VIII

THE CULTIVATION OF THE IMAGINATION

§ 1

In the closing years of the school period comes the dawn of the process of adolescence, and the simple egotism, the egotistical affections of the child begin to be troubled by new interests, new vague impulses, and presently by a flood of as yet formless emotions. The race, the species, is claiming the individual, endeavouring to secure the individual for its greater ends. In the space of a few years the almost sexless boy and girl have become consciously sexual, are troubled by the still mysterious possibilities of love, are stirred to discontent and adventure, are reaching out imaginatively or actively towards what is at last the recommencement of things, the essential fact in the perennial reshaping of the order of the world. This is indeed something of a second birth. At its beginning the child we have known begins to recede, the new individuality gathers itself together with a sort of shy jealousy, and withdraws from the confident intimacy of childhood into a secret seclusion; all parents know of that loss; at its end we have an adult, formed and determinate, for whom indeed the drama and conflict of life is still only beginning, but who is, nevertheless, in a very serious sense finished and made. The quaint, lovable, larval

human being has passed then into the full imago, before whom there is no further change in kind save age and decay.

This development of the sexual being, of personal dreams, and the adult imagination is already commencing in the early teens. It goes on through all the later phases of the educational process, and it ends, or, rather, it is transformed by insensible degrees into the personal realities of adult life.

Now this second birth within the body of the first differs in many fundamental aspects from that first. The first birth and the body abound in inevitable things; for example, features, gestures aptitudes, complexions, and colours, are inherited beyond any power of perversion; but the second birth is the unfolding not of shaped and settled things but of possibilities, of extraordinarily plastic mental faculties. No doubt there are in each developing individual dispositions towards this or that--tendencies, a bias in the texture this way or that--but the form of it all is extraordinarily a matter of suggestion and the influence of deliberate and accidental moulding forces. The universal Will to live is there, peeping out at first in little curiosities, inquiries, sudden disgusts, sudden fancies, the stumbling, slow realization that for this in a mysteriously predominant way we live, and growing stronger, growing presently, in the great multitude of cases, to passionate preferences and powerful desires. This flow of sex comes like a great river athwart the plain of our personal and egoistic schemes, a great river with its rapids, with its deep and silent

places, a river of uncertain droughts, a river of overwhelming floods, a river no one who would escape drowning may afford to ignore. Moreover, it is the very axis and creator of our world valley, the source of all our power in life, and the irrigator of all things. In the microcosm of each individual, as in the microcosm of the race, this flood is a cardinal problem.

And from its very nature this is a discussion of especial difficulty, because it touches all of us--except for a few peculiar souls--so intimately and so disturbingly. I had purposed to call this paper "Sex and the Imagination," and then I had a sudden vision of the thing that happens. The vision presented a casual reader seated in a library, turning over books and magazines and casting much excellent wisdom aside, and then suddenly, as it were, waking up at that title, arrested, displaying a furtive alertness, reading, flushed and eager, nosing through the article. That in a vignette is the trouble in all this discussion. Were we angels--! But we are not angels; we are all involved. If we are young we are deep in it, whether we would have it so or not; if we are old, even if we are quite old, our memories still stretch out, living sensitive threads from our tender vanity to the great trouble. Detachment is impossible. The nearest we can get to detachment is to recognize that.

About this question the tragi-comic web of human absurdity thickens to its closest. When has there ever been a lucid view or ever will be of this great business? Here is the common madness of our species, here is

