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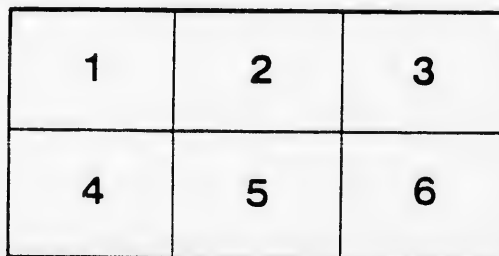
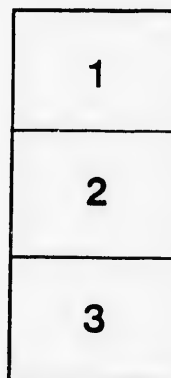
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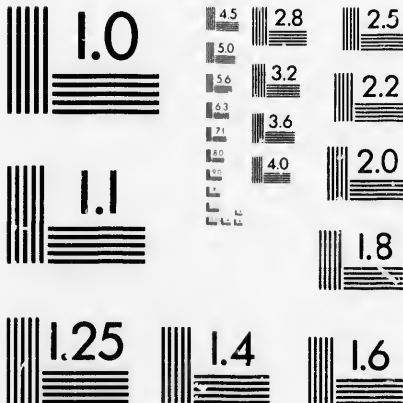
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A LECTURE

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ON

THE SOCIAL EVIL,

DELIVERED BY

W. S. OLIVER, M. D.,

ASSIST. SURGEON FOURTH BATTALION 60TH RIFLES,

TO THE MEN OF THAT CORPS,

March 7th, 1862.

QUEBEC :

PRINTED BY MIDDLETON AND DAWSON, SHAW'S BUILDINGS.

1862.

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A LECTURE ON THE SOCIAL EVIL.

MEN of this Battalion, I have been requested by a brother officer, who devotes most of his time and attention in promoting your well-being and comfort, to make a few remarks here to-night on a subject known by the name of "the Social Evil."

The term is inappropriate. This mild appellation has, no doubt, been attached to it to render it capable of being pronounced by pure lips, and to enable its being printed in the journals of the kingdom without defiling the eye or shocking the feelings of the tender reader. It is, as it were, a pellicle of ice cloaking beneath its crystal surface a pool of decomposition.

By those two words is expressed a sin of the deepest dye, one of the most impregnable strongholds of Hell that the Devil could found in the flesh of the creature that God has fashioned after His own image.

Its dire inoculation has tainted more than (I might say) half the human beings of this globe, and has been the destruction, both soul and body, of nearly two-thirds of its victims.

Of the everlasting torture the ever-living soul has been sacrificed to and doomed to undergo, for the momentary earthly gratification of its frail ~~possession~~^{possessor}, it is not within my province to touch upon. Conscience, the ministering angel of each human frame, and our spiritual advisers, have, from the period we have become rational creatures, preached to us the consequences and the penalties we have to pay for fornication's sin ; but it is in my capacity as curator of the body, and as a medical officer, that I wish to address a few words to you, the British soldier, in particular.

It is a sad and solemn fact, that he who has chosen that grand calling, the most noble and glorious in the long category of earthly pursuits,—that he, who, with a lion's heart and an unconquerable courage, has framed the United Kingdom a diamond of such greatness and brilliancy, that it reflects with lustre Victoria's rule, religion, civilization, and liberty, over a dominion so vast that a portion of it ever enjoys the light of day ; that he, who sacrifices his body for his Queen and country, should be, of all persons, the most prone to subject that body, so beautifully and wonderfully formed by the finger of God, to the most vile and corruptible contamination of the land he has conquered and protects.

In two short years and six months, fornication has left its indelible stain (in many cases more than once) on 432 of the 849 men that at the present moment compose this battalion ; and its fearful secondary consequences, premature decay, has already made its appearance in the systems

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of 150 of those delinquents. But it is not an exception to the army at large. In 1859, the period of publication of the last "Army Statistical Report," there were 429 admissions into hospital, on account of ~~fever~~ ^{venereal}, in every 1000 men serving in the United Kingdom; and, assuming the mean strength of the forces in the United Kingdom to be 90,000, the inefficiency arising from this foul disease alone must, therefore, be equal to the loss of the services for the entire year of 2417 men, or equal to three regiments.

