



Drawn by K. R. Chamberlain.

Family Limitation—Old Style

Birth Control

AS a means of agitation for the repeal or amendment of the law prohibiting the circulation of information in regard to preventing conception, the Birth Control League has been formed. The board of this organization consists of Paul Kennaday, Jessie Ashley, Mary Ware Dennett, James F. Morton, Jr., Winthrop Lane, Felix Grendon and Clara Stillman. Those who wish to join may communicate through this office.

Public Opinion and the Law

(Remarks at the meeting for the organization of the Birth Control League, by Mary Ware Dennett.)

JUDGING by the recent experiences of several groups of representative people, there can be little doubt that the time is ripe for the action this meeting is called to take,—the organization of a Birth Control League.

Several groups have independently and spontaneously got together to do something, the impetus having been largely precipitated by the Sanger case.

Irrespective of the variation in programs, there has been marked unanimity on one point—that correct information about birth control should be freely obtainable. And it is an encouraging fact that this conviction seems to be held by all kinds of people, from the most cramped conservative to the freest type of radical.

It is true that among both radicals and conservatives there is to be found a certain timidity in regard to positive action which seems born of a fear that the sensibilities and prejudices of others must somehow be protected. Just what others no one seems to exactly know. They are mythical and elusive people just round the corner who disappear when we really hunt for them. All we can find are those who say, "Of course, personally, I entirely believe in it, but I think perhaps it would not do to say so, in any but a purely private way just yet."

Now since almost nobody can be found, except Comstock, who will say for his or her own self, "I think the present law is all right," the rest of us only need to simultaneously shed our "ifs" and "buts," which we have been holding for the undiscoverable other people, and join together to push for the change we all believe in.

It is a shame to have a law on the statute-books which is so seriously at variance with the degree of evolution already achieved by the race in the matter of the sex-relation. In spite of the all too many perverted and degenerating phases of sex life which exist at present, it is still true that there has been a wonderful evolution that is perfectly logical, natural and desirable,—that is, the recognition of the value of other precious results from the sex-relation beside children, the psychological, emotional and spiritual reactions, and, if I may venture to use the term without being misunderstood, the moral reaction also.

For the highly developed civilized human being there is no such thing as natural sex-relations, that is, in the animal sense. We do not, after the simple manner of the animals, have a mating season. We do not have an annual baby. It would be anything but ideal to do so. But instead we expand our creative impulses into other channels which are more beneficial and enjoyable for the race. We find creative scope in the whole wide field of science, art and community life. And along with this expansion, we are developing a conscious and unashamed appreciation of the invaluable reactions of the sex-relation upon the individual, quite apart from the question of children.

This faculty of appreciation,—this evolved use of the sex function seems to be peculiar to the human race, an evidence of its higher development and actual progress.

Therefore it is a specially grave mistake to allow the continuance of a law, which not only has no place in modern thought or idealism, but which is positively pernicious in that it links up with crime an element in education which is absolutely essential to individual and racial progress. It is already sneakily available for the well to do, but is still, alas, beyond the reach of most of the masses.

It is generally assumed, though often falsely so, that law does not exist till demanded by public opinion, and so the average mind is apt to more or less hold the law in respect. The result is that, in instances like this, the respect becomes hypocritical, and there is general shamefacedness in evading or defying the law, which is in itself demoralizing.

It is obviously a long job to make the statutes thoroughly reflect the best thought and ideals of the community, but that is no reason for postponing the effort.

The Sanger Case

ON behalf of the Sanger Fund, THE MASSES thanks its readers for their response to our last month's appeal for contributions. The sum of \$93.65 has been turned over to those in charge of the case. We publish below a few characteristic letters from our correspondence on this subject.

From a Working Woman

To THE MASSES:

As being a poor workingwoman I could not have any more children than I have at the present time. Now could you furnish me with information pertaining to family limitations, or direct me to where I could get the desired information? I am interested in the Margaret Sanger case and am prompted to write hoping you might enlighten me.

From a "Stodgy Bourgeois"

To THE MASSES:

Enclosed is a check, smaller than I could wish, to assist in the defense of the Sangers. I am a stodgy bourgeois and reprehend most of your doctrines very heartily, but even a stiffnecked royalist ought to support you in this.

Another Comstock Victim

To THE MASSES:

As you are on Mr. Comstock's trail, I would like to call to your attention the case of Mr. Moscowitz, proprietor of the Franklin Book Shop, 125 East 59th Street who is to be tried next month for selling "obscene" literature; otherwise books or plates more or less artistic which include figures, more or less nude, but, of course, far less objectionable than, say, some of Bakst's figures or those which constantly appear in the *International Studio*, or *Jugend*; in fact I imagine one could find worse in *Life*!

Like the usual victim of Comstock's attacks, he is a small man without the money or connection necessary for a proper defence and quite likely to spend six months in jail unless his case receives the publicity which it deserves and which might take it out of the ordinary routine.

I enclose a check for \$10. for the Sanger Fund.

PHILIP SAWYER.

From a Disembodied Spirit

To THE MASSES:

Appropos to the Sanger controversy, I have a suggestion to make and a story to tell. It will doubtless be received with howls of derision. For of course it is but the wildest of fiction, impossible and unnatural. The suggestion is simply this: Has anyone ever heard of or considered sexual relations ONLY when children are wanted? Absurd, isn't it? Of course one cannot expect men and women to attempt to control themselves. They must needs resort to some artificial method of avoiding the result of their actions.

