The Sex Radicals

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Appendix

What "Diana" Teaches
(An essay by Leo Tolstoy)

"The Kreutzer Sonata" and the "Postscripts" have brought to me many letters from different places proving that the need of changed views regarding the relations between the sexes is recognized not by me alone but by a great number of thinking people whose voices have been unheard and unheeded simply because they have been cried down by the multitude who obstinately and warmly uphold the accustomed order of things, granting, as it does, free indulgence in their passions. Among the letters which I received in October, 1890, was the following which accompanied a pamphlet entitled "Diana," referred to in it:

New York, Oct. 7th., 1890.

We have the pleasure of transmitting you by mail a copy of a small book, entitled "Diana, a Psycho-Physiological Essay on Sexual Relations for Married Men and Women," which we hope will reach you safely.

Since the circulation, in America, of your work the "Kreutzer Sonata," many, so many, persons have said "Diana carries out, explains and makes practicable Count Tolstoy's theories." We therefore take the liberty of sending you a copy, that you may judge for yourself.

Praying for the fulfillment of your heart's dearest wish, we are, dear Sir, Sincerely yours,

Burnz & Co.

Shortly before this I had received from France a letter from Angele Françoise together with her brochure.

In her letter Madame Angele informed me of the existence of two Societies whose object was the encouragement of purity in sexual life—one in England and the other in France, "Societe d'Amour Pur."
In Madame Angele's essay were expressed very much the same thoughts as in "Diana," but much less clearly and definitely and with a shade of mysticism. The thoughts expressed in the essay, "Diana," though taken from a point of view that is not Christian but rather Pagan—Platonic,—are both novel and interesting, and they give such a clear exposition of the folly of wantonness (licentiousness), not only among the unmarried but also among the married in our modern society that I feel a desire to give my readers the benefit of these thoughts.

The fundamental thesis of the essay which had for a motto the text, "And they two shall be one flesh," is as follows:

The difference in organization between man and woman is not only physiological but extends also into other and moral characteristics, such as go to make manhood in man and womanhood (or femininity) in woman. The attraction between the sexes is based not merely upon the yearning for physical union but likewise upon that reciprocal attraction, exerted by the contrasting qualities of the sexes, each upon the other, manhood upon womanhood and womanhood upon manhood. The one sex endeavors to complement itself with the other, and therefore the attraction between the sexes demands a union of spirit precisely identical with the physical union.

The tendency towards physical and spiritual union forms two phases or manifestations of one and the same fountain-head of desire, and they bear such intimate relations to each other that the gratification of the one inclination inevitably weakens the other. So far as the yearning for spiritual union is satisfied, to that extent the yearning for physical union is diminished or entirely destroyed; and, vice versa, the gratification of the physical desire weakens or destroys the spiritual. And consequently the attraction between the sexes is not only a physical affinity leading to procreation but is also the attraction of opposites for one another, capable of assuming the form of the most spiritual union in thought only, or of the most animal union, causing the procreation of children and all those varied degrees of relationship between the one and the other.

The question on which footing the connection between the sexes is to be established is settled by deciding what method of
union is regarded at any given time, or for all time, as good, proper and therefore desirable.

(A remarkable illustration of the degree to which the relationship between the sexes may be made conformable to what is considered good, proper and therefore desirable, is afforded by the astonishing custom of zheni-khanya or "little marriage" among the Malo-Russians, which allows young fellows for years to sleep with the girls to whom they are betrothed without even impeaching their virginity.)

Perfect satisfaction for different persons united together constitutes the relationship which these individuals consider good, proper and consequently desirable, and depends on their special point of view.

But independently of this, per se and, objectively, one relationship must give every person a higher satisfaction than the other. Which mode of union gives this maximum of satisfaction, per se, for all, independently of the individual view of those who make the union? That which nearest approaches the spiritual, or that which nearest approaches the physical?

The reply to this question is clear and indubitable, although it is diametrically opposed to all the habitual modes of thought held by society, and is to this effect; that the nearer the form of union approaches the extreme physical boundary the more it kindles the passions (desire) and the less satisfaction it gets; the nearer it approaches the opposite extreme spiritual boundary, the less new passions are excited and the greater is the satisfaction. The nearer it comes to the first, the more destructive it is to animal energy; the nearer it approaches the second, the spiritual, the more serene, the more enjoyable and forceful is the general condition.

The union of man and woman "in one flesh," in the form of an indissoluble, monogamous marriage, the author considers a necessary condition for the superior development of mankind. Marriage, therefore, in the author's opinion, since it constitutes the natural and desirable condition for all men who attain years of maturity, is not necessarily a physical union but may also be a spiritual one. Taking into consideration conditions and temperament, and above all what the contracting parties regard as good, proper and desirable, marriage for some will approach the spiritual union, for others the physical, but the nearer the union ap-
proaches the spiritual the more complete will be the satisfaction.

Since the author avows that the same sexual tendencies may lead to a spiritual union, affection,—and to the physical union,—reproductiveness, procreation—and that the one activity passes into the other, conscience being a determining cause, it stands to reason that he does not recognize any impossibility in self-restraint, but considers it a natural and indispensable condition of a reasonable system of sexual hygiene both in married life and outside of it.

The whole essay forms a rich collection of examples and illustrations of the argument which it contains, and physiological data regarding the processes of the sexual relations, their effects upon the organism and the possibility of a conscious directing of them in one way or the other,—affection or reproductiveness.

In support of this theory the author quotes the words of Herbert Spencer: "If any law," says Spencer, "works to the advantage of the human race, then human nature infallibly submits to it, since obedience to it becomes a pleasure to a man."

"And, consequently," says the author, "we ought not to place too much reliance on the established customs and conditions about us; but we ought rather to consider what man should be and may be in the brilliant future which is before us."["

The substance of all that has been said, the author thus explains. The fundamental theory of "Diana" is that the relations between the sexes have two functions: reproductive and affectional; and that the sexual energy, if only it have no conscious desire to beget children, must be always directed in the way of affection, (love). The manifestation which this energy assumes, depends on reason and custom; in consequence of which there is a gradual bringing of the reason into agreement with the principles here expounded, and a gradual reorganization of customs consonant with them, thus saving men from many of their passions and giving them satisfaction for their sexual desires.

At the end of the essay is a remarkable "Letter to Parents and Teachers" from the pen of Eliza B. Burnz. This letter, notwithstanding the fact that it treats of subjects generally considered improper, (calling things by their names as indeed it is impossible to avoid doing) ought to have such a beneficent influence on unfortunate young men suffering from excesses and irregularities,
that its wide circulation among grown men who have thrown away their best energies and ruined their happiness, and especially among the poor who are destroying themselves simply through ignorance, among boys in families, academies, high schools (gymnasiums) and above all in military establishments and private institutions, would be a genuine blessing.
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