

KELLY (H. A.)

Personal Purity.

BY

HOWARD A. KELLY, M. D.,
Professor of Gynecology in the Johns
Hopkins University.

*An Address to Men, delivered in St. Peter's
Church, Baltimore, Easter Sunday, 1896.*

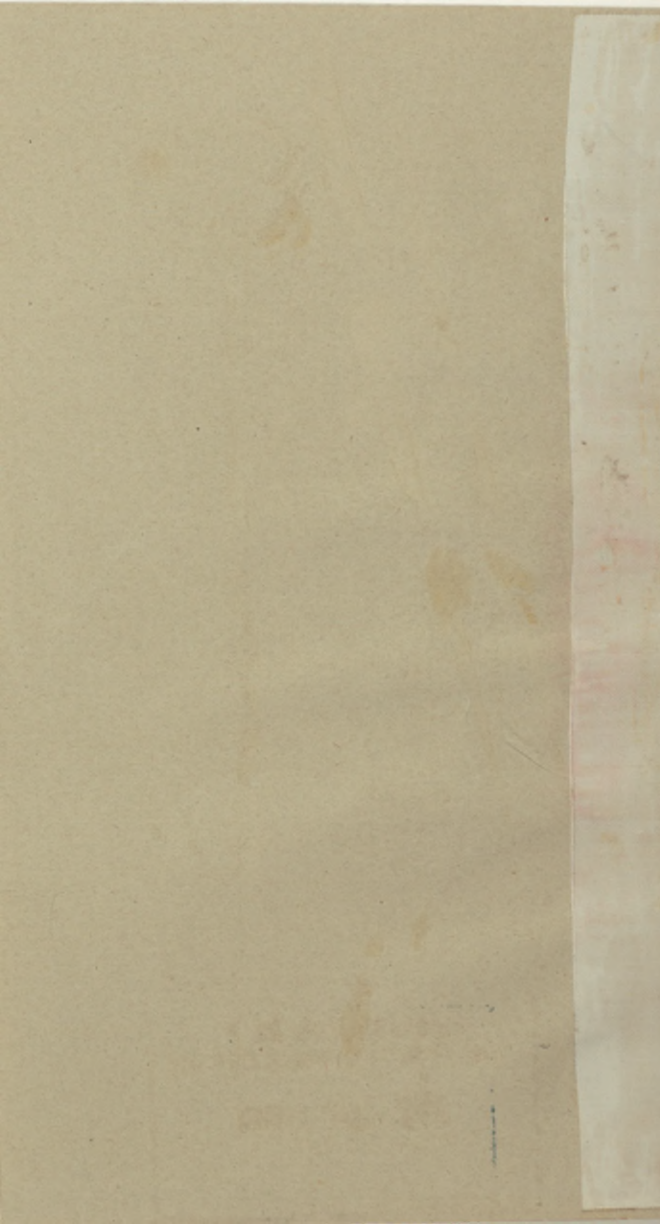


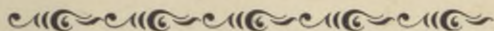
Reprinted from
THE HEALTH MAGAZINE,
May, 1896.

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DEC. 30. 1901

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PERSONAL PURITY.

BY HOWARD A. KELLY, M. D.,

Professor of Gynecology in the Johns Hopkins
University.

It is now about a year since I had the pleasure of speaking to a large audience of men in this church on the subject of personal purity, a subject which touches our common manhood more deeply perhaps than any other in the world. I spoke to you then somewhat diffidently, urging upon you the broad principles of morals as laid down in the Bible. But with added experience, and the revelations naturally brought to me by my daily occupation, I have accumulated a fund of information which places me from now on in a position of unremitting and active aggression against impurity in all its forms.

I grew as a young man under the impression that all kinds of sexual vices were so infrequent that it was best not to mention them for fear of spreading the evil. I now know that the whole length and breadth of our land is inter-

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penetrated with the rootlets of this gigantic evil, that vice is rampant in our cities, and that no subject is more commonly talked about. It is the devil who says: "Don't talk about prostitution, it is an improper subject." The righteous man will say instead—I will never cease to talk about it and to fight it, until it has been destroyed root and branch. I am glad then to be able to talk to you on the advantages of chastity and the evils and miseries of unchastity, because I want every man of you to go away from this church not only determined to keep his own body in subjection, but also resolved to do missionary work in this great cause. What I have to say to you naturally divides itself in my mind into three parts:

1. Personal impurity as it affects men.
2. The relations of women to prostitution.
3. Practical ways to meet the social evil.