all a tissue of fine unreasonableness--to which, no doubt, we are in the present paper infinitesimally adding. One has a vision of preposterous proceedings; great, fat, wheezing, strigilated Roman emperors, neat Parisian gentlemen of the latest cult, the good Saint Anthony rolling on his thorns, and the piously obscene Durtal undergoing his expiatory temptations, Mahomet and Brigham Young receiving supplementary revelations, grim men babbling secrets to schoolgirls, enamoured errand boys, amorous old women, debauchees dreaming themselves thoroughly sensible men and going about their queer proceedings with insane self-satisfaction, beautiful witless young persons dressed in the most amazing things, all down the vista of history--a Vision of Fair Women--looking their conscious queenliest, sentimentalists crawling over every aspect and leaving tracks like snails, flushed young blockheads telling the world "all about women," intrigue, folly--you have as much of it as one pen may condense in old Burton's Anatomy--and through it all a vast multitude of decent, respectable bodies pretending to have quite solved the problem--until one day, almost shockingly, you get their secret from a careless something glancing out of the eyes. Most preposterous of all for some reason is a figure--one is maliciously disposed to present it as feminine and a little unattractive, goloshed for preference, and saying in a voice of cultivated flatness, "Why cannot we be perfectly plain and sensible, and speak quite frankly about this matter?" The answer to which one conceives, would be near the last conclusions of Philosophy.

So much seethes about the plain discussion of the question of sexual

institutions. One echoes the intelligent inquiry of that quite imaginary, libellously conceived lady in goloshes with a smile and a sigh. As well might she ask, "Why shouldn't I keep my sandwiches in the Ark of the Covenant? There's room!" "Of course there's room," one answers, "but--As things are, Madam, it is inadvisable to try. You see --for one thing--people are so peculiar. The quantity of loose stones in this neighbourhood."

The predominant feeling about the discussion of these things is, to speak frankly, Fear. We know, very many of us, that our present state has many evil aspects, seems unjust and wasteful of human happiness, is full of secret and horrible dangers, abounding in cruelties and painful things; that our system of sanctions and prohibitions is wickedly venial, pressing far more gravely on the poor than on the rich, and that it is enormously sapped by sentimentalities of various sorts and undermined and qualified by secret cults; it is a clogged and an ill-made and dishonest machine, but we have a dread, in part instinctive, in part, no doubt, the suggestion of our upbringing and atmosphere, of any rash alterations, of any really free examination of its constitution. We are not sure or satisfied where that process of examination may not take us; many more people can take machines to pieces than can put them together again. Mr. Grant Allen used to call our current prohibitions Taboos. Well, the fact is, in these matters there is something that is probably an instinct, a deeply felt necessity for Taboos. We know perhaps that our Taboos were not devised on absolutely reasonable grounds, but we are afraid of just how many

may not collapse before a purely reasonable inquiry. We are afraid of thinking quite freely even in private. We doubt whether it is wise to begin, though only in the study and alone. "Why should we--? Why should we not--?" And the thought of a public discussion without limitations by a hasty myriad untrained to think, does, indeed, raise an image of consequences best conveyed perhaps by that fine indefinite phrase, "A Moral Chaos." These people who are for the free, frank, and open discussion assume so much; they either intend a sham with foregone conclusions, or they have not thought of all sorts of things inherent in the natural silliness of contemporary man.

On the whole I think a man or woman who is no longer a fabric of pure emotion may, if there is indeed the passion for truth and the clear sight of things to justify research, venture upon this sinister seeming wilderness of speculation, and I think, too, it is very probable the courageous persistent explorer will end at last not so very remote from the starting-point, but above it, as it were, on a crest that will give a wider view, reaching over many things that now confine the lower vision. But these are perilous paths, it must always be remembered. This is no public playground. One may distrust the conventional code, and one may leave it in thought, long before one is justified in leaving it either in expressed opinion or in act. We are social animals; we cannot live alone; manifestly from the nature of the question, here, at any rate, we must associate and group. For all who find the accepted righteousness not good enough or clear enough for them, there is the chance of an ironical destiny. We must look well to

