

In point of fact, these destructive elements are already known, though but little heeded. This neglect arises partly from the delicacy of the subject, and partly from the difficulties in the way of applying a remedy. We should not, however, be deterred from doing our duty by such considerations. Effects are often avoided by a proper knowledge of causes, even where compulsory laws would be inoperative. That the sins of the fathers are visited upon the children, is a truth no less certain in a physical than in a moral sense. "Like begets like" is a truism as applicable to the human family as it is to the herds of the stock-raiser. Robust parents produce, almost infallibly, healthy, vigorous children. We do not look for such results from parents of diseased or enfeebled constitutions. The remedy is obvious. The stock-breeder would say, Weed out all the weaklings, and prevent the mating of all but the perfect in form and development. That would be a sure and scientific remedy, one readily enough applied to dumb brutes, but largely impracticable as regards mankind. That would be a practical working out of Darwin's theory of the survival of the fittest; but man, as a moral, free agent, and king of all the earth, would refuse to come under laws and regulations so much calculated to thwart his passions and inclinations, however much in the interests of the race such laws might be.

How much could be accomplished by restrictive laws is a question for the political economist. Probably such a law would be found oppressive and inoperative. Man's two-fold nature is a barrier to the application of laws restricting his liberty in this behalf. Besides the undesirable unions based on mutual attachment and affinity, many more are the result of social and material considerations. Evidently the springs of action are too numerous, and motive power too strong, ever to be regulated or controlled by statutory laws. Amongst savages such laws are unnecessary; Darwin's theory has full play. The hardships and exposures incident to their mode of life kill off the weak and sickly, so that only the healthy and strong survive. Hence transmitted disease is rarely met with amongst the uncivilized. It is in civilized life, where circumstances favor effeminacy, and where the life of the sickly offspring is preserved by intelligent care and the skill of the physician, that the blighting, painful, and destructive influences

of transmitted debility and disease are mostly seen and felt. Strange indeed, and most unfortunate too, that the very conditions which we most covet, and to which we point with most pride, should be freighted with danger to health and life. Paradoxical as this may seem, it is, nevertheless, true. Here extremes meet: In the lower strata, hunger, dirt, and exposure, productive of suffering, disease, and death; and abundance, cleanliness, and comfort, productive of effeminacy and transmitted debility, in the upper strata. A noteworthy illustration of this fact was recently given to the public by the St. Louis Medical Society, some of whose members have a world-wide reputation. That learned body actually had the temerity to discuss, openly and frankly, woman's enjoyment of the sexual function. The consensus of opinion arrived at was, that desire and pleasure were the rare exception; pleasure without desire, more frequent; neither desire nor pleasure, common; while loathing and pain were far from uncommon. Here we have a certain proof of lack of vitality and physical development, as productive of evil as it is contrary to nature. It was ordained that woman should bring forth her young in pain, but to ask her also to conceive in pain is the acme of cruelty. Mothers so constituted cannot be expected to produce a healthy, vigorous offspring. Consider also the conjugal unhappiness resulting from such unnatural physiological conditions. The women of St. Louis are probably a fair type of womanhood in general, on this continent at least; and, if so, civilized life must undergo a reformation before it can be said to favor a high degree of physical development. It is important that medical men should know and consider these matters. Perhaps they cannot do a great deal to mitigate the evils to which we have called attention, but it is to them alone suffering woman can look, and society at large, for counsel and guidance in these difficult and delicate matters. We all can do a little, if we only would, and drop a hint here and a word there, as we pass in and out amongst the people. In this quiet way each can impart information which is certain to bear good and abundant fruit. The medical profession is open to criticism for neglecting to supply popular works treating of these and kindred topics. No kind of information is more eagerly sought after, and none more difficult to obtain. What literature the people have, of this