In the hospitals of Bengal, in August, 1860, this one disease confined 1734 men out of 40,731—that is, two whole regiments. In the same proportion, which is under the average, there are four regiments rendered useless every year in India, at an immediate loss of half a million sterling.

This chronicle of immorality tells a fearful tale. In those annals is contained the history of a hot-bed of corruption, sufficient, if circumstances would admit, to infect the inhabitants of the whole globe with a pestilence more loathsome and destructive to the human race than any the hand of God could crush its creatures with.

But if we follow this stream of infamy from its fountain-head, we shall be better able to have some slight conception of the innumerable tributaries of heart-rending grief and anguish that assist in swelling its waters ere it reaches the sea of irreparable destruction.

There is a creature formed delicately and beautifully by the finger of her Creator, pure and confiding, gifted with

all the tender attributes of defenceless woman ; she is the sole child of a doting father, attached by ties of fondness, which only death can sever from the mother's heart ; she has ~~been nursed~~ with the tenderest affection, and sorrow and affliction are unknown to her until that period arrives when the devil lays his fatal grasp on the being who is ordained by the Creator to be the protector of the defenceless one, and chills in his breast that peculiar heavenly inspiration of devoted love, possessed by man alone, the safe-guard against vice, the ~~promise~~ ^{best} of all that is holy and noble ; and substitutes in its place that lust which renders man inferior to the irrational brute beast. Lust, a term of such degradation that it is inapplicable to the brute creature, and framed only for the human victim whom the devil has made his own. It is an amalgamation of all that is deceitful, cowardly, and debasing. It becomes, in the instance under consideration, the immediate destroyer of that poor confiding woman's immortal soul, and the harbinger of temporal woe and bitterness to her mortal body. From that period she is hurried rapidly forward in the current of the world's wickedness—her sense of self-respect and honour have departed with her virtue ; she loses all heavenly attributes, and the corruption and the future torments of her soul are simulated **only** by the previous offences ^{five phases} her vile body is subjected to ere it descends prematurely corrupted to the grave. Yes, and this irtraceable pathway from time to eternity ; this clayey couch of death, how often is its cold pillow courted by the violent hand of suicide to release her weary frame

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from temporal trouble. In the temporary bitterness of the deadly poison she experiences but the sweet foretaste of future oblivion ; in the dreaded halter she procures relief ; into the dark deep waters of the pool, or the raging torrent, she plunges without a shudder, seeking there, in kindling the torture-furnace of eternity for her soul, to extinguish the agonizing flames of earth in her miserable body.

One more unfortunate,
Weary of breath,
Rashly importunate,
Gone to her death.

• • • • •

Sisterly, brotherly,
Fatherly, motherly,
Feelings had changed ;
Love, by harsh evidence,
Threw from its eminence ;
Even God's providence
Seeming estranged.

The bleak wind of March
Made her tremble and shiver ;
But not the dark ~~bank~~, *arch*
Or the black flowing river ;
Mad from life's history,
Glad of death's mystery,
Swift to be hurled—
Anywhere, anywhere,
Out of the world.
In she plunged boldly,
No matter how coldly
The rough river ran—

Over the brink of it,
Picture it, think of it,
Dissolute man!
Live in it, drink of it,
Then, if you can!

Take her up tenderly,
Lift her with care;
Fashioned so slenderly,
Young, and so fair!

Ere her limbs frigidly
Stiffen too rigidly,
Decently, kindly,
Smooth and compose them,
And her eyes, close them,
Staring so blindly!

Dreadfully staring
Through muddy impurity,
As when with the daring
Last look of despairing
Fixed on futurity.