our company, as we come out of the city of the common practice and kick its dust from our superior soles. There is an abominable riff-raff gone into those thickets for purposes quite other than the discovery of the right thing to do, for quite other motives than our high intellectual desire. There are ugly rebels and born rascals, cheats by instinct, and liars to women, swinish unbelievers who would compromise us with their erratic pursuit of a miscellaneous collection of strange fancies and betray us callously at last. Because a man does not find the law pure justice, that is no reason why he should fake his gold to a thieves' kitchen; because he does not think the city a sanitary place, why he should pitch his tent on a dust-heap amidst pariah dogs. Because we criticize the old limitations that does not bind us to the creed of unfettered liberty. I very much doubt if, when at last the days for the sane complete discussion of our sexual problems come, it will give us anything at all in the way of "Liberty," as most people understand that word. In the place of the rusty old manacles, the chain and shot, the iron yoke, cruel, ill-fitting, violent implements from which it was yet possible to wriggle and escape to outlawry, it may be the world will discover only a completer restriction, will develop a scheme of neat gyves, light but efficient, beautifully adaptable to the wrists and ankles, never chafing, never oppressing, slipped on and worn until at last, like the mask of the Happy Hypocrite, they mould the wearer to their own identity. But for all that--gyves!

Let us glance for a moment or so now, in the most tentative fashion, at some of the data for this inquiry, and then revert from this excursion

into general theory to our more immediate business, to the manner in which our civilized community at present effects the emotional initiation of youth.

The intellectual trouble in the matter, as it presents itself to me, comes in upon this, that the question does not lie in one plane. So many discussions ignore this fact, and deal with it on one plane only. For example, we may take the whole business on the plane of the medical man, ignoring all other considerations. On that plane it would probably be almost easy to reason out a working system. It never has been done by the medical profession, as a whole, which is fairly understandable, or by any group of medical men, which is the more surprising, but it would be an extremely interesting thing to have done and a material contribution to the sane discussion of this problem. It would not solve it but it would illuminate certain aspects. Let the mere physiological problem be taken. We want healthy children and the best we can get. Let the medical man devise his scheme primarily for that. Understand we are shutting our eyes to every other consideration but physical or quasi-physical ones. Imagine the thing done, for example, by a Mr. Francis Galton, who had an absolutely open mind upon all other questions. Some form of polygamy, marriage of the most transient description, with reproduction barred to specified types, would probably come from such a speculation. But, in addition, a number of people who can have only a few children or none are, nevertheless, not adapted physiologically for celibacy. Conceive the medical man working that problem out upon purely materialistic lines and with an eye to all physiological and

pathological peculiarities. The Tasmanians (now extinct) seem to have been somewhere near the probable result.

Then let us take one step up to a second stage of consideration, remaining still materialistic, and with the medical man still as our only guide. We want the children to grow up healthy; we want them to be taken care of. This means homes, homes of some sort. That may not abolish polygamy, but it will qualify it, it will certainly abolish any approach to promiscuity that was possible at the lowest stage, it will enhance the importance of motherhood and impose a number of limits upon the sexual freedoms of men and women. People who have become parents, at any rate, must be tied to the children and one another. We come at once to much more definite marriage, to an organized family of some sort, be it only Plato's state community or something after the Oneida pattern, but with at least a system of guarantees and responsibilities. Let us add that we want the children to go through a serious educational process, and we find at once still further limitations coming in. We discover the necessity of deferring experience, of pushing back adolescence, of avoiding precocious stimulation with its consequent arrest of growth. We are already face to face with an enlarged case for decency, for a system of suppressions and of complicated Taboos.

Directly we let our thoughts pass out of this physical plane and rise so high as to consider the concurrent emotions--and I suppose to a large number of people these are at least as important as the physical

aspects--we come to pride, we come to preference and jealousy, and so soon as we bring these to bear upon our physical scheme, crumpling and fissures begin. The complications have multiplied enormously. More especially that little trouble of preferences. These emotions we may educate indeed, but not altogether. Neither pride nor preference nor jealousy are to be tampered with lightly. We are making men, we are not planning a society of regulated slaves; we want fine upstanding personalities, and we shall not get them if we break them down to obedience in this particular--for the cardinal expression of freedom in the human life is surely this choice of a mate. There is indeed no freedom without this freedom. Our men and women in the future must feel free and responsible. It seems almost instinctive, at least in the youth of the white races, to exercise this power of choice, not simply rebelling when opposition is offered to it, but wanting to rebel; it is a socially good thing, and a thing we are justified in protecting if the odds are against it, this passion for making the business one's very own private affair. Our citizens must not be caught and paired; it will never work like that. But in all social contrivances we must see to it that the freedoms we give are real freedoms. Our youths and maidens as they grow up out of the protection of our first taboos, grow into a world very largely in the hands of older people; strong men and experienced women are there before them, and we are justified in any effectual contrivance to save them from being "gobbled up"--against their real instincts. That works--the reflective man will discover--towards whittling the previous polygamy to still smaller proportions. Here, indeed, our present arrangements