To me this wail about large families and this pathetic pleading for a preventive of conception, is but an admission that men and women are but senseless slaves of passion—utterly incapable of self-control. For have they not the means within themselves, of preventing that which they deplore?

And the story? That but concerns a few of my friends and my—if you like—mate and me. For years we have practiced the theory of having such relations only when children were wanted—and strange as it may seem—we are still living contented, happy lives. What is the recipe? Sincere love mixed with a little brains.

I cannot for the life of me, bring myself in line to sympathize with Mr. and Mrs. Sanger. For to teach a preventive of conception is but to foster that spirit that revels in the pleasures of the flesh yet shrinks at paying the price.

My comrades, do not think me heartless, I crave simple justice—nature's justice. Let those who indulge in sexual relations merely to satiate the yearnings of uncontrolled passion—let them pay the penalty—that of rearing large families.

Very truly yours, C. S. B.

P. S.—Should you care to print this letter I should be delighted. It would interest as well as amuse me to read the replies of a selfish, sensual humanity. In quoting me kindly use only my initials.

A FUND OF AT LEAST \$500 IS NEEDED for legal expenses in the Sanger struggle. More is needed for a campaign of publicity outside of the courts. This is your fight. The time to fight is now. You are asked to send as much as you can, and as soon as possible to the Sanger Fund, The Masses Publishing Company, 87 Greenwich Avenue, New York City.

Letters of Protest

An Englishwoman Protests

To THE MASSES:

As a reader of your pages I feel that I may be allowed to protest against an article in your March issue by Mr. John Reed called "The Worst Thing in Europe." It is a rather hysterical diatribe against violence.

There is a certain difference which Mr. Reed does not seem to appreciate between the driving by Christ of the money changers out of the Temple and the activities of Jack the Ripper. These two forms of violence are not, to every one, equally reprehensible.

Mr. Reed's charges against the Allied Armies are easily dealt with. They are quite simply not true. The French, of whom he speaks as not fighting well, have on the contrary, by their gallant courage and steadiness, won the admiration of all who have seen and known. The country as well as the army has responded with selfless devotion to the call of national defense.

Mr. Reed's phrase "The Russian peasants are knouted into battle for a cause they never heard of," so little represents the facts that lately a Russian radical, in answer to my question of what would happen if the Russian government tried to make a separate peace, replied "The Emperor would fall, the war, which is a war of the Russian people for the liberation of the Slav nations, would go on."

As for the allegation that a British officer wishing to punish a private tells his non-commissioned officer to "hit him," as the mother of an English officer knowing something of the regulations of the army, I am in a position to deny it absolutely. It is inconceivable that such an order should be given. If it were given the officer who gave it would be dismissed from the army.

Mr. Reed's description of the "undersized, debauched, diseased little men" of the English expeditionary force is equally imaginary. An army which could hold for nearly a week at Ypres against a German force estimated at from five to seven times greater than itself in numbers is not likely to have been composed of such material as Mr. Reed mentions. This description seems to be dictated more by malice than by knowledge, and I am surprised that an American, knowing, as Mr. Reed must know, that the Allied Armies are fighting the battle of democracy against the aristocratic military system of Germany, should find no better employment for his pen than making entirely unfounded accusations against men who are giving their lives for the cause of all free nations.

ANTOINETTE PINCHOT JOHNSTONE.

19 Seymour St., London.

A German Protests

To THE MASSES:

In your issue for March, 1915, Mr. John Reed gives two anecdotes of German officers which I take the liberty of commenting on. Tho' an American by blood and birth I had occasion to study the German army in the present war; and that at first hand, as a volunteer, in the garrison, in the front, and in the hospital. And my information is recent, as I left Germany less than a month ago.

The incidents cited in "The Worst Thing in Europe" are, to my knowledge impossible: no German officer is allowed to carry a swagger stick, no German officer or non-commissioned officer is permitted to strike or strike at a subordinate; and a sentry is for the duration of his stay on the post the superior in all matters pertaining to his post or instructions of any member of the army, save the commanding general, the officer in command of the town or station and the officers of the guard for that day. These statements will be borne out by anyone acquainted with the German army or by a perusal of the official manuals of instructions, or the records as far as they are public, of the trials of officers for misconduct.

I feel sure that Mr. Reed was misinformed on these matters, and therefore call the points to your attention: inaccuracies of statement and fact disturb one in a periodical with whose editorial policy one sympathizes.

Yours truly,

KARL N. LLEWELLYN.

Yale '15; ex-Sergt. 78th Prussian Infantry.

117 Congress St., Brooklyn, N. Y.

A Charity Official Protests

To THE MASSES:

I have just read the article in the MASSES for April entitled "Overlords of Charity," in which it is stated that I have said in substance that it is none of the public's business what I get out of my personal service, because the money comes from private sources. This is an absolutely false statement and does not accord with my views of the ethics of my profession.

I should be interested to know whether you can find a man who will tell you that I said any such thing. Sincerely yours,

W. FRANK PERSONS.

[The writer of the article has given us the name of an investigator who says Mr. Persons uttered the statement attributed to him, and we have furnished this information to Mr. Persons. THE MASSES is less interested in the question raised by these conflicting testimonies than in the attitude of the charity organization, which has within the last few weeks issued the first public statement of the salaries of its officials—a concession to public opinion which we are glad to chronicle.—Eds.]