There is a text in the Epistle of St. Paul to the Corinthians, which says, "If any man defile the temple of God, him shall God destroy; for the temple of God is holy, which temple ye are." Now, some of you may not believe the Bible as I do, but if any man here has been tempted into impurity, he knows that the text is true. "The wages of

sin is death" is just as much a scientific truth as a moral one. If you want convincing proof of that you have only to glance over the columns of some of our daily papers, which fairly reek with the crimes of immorality, betrayal, divorce, abortion, suicide and murder.

Consider this matter for a moment in some of the ways it affects men. Take the case of the young man who is addicted to self-abuse. I know of a college professor who, in an apparent hugging to himself of virtue, said that he had never visited a house of ill-fame, while confessing that he had abused himself for years. What is the harm? Why, all the harm in the world. The man who stoops to so contemptible a vice loses a moral force that is simply incalculable. He becomes a weakling, and when great moral questions arise which require a clear judgment and energetic action, he is found wanting. Not a few victims of self-abuse end in the insane asylum, or, if they do not get so far as that, they become miserable and morbid, utterly unfit for the duties of life.

Another aspect of the question is the case of the man who betrays a confiding, innocent girl, either in a moment of passion, or simply as a kind of sport. The euphemism for this form of sexual

vice is "getting a girl into trouble," and the way her seducer goes about to get her out of trouble is either to take her to an ignorant abortionist where she is very likely done to death, or to let her bear alone the burdens and the disgrace of unwedded motherhood. Can a man be guilty of a greater villainy than this?

I want to read to you something from Mr. Lecky, the historian of European morals, on this point:—

"When we reflect that the object of such a man is by the coldest and most deliberate treachery to blast the life of an innocent woman; when we compare the levity of his motive with the irreparable injury he inflicts, and when we remember that he can only deceive his victim by persuading her to love him, and can only ruin her by persuading her to trust him, it must be owned that it would be difficult to conceive a cruelty more wanton and more heartless, or a character combining more numerous elements of infamy and dishonor."

"Not until our civilization shall have wrought out in life what Hawthorne wrought out in "The Scarlet Letter," and the man takes his stand in the pillory by the woman, and the scarlet letter is on the breast of the one as on the breast of the other, and both alike bear

the ineffable shame, and each help the other back to the ineffable glory, shall we find Christ's remedy." (Lyman Abbott, Sermon on the Social Evil, January 19, 1896, in Plymouth Church.)

But the commonest form of sexual vice among men is prostitution, and here occurs one of the most curious phenomena. Every man holds to strict account another man who enters his home and seduces his wife or daughter. We continually read of seducers who are shot down by an outraged husband or brother, and it is almost impossible to convict a man for such a murder. There seems to be a sort of unwritten law that this form of homicide is justifiable. But when the woman has once been led astray and gets very likely into a house of ill fame, this fine sense of honor (is it honor?) is all spun out into thin air. The male prostitute does not reflect that his partner in sin has been some man's daughter, or wife, or sister. No, she is to him simply the means by which he gratifies a vile passion. "I did not lead her into it," a man will say. But you can lead her out of it, you can yourself abstain from going there; you can help women prostitutes into a reputable life; you can influence other men to live pure lives.

It is not a venial sin for men to con-

sort with prostitutes. It blunts a man's finer sensibilities, it lowers his respect for women, it leaves its indelible marks in disease, for sooner or later every man who indulges his passions unlawfully contracts disease. It is not possible for either men or women who prostitute themselves freely to escape it. And these diseases are not only the most loathsome and the most disgusting in their early manifestations, but they have the horrible characteristic of becoming latent. A man who contracts disease of this sort can never be sure that he is cured, for venereal disease is not a merciful disease, like cancer, killing its victim within a certain definite time. Rather, it is a death in life; such local lesion may occur as to destroy forever the sexual function, and the unchaste man finds that he is incapable of realizing one of the chief blessings of life, surrounding himself with a family of children, who will be to him in the struggle of life a daily incentive and comfort, in whom in old age he may live again.

Or, if not made sterile himself, he may make his wife sterile, and this is one of the most pitiable, and most unjust results of the immorality of men. No man, no matter how much he may prostitute himself, ever marries a pros-

stitute. No, his wife must be a pure woman, and perhaps he may infect her at once. Fancy the shame and pain of that to a sensitive, pure-minded woman! How can a woman retain her love for a man who has dragged her into such filth! Many an unhappy wife dates the beginning of her marital troubles to loss of respect for her husband in the fearful knowledge thrust upon her that she has married a prostitute. Very likely, too, she dates a life of pain, suffering and invalidism from her very wedding day. For these diseases are even more disastrous to women than to men. Infection sets up a series of abnormal processes, which either make it impossible for the wife to bear children, or cause such grave symptoms that the poor woman has often to decide between death or a dangerous mutilating operation, an operation which men resist to the last extremity.