fail most lamentably; each year sees a hideous sacrifice of girls, mentally scarcely more than children--to our delicacy in discussion. We give freedom, and we do not give adequate knowledge, and we punish inexorably. There are a multitude of women, and not a few men, with lives hopelessly damaged by this blindfold freedom. So many poor girls, so many lads also, do not get a fair chance against the adult world. Things mend indeed in this respect; as one sign the percentage of illegitimate births in England has almost halved in fifty years, but it is clear we have much to revise before this leakage to perdition of unlucky creatures, for the most part girls no worse on the average, I honestly believe--until our penalties make them so--than other women, ceases. If our age of moral responsibility is high enough, then our age of complete knowledge is too high. But nevertheless, things are better than they were, and promise still to mend. All round we raise the age, the average age at marriage rises, just as, I believe, the average age at misconduct has risen. We may not be approaching a period of universal morality, but we do seem within sight of a time when people will know what they are doing.

That, however, is something of a digression. The intelligent inquirer who has squared his initially materialistic system of morals with the problems arising out of the necessity of sustaining pride and preference, is then invited to explore an adjacent thicket of this tortuous subject. It is, we hold, of supreme importance in our state to sustain in all our citizens, women as well as men, a sense of personal independence and responsibility. Particularly is this the case with

mothers. An illiterate mother means a backward child, a downtrodden mother bears a dishonest man, an unwilling mother may even hate her children. Slaves and brutes are the sexes where women are slaves. The line of thought we are following out in these papers necessarily attaches distinctive importance to the woman as mother. Our system of morals, therefore, has to make it worth while and honourable to be a mother; it is particularly undesirable that it should be held to be right for a woman of exceptional charm or exceptional cleverness to evade motherhood, unless, perhaps, to become a teacher. A woman evading her high calling, must not be conceded the same claim upon men's toil and service as the mother-woman; more particularly Lady Greensleeves must not flaunt it over the housewife. And here also comes the question of the quality of jealousy, whether being wife of a man and mother of his children does not almost necessarily give a woman a feeling of exclusive possession in him, and whether, therefore, if we are earnest in our determination not to debase her, our last shred of polygamy does not vanish. From first to last, of course, it has been assumed that a prolific polygamy alone can be intended, for long before we have plumbed the bottom of the human heart we shall know enough to imagine what the ugly and pointless consequences of permitting sterile polygamy must be.

Then into all this tangle, whether as a light or an added confusion it is hard to say, comes the fact that while we are ever apt to talk of what "a woman" feels and what "a man" will do, and so contrive our code, there is, indeed, no such woman and no such man, but a vast

variety of temperaments and dispositions, monadic, dyadic, and polymeric souls, and this sort of heart and brain and that. It is only the young fool and the brooding mattoid who believe in a special separate science of "women," there are all sorts of people, and some of each sort are women and some are men. With every stage in educational development people become more varied, or, at least, more conscious of their variety, more sensitively insistent upon the claim of their individualities over any general rules. Among the peasants of a countryside one may hope to order homogeneous lives, but not among the people of the coming state. It is well to sustain a home, it is noble to be a good mother, and splendid to bear children well and train them well, but we shall get no valid rules until we see clearly that life has other ways by which the future may be served. There are laws to be made and altered, there are roads and bridges to be built, figuratively and really; there is not only a succession of flesh and blood but of thought that is going on for ever. To write a fruitful book or improve a widely used machine is just as much paternity as begetting a son.