* * * * *

What a melancholy reality is contained in those memorable lines of Hood.

But ere this sinful body has passed through the gulf of iniquity to the realms of eternal torture, picture to yourselves the sorrow and wretchedness that follow in its track.

The father, who has loved and laboured for her from her infancy, is weighed down with despondency and sorrow, untimely to the grave. The tender mother who gave her

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birth, who from her bosom nourished her with the essence of her own substance, nursed her, clad her, fed her, fondled her affectionately for years, finally receives the fatal sting of ~~the~~ daughter's shame in the very heart which cherished for her that never-fading and grandest emotion of the human breast—a mother's love.

But the sad tale does not end here ; this poor creature becomes the outlaw of God, the outcast of the world ; friendless, remorseless, and rendered desperate by despair, she enters that out-post of hell, the brothel, and there circulates through hundreds that germ of corruption with which her vile body is inoculated.

What a fearful destination unmeritedly preconceived by the hand of her unmanly protector.

Look around ~~in~~ this vast universe ; consider how beautifully it is formed by the Creator for the creature, man.

Look at the mighty firmament studded with innumerable glorious constellations, never tiring in illuminating the wonders of this earth which God has given man as a temporary inheritance. Every animate and inanimate substance which it contains or produces, being formed for his use, his sustenance, and comfort.

The most useless weed, when acted on by that glorious luminary of the day, in forming the principal pabulum of its own life, decomposes in its self-nourishment the deleterious carbonic acid that is thrown off from the lungs of each breathing creature, and, retaining the destructive ~~tion~~, carbon, it renders up to the invisible atmosphere

a life-supporting current of oxygen for the sustenance of man, and of all living creatures formed for his use.

Even the lightning spark of heaven's artillery, in its transit through the air, adds its mite to man's benefit, in the formation of ammonia, which, with that produced by the worthless offal on the dunghill, and diffused through the air to prevent it acting injuriously on all animal beings, is brought down by the rains of heaven to form the chief nutriment of the vegetables that the surface of this earth is ever producing for man's support.

The mountains, those conductors from the elements of the gushing fountains that render earth inhabitable, are consigned to him as nature's fortresses for his country's protection.

The rivers are his scavengers of the land, ready-formed roads for his commercial intercourse ; they are the channels through which passes from the bowels of the earth that fluid which feeds heaven with its dews, and man with an element that is incorporated in 77 per cent. of the muscular tissues of his body.

Let him dig into the depths of the earth ; it is stowed with granaries of wealth for his sole use. Let him look upon earth's surface—how varied and beautiful its scenery, and what a picture of usefulness !—comparatively speaking, not a pin's point of it can be touched that does not afford man some gratuitous gift. The fishes of the sea, the fowls of the air, the elements almost are at his pleasure ; there is a change of season because he likes variety. What a grand creation, and how magnificent ! But how much

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grander and more beautiful is the frame-work of the unworthy creature whom the Creator has ordained to be lord of that creation?

Reflect for a moment on the mind of man alone—that invisible, impalpable, incomprehensible endowment. Its very name gives you the idea of universality of comprehension ; the grand centre of radiation of sensations, perceptions, ideas, emotions, and all reasoning processes ; that great originator of all the mechanical inventions on the face of the globe ; the foundation of the hero, the politician ; the instigator of all that science and art have rendered illustrious since the creation of Adam ; that electric current of mortality, that renders the meanest beggar a responsible being, a living moving world in himself ;—that can, as Memory, calm the turbulent spirit by bringing it back to the happy innocence of childhood's days ; that can, as Despondency, cloud the transparent spring of hope, by stirring up the gloomy mud of futurity ; that can, as Conscience, judge and torture the body it governs ; and, as Imagination, can grasp instantaneously the power, pomp, sway, and grandeur of the entire universe. It endows man, too, with that reason which elevates him above the brute beast. As the counsellor and director of every human soul, it bears the nearest similitude to the Creator's omniscience of all the grand moral attributes with which man is gifted. It is it that renders him a responsible being, and different from the puppet that moves according as its strings are pulled. When the devil pulls the string of lust in the heart of the fornicator,