Professor A. R. Simpson of Edinburgh, in his inaugural address as President of the British Gynecological Society, in 1892, says on this subject :

“ When the day comes for the righting of the wrongs of women the law will do something to protect her from this injury, or compensate her where it has been inflicted on her innocence. Assuredly if it had been the rule that this

disastrous element was introduced into the marriage contract by the wife, instead of being, as is the case, the rare exception, we men would long ago have found legal means of freeing ourselves from partners whose condition was a danger to us and our offspring."

The whole question of the relations of sex, in both law and custom, is full of injustice to women. Think how utterly unjust it is for men to claim for themselves a license that they would never dream of permitting to their mothers, sisters, wives and daughters. There is a false notion among men that unchastity is necessary to health. If unchastity is necessary for men, I assure you it is equally necessary for women. And what would become of the social order in an orgy like that? I do not know of any respectable physician or any physiologist who holds that incontinence is necessary or even desirable for healthy men and women. (See *British Medical Journal* March 14, 1896.)

On the contrary, there is plenty of medical testimony in favor of chastity, both in the single life and in marriage. Dr. Kellogg, in a paper before the National Purity Congress, held in this city last autumn, says :

"In the course of my own professional experience, I can truthfully say that I

have never met with a single instance in which disease of any kind was present as the result of a pure or continent life. On the other hand, I have seen the most horrible results from the unlawful and unprofessional advice sometimes given by physicians to young men, suggesting unchastity as being essential for the relief of some physical weakness, though I have never met with a single case in which the slightest benefit had been derived from following such advice. My observations with reference to the character of those who give professional advice of this sort have long ago led me to the belief that, as a rule, only those who have themselves been impure to such an extent that they were bereft of their ability to judge properly of the influence of a pure and continent life, are capable of giving such unwise and immoral advice."

Finally, I think every right minded man will realize his personal responsibility in this matter, when I remind you that every community is just as pure or as impure as the men make it. For it is men who sustain prostitution; if its maintenance were left to the active efforts of women, it would sink into insignificance.

The difference between man's treatment of the woman who sins with him

and that of Christ is strikingly brought out in the well known story of the woman taken in adultery (St. John viii, 10, 11) you remember that when Jesus said: "Let him that is without sin among you cast the first stone," all her accusers fled, and the prostitute was left alone with him.

"And Jesus said unto her, woman, where are those thine accusers? Hath no man condemned thee? She said, no man, Lord. And Jesus said unto her, Neither do I condemn thee; go, and sin no more."

Let us try to apply Christ's method, in considering how prostitution affects women. What does a life of unchastity mean for a woman? It means loss of respect, loss of home, loss of natural affections, loss of means of livelihood, loss of health, loss of life itself after a few years. I ask you to think seriously of the awful misery that is expressed in this one sentence; remember also that the instincts of women are for purity and the natural outlet of the affections in the family life; and that men have to pervert this before they can induce them to become prostitutes.

The difference between men and women as to the sexual instinct when the hope of children does not enter into it is strikingly shown by the fact that wo-

men prostitutes are almost entirely from the lowest classes ; they are often ignorant girls who have first been betrayed. Men prostitutes, on the other hand, come from every class. This gives us the double standard of morality, with all its social and legal injustice to women. Consider in this light laws regulating vice, which some ill-informed persons think ought to be enacted in this country. Such a bill is now before the New York legislature, advocated by a society of obscure citizens which bears the specious name of "The Law and Order Society of New York City." It proposes that the respectable taxpayers of New York (which, including women, must be the majority) shall spend annually \$37,000 for the maintenance of houses of ill fame to be known euphoniouly as "District Inns." The Outlook says the bill should be entitled "An Act to create offices and give salaries for the promotion of immorality and disease in the city of New York." Politically, Contagious Diseases Acts are a foreign oppression of women, and have no place in a government which boasts of being set up to secure "life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness" to all its citizens. Morally, regulation of vice is a compromise with the Devil, and in every such makeshift the Devil

is bound to get the best of it. What are the facts in Paris and Berlin, where this system has been carried out to all the perfection it is capable of?

In Paris, under inspection, the number of diseased women doubled in five years; and the official report is that "prostitution augments and becomes more dangerous to the public health." In Berlin, Professor Virchow's Commission reported that prostitution and venereal diseases were rapidly increasing. Why it increases is plain. The total number of women examined in 1891 was 4364, while it was estimated that one man in every nine or ten in Berlin was infected with syphilis.