The last temporary raft of a logical moral code goes to pieces at this, and its separated spars float here and there. So I will confess they float at present in my mind. I have no System--I wish I had--and I never encountered a system or any universal doctrine of sexual conduct that did not seem to me to be reached by clinging tight to one or two of these dissevered spars and letting the rest drift disregarded, making a law for A, B, and C, and pretending that E and F are out of the question. That motherhood is a great and noble occupation for a

good woman, and not to be lightly undertaken, is a manifest thing, and so also that to beget children and see them full grown in the world is the common triumph of life, as inconsequence is its common failure. That to live for pleasure is not only wickedness but folly, seems easy to admit, and equally foolish, as Saint Paul has intimated, must it be to waste a life of nervous energy in fighting down beyond a natural minimum our natural desires. That we must pitch our lives just as much as we can in the heroic key, and hem and control mere lasciviousness as it were a sort of leprosy of the soul, seems fairly certain. And all that love-making which involves lies, all sham heroics and shining snares, assuredly must go out of a higher order of social being, for here more than anywhere lying is the poison of life. But between these data there are great interrogative blanks no generalization will fill--cases, situations, temperaments. Each life, it seems to me, in that intelligent, conscious, social state to which the world is coming, must square itself to these things in its own way, and fill in the details of its individual moral code according to its needs. So it seems, at least, to one limited thinker.

To be frank, upon that common ground of decent behaviour, pride and self-respect, health and the heroic habit of thinking, we need for ourselves not so much rules as wisdom, and for others not, indeed, a foolish and indiscriminate toleration but at least patience, arrests of judgment, and the honest endeavour to understand. Now to help the imagination in these judgments, to enlarge and interpret experience, is most certainly one of the functions of literature. A good biography may

give facts of infinite suggestion, and the great multitude of novels at present are, in fact, experiments in the science of this central field of human action, experiments in the "way of looking at" various cases and situations. They may be very misleading experiments, it is true, done with adulterated substances, dangerous chemicals, dirty flasks and unsound balances; but that is a question of their quality and not of their nature, they are experiments for all that. A good novel may become a very potent and convincing experiment indeed. Books in these matters are often so much quieter and cooler as counsellors than friends. And there, in truth, is my whole mind in this matter.

Meanwhile, as we work each one to solve his own problems, the young people are growing up about us.

§ 2

How do the young people arrive at knowledge and at their interpretation of these things? Let us for a few moments at least, put pretence and claptrap aside, and recall our own youth. Let us recognize that this complex initiation is always a very shy and secret process, beyond the range of parent and guardian. The prying type of schoolmaster or schoolmistress only drives the thing deeper, and, at the worst, blunders with a hideous suggestiveness. It is almost an instinct, a part of the natural modesty of the growing young, to hide all that is

fermenting in the mind from authoritative older people. It would not be difficult to find a biological reason for that. The growing mind advances slowly, intermittently, with long pauses and sudden panics, that is the law of its progress; it feels its way through three main agencies, firstly, observation, secondly, tentative, confidential talk with unauthoritative and trusted friends, and thirdly, books. In the present epoch observation declines relatively to books; books and pictures, these dumb impersonal initiators, play a larger and a larger part in this great awakening. Perhaps for all but the children of the urban poor, the furtive talk also declines and is delayed; a most desirable thing in a civilizing process that finds great advantage in putting off adolescence and prolonging the average life.

Now the furtive talk is largely beyond our control, only by improving the general texture of our communal life can we effectually improve the quality of that. But we may bear in mind that factor of observation, and give it a casting vote in any decision upon public decency. That is all too often forgotten. Before Broadbeam, the popular humorist, for example, flashes his glittering rapier upon the County Council for suppressing some vulgar obscenity in the music-halls, or tickles the ribs of a Vigilance Association for its care of our hoardings, he should do his best to imagine the mental process of some nice boy or girl he knows, "taking it in." To come outright to the essential matter of this paper, we are all too careless of the quality of the stuff that reaches the eyes and ears of our children. It is not that the stuff is knowledge, but that it is knowledge in the basest and vulgarest

colourings, knowledge without the antiseptic quality of heroic interpretation, debased, suggestive, diseased and contagious knowledge.

