paupers. It is dreadful also to think that invalids and widows should be punished for being invalids or widows.

It is distressing to think that children should have their lives warped because they happened to be born of certain parents.

The aged, infirm and widows should have a sufficient pension. Everything the children need should be guaranteed by the State, and provided. Those who are financial failures should be helped by a paternal public on scientific self-help lines, by granting them the use of our collective credit. As Wolff puts it, "the poor are poor because they get no credit, and they get no credit because they are poor."

The land should be "humanised" so that no man could withhold the land from the poor, and no man could hold more land than he really needed or worked properly.

Of course, any scheme for the improving of the conditions of the poor and needy, or anybody else, would be greatly hampered if not made ineffective without Prohibition. Those who do not believe in Prohibition should read the "Ten Commandments" and see how many of them are not prohibitory. We talk of a League of Nations to keep the peace. But how can any peace be built up on a substratum of undeserved poverty, and how can any man be self-respecting and a lover of peace who is not a free man, and how can any man be a free man who has not an inalienable right to a portion of God's earth, and what impulse has a man to go to war when he is happy enough in his own place?—I am, etc.,

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