

The Physician's Library.

Therapeutic Suggestion in Psychopathia Sexualis. By DR. A. VON SCHRENCK-NOTZING. The F. A. Davis Co.

The present work should be read in conjunction with the earlier treatise of a somewhat similar title, by Dr. R. Von Kraft-Ebing. The two certainly form a scathing comment (though unintentionally perhaps) upon the pernicious practices of *fin-de-siècle* civilization: a comment as useful to the physician and criminologist of to-day as to the historian and sociologist of to-morrow.

A simple physiological function (procreation)—thanks to the prejudices of the early Fathers who made a virtue of celibacy, has been gradually separated from its correct place in the life of the human race and invested with a strained and fatuous religious significance. Veiled, far-fetched and askew in the stilted fabric of modern society, the ancient relationship of the sexes has lost all its naturalness, and instead of being regarded now as simply one of the primitive instincts of the race, it has been branded by the theologians as in itself a form of crime against decency—a foul defect to hold in secret shame. By the pronouncement, however, of a certain sacerdotal *Abracadabra* on the part of the ecclesiast the instinct may afterwards be safely indulged; but without such a mystic ceremonial of purification the expression of this instinct is superstitiously claimed by them to be indecorous and even criminal. The ecclesiastic having thus in an age of credulity taken possession of one of the fundamental functions of the species, increased his power enormously by restricting and regulating its practice to suit his own ends. The species suffered.

The early association of the sexes originated in this function of procreation, but the partnership under the benign influences mentioned has developed for the most part into a form of corporeal barter, degrading and monstrous, in which procreation is the last thing thought of and the least thing wished. However, this is one of the keys of ecclesiastical power, and it simplifies political calculations. Should the human race (the hewers of wood and drawers of water) throw down their axes and buckets to-morrow and decide to live naturally, the chaos so often prophesied would certainly take place. But in Nature a condition of similar chaos occurs annually at the approach of the vernal season, and at much longer intervals the same alternation of order and confusion may be noticed in history. The phenomenon is manifestly a necessary factor in any condition of progress. It certainly is in the realm of nature and the race is only a humble part of nature and amenable to her laws.

Furthermore, every departure from nature breeds disease, and the wider the departure the more deadly the disease. In the contemptuous abuse of this simple procreative function the departure from nature has been very wide, and the disease of the race, heralded as it is by many sinister harbingers, bids fair to be a very grave one.

It is with these first degenerative symptoms that the present writer dwells. Dr. Schrenck-Notzing assumes a conservative attitude, and while the work under consideration might be very acceptable to the salacious, it was certainly not written especially for them—an unblushing practice with certain pornographic writers who enjoy considerable repute. The methods of therapeutics described will prove in some cases efficacious, but cannot be relied upon to always succeed in the more persistent forms of perversion, which occur among the technically insane. He refrains from suggesting marriage (a vile and thoughtless crime often committed by practitioners) as a panacea for all disorders of this class. Nothing could be more cruel or reprehensible: nothing more unjust to the normal contracting party. The tainted half-insane degenerates of society are the irreclaimable refuse of the species, and the pure and unpolluted should not be immolated in this brutal and most flagitious manner, in the chance hope that some such charnel-house marriage might possibly prove of some slight benefit to the degenerate. Fanatics ever resort to the cheerful task of cleansing the filthy instead of keeping the pure uncorrupt.

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