No system of inspection can ever be effective so long as it applies to but one party in the act, and that party, collectively, in the minority. Regulation of vice is not only unjust to women, it is not only immoral and cowardly, but it is utterly unscientific. You might as well try to prevent the spread of small-pox or cholera by quarantining one sex only. The most conspicuous attempt in the United States to make vice safe was the St. Louis experiment, 1870-74, and after four years' trial the results showed such an increase of prostitution that the law permitting license was repealed by a vote of three to one in the

Senate and ninety to one in the House. Contagious Diseases Acts were in force in England for some years, but have now all been repealed in the United Kingdom, India and the Crown Colonies. As to the English experience, I quote from the "Memorandum by the Army Sanitary Commission on the Statistics of Venereal Disease among British and Native Troops in India for the year 1892."

"Statistical returns from the Army Medical Department, showing the amount of venereal disease in the Army at home during the period when the Contagious Diseases Acts were in force, as compared with the period since their abolition, do not show any more favorable results obtained during the time the Acts were in operation," and that, "as a matter of fact, the ratio of admissions per 1000 has decreased since the Acts have been abolished."

I will not claim that the men of the Anglo-Saxon race are morally purer than those of other nationalities, but there is no doubt whatever but that the condition of women among them is better, and one evidence of this is the fact that no woman in England or America, however degraded, can be compelled by law to submit to revolting physical examinations by police surgeons.

I would suggest, in conclusion, a few practical ways of dealing with the social evil.—

1. Every man personally to resolve to be as pure as the women who belong to him.

2. Every man to demand, and to insist upon, a single standard of morality.

3. By joining or supporting societies that are working for personal purity, such as the White Cross Society, for men, the Woman's Christian Temperance Union, the Purity League, for men and women.

4. By helping women prostitutes into reputable employment. An English barrister working among the poor of East London estimated last winter that 20,000 prostitutes in London would gladly give up the calling, if they could find respectable employment. The Florence Crittenton Missions of this country are working for this end, and they need all the support they can get.

5. All laws and customs regulating vice should be resisted.

a. Because they condone vice.

b. Because applying only to one sex, and to the minority, they are unscientific.

c. Because they have been proved over

and over again only to aggravate the evil.

d. Because they encourage vicious habits among that class of men who would be restrained by a wholesome fear of contagion.

e. Because they are oppressive and unjust to women.

f. Because they are an infringement of the rights of the individual, no right being so intrinsic as that to one's own person.

g. Because it is indefensible for the State to tax respectable men and women for the support of a vice that is responsible for the worst crimes against the social order.

6. Girls should be protected by raising the age of consent in all the States to at least eighteen years.

7. Wives should have legal redress for marital infection. So late as 1889, an English Court held that an innocent woman, by her marriage vows, consented to become infected, if her husband chose to inflict his loathsome diseases upon her! The poor wife, failing to find justice in law, and abhorring the man to whom she was hopelessly bound, simply disappeared, abandoning home, friends, everything, to live a cleanly life. What a travesty on civilization!

8. Lastly, in the growing recognition

of women, we see one of the most powerful means of combatting the social evil. Wallace has pointed out this fact as a significant factor in the process of natural selection. The moral force of women has long been recognized, its utility is only just beginning to be put in practice. And it is within the power of every man to help in this great social and economic revolution, the advancement of woman. Open up avenues of employment to women. Assist them in every possible way to become self-supporting, make the economic conditions of life easier for them. You may think individually that the home is woman's province, but the hard facts of our modern life are that many women, some highly educated and most estimable women, have no homes, and no hope of ever earning them, as men do, even by the most strenuous effort and by the most rigid economy. And for the homeless woman who has only unskilled labor to offer, the conditions of existence are dangerously near ruin. Many a poor girl, especially if she has once erred through trusting a man too far, is compelled to live in shame to live at all.

With these awful facts staring us all in the face, the duty of every pure, right-minded man is as clear as the daylight.

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EDITED AND CONDUCTED BY PHYSICIANS

FEBRUARY 1906

LEADING FEATURES

HEALTH AND DISEASE, HYGIENE,
NUTRITION, MEDICINE,
PHYSIOLOGY, ANATOMY,
PATHOLOGY, SURGERY,
DENTISTRY, GYNECOLOGY,
PEDIATRICS, AND ALL THE
LATEST PROGRESS

ESTABLISHED BY FREDERICK BROWN,
BOSTON, MASSACHUSETTS

PUBLISHED BY THE
HEALTH MAGAZINE COMPANY
WASHINGTON BALTIMORE NEW YORK