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BOOKS WE'D LIKE TO BURN.

Writers Contorted View of Morality.

Two novels have just been banned by the libraries. We should have banned more than two ourselves, but this ban serves to draw attention to the large numbers of polite pornographic novels which are being published. The picture of London given in these novels is that Londoners live in a state of dog-like promiscuity worse than that of the Roman Empire in its most degenerate days.

This is wildly untrue to life. Then what are the novelists up to? They have seen that there is money in contraceptive fiction, as it can be seen from the advertised number of editions of Marie Stopes' books that there is money in contraceptive facts.

There is no objection to robust sexuality in fiction. Rabelais, is a healthy hearty fellow. "The Golden Asse" need not be read in girls' schools, nor need Anatole France's "A Mummer's Tale," nor J. B. Coheirs "Virgin" or George Moore's "A Story-Teller's Holiday." But these books are harmless to any adult of normally constituted mind.

The harmful book is not the downright, jolly, old-fashioned book, which is frank about sex, but the new-fashioned book which calmly takes it for granted that the ideal of virginity before marriage no longer exists. In life as these authors pretend to show it, chastity is extinct and the moral standards of Night Club Decadents are supposed to be the standards of us all.

Besides being a thundering libel, this is pernicious because though one novel may not have much influence, a whole batch of novels all making the same cool assumption has a great deal of influence. You circulate ten novels to young people; in each novel incontinence is general; and what is the young reader to conclude except that, in life, incontinence is the rule?

Among the books we would burn are a number by well-known authors. If we had our way the public hangman should seize upon such erotic bundles as "Speed the Plough," by Mary Butts, "Sweet Pepper," by Geoffrey Moss, "Bodies and Souls,"

by Shaw Desmond. A similar fate should overtake "The Outsider," by Maurice Samuel, and, more infamous than all, "The Diary of a Drug Fiend," by Aleister Crowley. It is a crime to suggest that there should be no restraint upon lust.

And they are so well written! The story may be of an English lady(?) going to the Desert to have a love-affair with an Arab, or it may be a London tale of General Post amongst a set of young men and women who change partners once a month, but always it is nicely written. You can't call it coarse because of its charming style!

Now, the average girl of to-day knows how Nature provides for the continuance of the race. There is still a percentage which does not know, and at the other end of the scale there is a percentage which has a theoretical knowledge of the use of contraceptives.

But these novels are written as if everybody knew all about these questions, and as if restraint and morality did not exist. It is not coarsely indecent fiction; it is worse, it is delicately indecent. It does not argue about morality; It blandly assumes universal incontinence, protected against the inconvenience of babies by contraceptives.

This is not the world as it is, but it is the world which these lecherous novels will make it if further publication is not stopped. At least six novels published this year ought to be publicly burned.

They are books which, while written under the pose of the artistic temperament, or the portrayal of real life as it is in these days of unconventionality, do little else than pander to the vicious tastes of the readers. The eminence of the writers and the skill with which the nastiness is allowed to creep into the narratives, only makes the reading of such trash by the unsophisticated and also the very much sophisticated, the more dangerous.

I do not suggest that the object of these authors is to accomplish the downfall of humanity. I believe that a far more immediate and material aim is before them. They are inspired, in fact, by a desire to attain popularity and prosperity swiftly and surely. There is nothing wrong in that, but there is decidedly something wrong in the methods adopted to secure that end.