How the sexual consciousness of a great proportion of our young people is being awakened, the curious reader may see for himself if he will expend a few pennies weekly for a month or so upon the halfpenny or penny "comic" papers which are bought so eagerly by boys. They begin upon the facts of sex as affairs of nodding and winking, of artful innuendo and scuffles in the dark. The earnest efforts of Broadbeam's minor kindred to knock the nonsense out of even younger people may be heard at almost any pantomime. The Lord Chamberlain's attempts to stem the tide amaze the English Judges. No scheme for making the best of human lives can ignore this system of influences.

What could be done in a sanely ordered state to suppress this sort of thing?

There immediately arises the question whether we are to limit art and literature to the sphere permissible to the growing youth and "young person." So far as shop windows, bookstalls, and hoardings go, so far as all general publicity goes, I would submit the answer is Yes. I am on the side of the Puritans here, unhesitatingly. But our adults must not walk in mental leading strings, and were this world an adult world I doubt if there is anything I would not regard as fit to print and publish. But cannot we contrive that our adult literature shall be as free as air while the literature and art of the young is sanely

expurgated?

There is in this matter a conceivable way, and as it is the principal business of these papers to point out and discuss such ways, it may be given here. It will be put, as for the sake of compact suggestion so much of these papers is put, in the form of a concrete suggestion, a sample suggestion as it were. This way, then, is to make a definition of what is undesirable matter for the minds of young people, and to make that cover as much suggestive indecency and coarseness as possible, to cover everything, indeed, that is not virginibus puerisque, and to call this matter by some reasonably inoffensive adjective, "adult," for example. One might speak of "adult" art, "adult" literature, and "adult" science, and the report of all proceedings under certain specified laws could be declared "adult" matter. In the old times there was an excellent system of putting "adult" matter into Latin, and for many reasons one regrets that Latin. But there is a rough practical equivalent to putting "adult" matter into Latin even now. It depends upon the fact that very few young people of the age we wish to protect, unless they are the children of the imbecile rich, have the spending of large sums of money. Consequently, it is only necessary to state a high minimum price for periodicals and books containing "adult" matter or "adult" illustrations, and to prosecute everything below that limit, in order to shut the flood-gates upon any torrent of over-stimulating and debasing suggestions there may be flowing now. It should be more clearly recognized in our prosecutions for obscenity, for example, that

the gravity of the offence is entirely dependent upon the accessibility of the offensive matter to the young. The application of the same method to the music-hall, the lecture-theatre, and the shelves of the public library, and to several other sources of suggestion would not be impossible. If the manager of a theatre saw fit to produce "adult" matter without excluding people under the age of eighteen, let us say, he would have to take his chance, and it would be a good one, of a prosecution. This latter expedient is less novel than the former, and it finds a sort of precedent in the legislative restriction of the sale of drink to children and the protection of children's morals under specific unfavourable circumstances.

There is already a pretty lively sense in our English-speaking communities of the particular respect due to the young, and it is probable that those who publish these suggestive and stimulating prints do not fully realize the new fact in our social body, that the whole mass of the young now not only read but buy reading matter. The last thirty or forty years have established absolutely new relations for our children in this direction. Legislation against free art and free writing is, and one hopes always will be, intensely repugnant to our peoples. But legislation which laid stress not on the indecorum but on the accessibility to the young, which hammered with every clause upon that note, is an altogether different matter. We want to make the pantomime writer, the proprietor of the penny "comic," the billsticker, and the music-hall artist extremely careful, punctiliously clean, but we do not want, for example, to pester Mr. Thomas Hardy.