conscience and that reason are sufficiently antagonistic to prevent that puppet moving. Even in the breast of the worst character in this regiment, there is an invisible power that instigates him to withstand that desire, so debasing, loathsome, and corruptible, and so contrary to all laws, both human and divine. But how many in this Battalion have infringed those laws, allowed conscience to be obliterated by the stains of this debasing sin ; who have given up the electric coil of their grand intellect to the fingers of the devil, and are this moment passing through the different stages of putridity, that may, in time, render them too foul to touch or even to approach. I need not go outside the confines of this citadel to give you a living instance ; some of you have seen him ; you all know him. The same germ of corruption that is sown in any of your bodies, like the parasitical fungus on the plant, may at any time take root in and feed on your vitals, and convert your entire system into a moving, decomposing mass of decay.

It is a curious fact, too, in connection with this vile pestilence, that as God has allotted that peculiar earthly curse to the sin of lust ; so also, by causing it to attack the most conspicuous parts of man's frame, he has ordained it to be, in some measure, the safeguard of the virgin's purity, by pointing out to her, in the faded eye, in the tainted skin, in the husky throat, in the hairless head, in the overwhelming torture-wheel of rheumatism, what a pit of vice, putridity, and loathsome contagion, that previous model of perfection and purity—man—has become.

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That globe of concentrated mechanism, the human eye, placed in its little boney shield of security against a thousand injuries, that works unconsciously on its numerous axes with lightning rapidity ; that living optical instrument of great perfection, which connects the outer world with the inner man, which, through its diminutive pupil, can stereotype momentarily on the mind a universe of objects from the minutest particle of gold dust 1125 parts of an inch in diameter, to the trees incalculable that clothe the gigantic mountain, the innumerable stars that decorate the canopy of heaven, or the countless ripples that roughen miles of the ocean's surface. Through what a beautifully adjusted and transparent window are the numberless reflected rays of heaven's light transmitted and refracted ; by what an accurately self-acting optical diaphragm, the pupil, are those invisible conveyors of objects excluded or admitted ; through what a wonderfully self-supporting fluid-medium do they pass ; and by what a brilliant crystalline lens are they doubly refracted, and rendered capable of forming in the mind's eye a sense of the beauties and grandeurs of the creation. What an incalculably priceless possession of utility and beauty ! Yes ! But look at the destroyer of that beautiful and priceless gem. Wafted quickly on life's circulating fluid, the loathsome leaven of syphilitic corruption is distributed over every—the minutest—component of the human body, even to the most invisible vessel in this eye ; there to render opaque that window of beautiful transparency, to paralyze and destroy that living optical diaphragm, to crush into decaying

fragments that lens of brilliancy, and render the entire of this little focus of utility and model of mechanism such a foul and worthless appendix to the already contaminated body, that it has to be plucked out, and becomes a worthless contribution to the cesspool or the dung-heap.

Upon the numerous other wonderful components of the creature that call on him individually to stay this self-destruction, it is unnecessary for me to enlarge; the most audible of them, that blighted voice, which in its purity could sway the counsellors of the kingdom—could excite ~~a~~ the vast continent into deadly strife and destruction, or calm the raging intellect with its plaintive music, that can make the lion of the forest crouch and tremble beneath its speech, loudly bespeaks the man to be worthy of a better object.

The skin, that marvellous integument of all these grand constituents, that safety-valve of great accuracy, which encircles man with 2500 square inches of surface; which, through 7,000,000 tubes, of a combined length of 28 miles, gives vent daily to from one to two lbs. of fluid, containing substances deleterious to its wonderful contents; that finishing-touch to human beauty ever endeavours, but too often fails, to ward off, even in its own self-destruction, venereal's premature decay from the body of the man who is unworthy of it.

In the entire catalogue of diseases to which the human body is subject, there is not one so injurious, contagious, or offensive. Cholera, yellow fever, pestilence, or small-pox, are incomparably its inferiors in virulence and destruction.

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Cholera and yellow fever may rage with a sirocco's violence for a season, and bring death and sorrow to many a home ; but, after that whirlwind of destruction has passed, peaceful calm succeeds, and, with the exception of the fresh-dug grave, no traces of the destroyer remain : the localities they have visited are as pure and free from contamination as they were before their unexpected onslaught. In the pitted face of small-pox there is left but the mark ; the skin-deep erosion of beauty ;—the inner man remains the same, pure and undefiled ; but not so with the tainted germ of syphilitic corruption. It does not, like the plague, with a stormy violence dismember the sturdy oak that opposes most its fury ; nor, as the autumn blast of small-pox, does it, for a season, cast an air of gloom and superficial decay over nature by rendering leafless the bud that was perfected by a summer's heat ; no, but as a deadly poison, it inoculates itself into the root, stem, and branches of man ; and if it does not instantly reduce him to a decaying mass, but allows him to shed his seed for the propagation of future generations, every sporule of that germinating product carries with it tales of the deepest sadness and heart-rending calamity. This same Zymotic source of rottenness, that in his own body renders his system tenfold more subservient to every disease under the sun, that converts the pin's-point scratch into a putrifying sore of fearful magnitude, and the simple pimple into a large receptacle of foul corruption ; this same yeast of immorality becomes the bane of destruction to the being of purity, who by her delicious fascinations has restored

him from the path of vice to that of virtue ; who, by her winning ways of effeminacy, supplants the most barbarous rudeness by the mildest gentleness ; who, as flesh of his flesh and bone of his bone, would sacrifice her soul almost for his eternal happiness ; and who now subjects her body of virgin chastity to him, its conscious defiler, to be by him rendered a new nidus for the extension of this fearful pestilence ; to be impregnated by him with a being whom she nourishes in her tainted womb, and ushers into the world either a ~~terrible~~ mass of decomposition or the transmitter to posterity of serofula, evil, imbecility, and a thousand other causes of degeneration of the mind and body of man. This, surely, is an awful scourge, and can and ought to be avoided.

I have stood by the death-bed of many a poor fellow gasping his last under the fatal stroke of an Indian sun. I have watched the dire dysentery gradually extinguishing the vital spark of many a lingering victim. I have listened to the death-tick in the breast of many a poor skeleton of consumption's deadly grasp. I have heard the death-yells issuing from the rack of cholera frequently, not unmoved ; but never, in my sad experience, have I witnessed such a fearful termination to mortal existence as that I once saw dealt by the hand of syphilis. The recollections of it are so indelibly imprinted in my memory that they will never be eradicated until my dying day. The poor subject of it was a being blessed, both in mind and body, with all the perfect attributes of man. He was married, and the father of children. He held the distinguished position of ser-

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geant-major of artillery, and in that capacity he went to India to assist in suppressing the mutiny, leaving his wife and little ones under his country's protection. In that country, where he decorated his breast with the medal of valour, he defiled his soul by adultery, and his body by the curse of syphilis ; and when he came under my notice in the "General Hospital" at Calcutta, in October, 1859, he truly presented a mass of contagious putridity too disgusting to be described ; suffice it to say, the entire surface of his wretched body was a running sore, and the fearful disease had eaten in nearly to the neck of his bladder. He was too repulsive to be approached ; and even the Mahter, the lowest grade of the most inferior Indian caste, could with difficulty be prevailed upon to remove and burn the bedding he had befouled. Months rolled on, and in the following March I was ordered home in charge of a cargo of invalids ; but he was not amongst the number. Change of scene and climate could not benefit him : he was left behind to die. Never shall I forget that morning when the other nests of sickness around him were being removed from the ward to be transferred to the ship that was to convey them to their native land. He watched them with a steady gaze as each sufferer from dysentery, fever, wounds, and sun-stroke, were being borne past his couch. The ship that brought his wife and children had entered the river's mouth ; he held the letter, the unwelcome messenger of the news, in his hand. With supplications the most heart-rending, that fleshless body besought me, by all that I held dear and sacred, to take

him with me ; and with a fearful pledge, and an eye of awful import, he swore that self-destruction was inevitable if he was left behind ; " preferring," as he said, " death and eternal torture to encountering the pure partner of his couch and his spotless children."