Yet there is danger in all this. The suppression of premature and base suggestions must not overleap itself and suppress either mature thought (which has been given its hemlock not once but many times on this particular pretext) or the destruction of necessary common knowledge. If we begin to hunt for suggestion and indecency it may be urged we shall end by driving all these things underground. Youth comes to adult life now between two dangers, vice, which has always threatened it, and morbid virtue, which would turn the very heart of life to ugliness and shame. How are we, or to come closer to the point, how is the average juryman going to distinguish between these three things; between advisable knowledge and corruptingly presented knowledge, and unnecessary and undesirable knowledge? In practice, under the laws I have sketched, it is quite probable the evil would flourish extremely, and necessary information would be ruthlessly suppressed. Many of our present laws and provisions for public decency do work in that manner. The errand-boy may not look at the Venus de Medici, but he can cram his mind with the lore of how "nobs" run after ballet girls, and why Lady X locked the door. One can only plead here, as everywhere, no law, no succinct statement can save us without wisdom, a growing general wisdom and conscience, coming into the detailed administration of whatever law the general purpose has made.

Beside our project for law and the state, it is evident there is scope for the individual. Certain people are in a position of exceptional responsibility. The Newsagents, for example, constitute a fairly strong

trade organization, and it would be easy for them to think of the boy with a penny just a little more than they do. Unfortunately such instances as we have had of voluntary censorship will qualify the reader's assent to this proposition. Another objection may be urged to this distinction between "adult" and general matter, and that is the possibility that what is marked off and forbidden becomes mysterious and attractive. One has to reckon with that. Everywhere in this field one must go wisely or fail. But what is here proposed is not so much the suppression of information as of a certain manner of presenting information, and our intention is at the most delay, and to give the wholesome aspect first.

Let us leave nothing doubtful upon one point; the suppression of stimulus must not mean the suppression of knowledge. There are things that young people should know, and know fully before they are involved in the central drama of life, in the serious business of love. There should be no horrifying surprises. Sane, clear, matter-of-fact books setting forth the broad facts of health and life, the existence of certain dangers, should come their way. In this matter books, I would insist, have a supreme value. The printed word may be such a quiet counsellor. It is so impersonal. It can have no conceivable personal reaction with the reader. It does not watch its reader's face, it is itself unobtrusively unabashed and safer than any priest. The power of the book, the possible function of the book in the modern state is still but imperfectly understood. It need not be, it ought not, I think, to be, a book specifically on what one calls delicate questions,

that would be throwing them up in just the way one does not want them thrown up; it should be a sort of rationalized and not too technical handbook of physiological instruction in the College Library--or at home. Naturally, it would begin with muscular physiology, with digestion, and so on. Other matters would come in their due place and proportion. From first to last it would have all that need be known. There is a natural and right curiosity on these matters, until we chase it underground.

Restriction alone is not half this business. It is inherent in the purpose of things that these young people should awaken sexually, and in some manner and somewhere that awakening must come. To ensure they do not awaken too soon or in a fetid atmosphere among ugly surroundings is not enough. They cannot awaken in a void. An ignorance kept beyond nature may corrupt into ugly secrecies, into morose and sinister seclusions, worse than the evils we have suppressed. Let them awaken as their day comes, in a sweet, large room. The true antiseptic of the soul is not ignorance, but a touch of the heroic in the heart and in the imagination. Pride has saved more men than piety, and even misconduct loses something of its evil if it is conceived upon generous lines. There lurks a capacity for heroic response in all youth, even in contaminated youth. Before five-and-twenty, at any rate, we were all sentimentalists at heart.

And the way to bring out these responses?

Assuredly it is not by sermons on Purity to Men Only and by nasty little pamphlets of pseudo-medical and highly alarming information stuffed into clean young hands [Footnote: See Clouston's Mental Diseases, fifth edition, p. 535, for insanity caused by these pamphlets; see also p. 591 et seq. for "adolescent" literature.]--ultra "adult" that stuff should be--but in the drum and trumpet style the thing should be done. There is a mass of fine literature to-day wherein love shines clean and noble. There is art telling fine stories. There is a possibility in the Theatre. Probably the average of the theatre-goer is under rather than over twenty-two. Literature, the drama, art; that is the sort of food upon which the young imagination grows stout and tall. There is the literature and art of youth that may or may not be part of the greater literature of life, and upon this mainly we must depend when our children pass from us into these privacies, these dreams and inquiries that will make them men and women. See the right stuff is near them and the wrong stuff as far as possible away, chase cad and quack together, and for the rest, in this matter--leave them alone.