I yielded to his entreaties, procured sanction for his embarkation, and with difficulty got him lifted on a stretcher over the side of the ship, from which he was doomed never to depart a living man. The foulness of his body prevented him mingling with the other mass of disease on board : he had to be placed in a cow-shed on the upper deck ; and there, while every other poor sufferer, with an anxious face and a failing heart, would daily watch my lips for some slight ray of hopeful promise that they would ever live to see the fond ones of their heart and their native villages, on his emaciated countenance alone was stamped a perfect apathy to the world around, and a fixed look of resigned termination to deliver up his immortal remains to the hands of the devil.

It was a lovely morning in the month of July, as we lay becalmed off the Western Islands. The winds were hushed ; the sails were motionless ; the cloudless canopy of heaven illuminated the chrystal depths of a sea of glass, whose smooth surface was rippled only by the portentous fin of a solitary shark as he glided slowly in the ship's wake ;—all was calm and solitude around ; nothing was heard but the measured tramp of the captain as he paced the cuddy deck. The outer world seemed hushed in peaceful slumber. But what a violent hurricane raged in the frame of the wretched

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occupant of the cow-shed at this moment—the death-struggle was being enacted. I was suddenly summoned to the bedside of this poor victim, to see him breathe his last, and deliver up his mortal body to the grave. When that last long-wished-for moment of mortality arrived—when the emissaries of the devil were hovering over the carcass they were to waft away to eternity, that heap of clay seemed to concentrate all its dying energies in that broken, breathless voice, that told me, in fearful accents, the utter impossibility of salvation to him in the Saviour's blood, and in pointing out to me, with a boney finger and a fiendish countenance, the imaginary demon that had gnawed away his vitals. Oblivion can never damp in my memory the screams, the moans, the fearful gesticulations of that dying man.

In the awful stillness of the following early morning, there was heard on deck the solemn step of the collecting soldiers; then followed the plaintive words of the officer, as he paid the last earthly tribute to those remains of mortality as they lay on the death-slide, sewn up in canvas and shrouded in the Union Jack. Then came a pause—a splash—and it was launched into the waters of the bottomless deep.

I will not draw any inferences from the above consequences of lust's sin I have endeavoured to describe; that I will leave to your own reasoning powers. The few plain truths there expressed are, I hope, sufficiently vivid to make a lasting impression on the minds of some of you; and, I think, sufficiently fearful to be remembered by you all, if it were only for a time.

You are all young men, and the generality of you enjoy all the great blessings that follow in the train of health. The poison of syphilis has not yet entirely crept through your youthful ranks. There are some of you altogether free ; others only slightly tainted. I hope the few remarks I have made here to-night will be a timely warning to those who are still undefiled, and an instructive lesson to those who already bear the mark of the beast, to refrain from this vile passion, to curb the devil's temptings, and not add fuel to the furnace, but allow the many wonderful organs of which he is composed to contend with the contagious pestilence he nourishes in his tissue ; and they may in time, perhaps, eliminate it entirely from his system, and render up to him the health, buoyancy, and strength he previously possessed. For the confirmed fornicator, if he continues in his ways, there is no escape. Early mental and bodily infirmity will necessitate his being early discharged the service, *pensionless* ; then what a life of woe and misery is before him ; perhaps an outcast from his family, he cannot return to his home. His decaying body renders him unable to earn his daily bread ; the curse of blindness may deprive him of the light of heaven, and darken the gloomy shades of remorse, poverty, starvation, and disease, that shroud his foul and emaciated body, ere it passes away from before the scenes of the temporary theatre of this life to eternity.

