

CORRESPONDENCE

review of Sir Herbert Samuel's book on *Practical Ethics*, and is as follows: "Such a book will, of course, necessarily be for non-philosophers" (the implication of this being apparently that philosophers already possess plenty of light on the subjects dealt with), "though that does not mean that it will not be of interest to philosophers also. It should discuss on a philosophical background, vexed questions of conduct, in regard to which contemporary society is puzzled, doubting what is right and what is wrong, and should presumably at the same time suggest that *the answer to the philosophical problem has some relevance to these practical problems.*" So far, so good. But my trouble begins when I turn the pages back, and, rubbing my eyes, carefully read once more these words from the account of Professor Hallett's address at the annual meeting of the Institute of Philosophy: "Who would go to a philosopher for advice on—the relations of the sexes?" The hope raised by the language of Mr. Stocks is here dashed ruthlessly, and one wonders where the truth lies. Certainly it cannot be denied that the relations of the sexes constitute one of the most baffling and, I must add, dangerous problems of contemporary practical morality, and in its rough waters many thoughtful men and women are more or less helplessly struggling, having lost all faith in the dictates of traditional ethics and in the teaching of the Church, of which last I speak with the highest honour, for I am one of her loyal servants. But my eyes are not shut, and I know how deep the trouble is. I am, moreover, unwilling to accept the implication of Professor Hallett's question as the last word of the philosophers on this vital subject. I, therefore, make bold to ask you, Sir, whether you cannot invite some of them to give their views on this specific matter in your valuable pages, and thus provide, for many eager and anxious readers, some of that light that is, as Mr. Stocks hopefully and I believe rightly suggests, in the possession and at the disposal of philosophy.

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4, CLIVE STREET,
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Remarks by the Chairman.

On receipt of the above letter the Editor, while considering it inadvisable to open a correspondence on the important problem it raises, has asked me, as Chairman of the Editorial Committee, if I have any comments to make upon it that might be of interest to readers. With regard to the contradiction which the writer finds between Professor Hallett and Professor Stocks as to the relevance of philosophy to practical problems, it need not be taken so seriously if, as I took it myself, Professor Hallett's statement be supposed to refer to particular problems in the life of an individual, while Professor Stocks refers to the general principle on which the solution of such problems should be sought. I do not think any of us would be prepared to exclude from the proper sphere of philosophy a subject which from the time of Socrates has exercised the minds and the pens of philosophers. If it finds itself helpless after all these centuries to say anything useful on one so fundamental as the relations of the sexes it would indeed be sentencing itself to futility. But it would be equally passing sentence on itself if it tried to treat of it in isolation from the principle which, from the beginning, the greatest philosophers, Plato and Aristotle perhaps more definitely than any before or since, laid down as the regulating one of any conduct which is truly human. Life, they taught, for a *man* differs from the life of an animal in being a fine art—the finest of all arts containing possibilities of "love and beauty and delight" denied to all lower creatures, yet only to be realized under one condition: that the animal instincts and passions should be treated as merely the materials of the art, the means through which man's essential humanity should find expression. Each of these instincts has its function and its place, but it can only perform its function and take its proper place, as a line or a colour can in a sculpture or picture, according as it is made to minister to the form and beauty of the whole. The sex instinct only differs from others in the dominating power it exercises owing to the load it has to bear in securing the continuance of the race and constituting the physical foundation of one of the highest forms civilization has hitherto achieved in the life of the Family. What has recently brought the problem of its regulation

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into such prominence is a fact, at once menacing to social equilibrium and containing the hope of its re-establishment on a firmer basis than ever before. This is the new position that women are claiming for themselves to be individuals with personalities of their own, which they have the same claim as men to be free to develop to the limit of their capacities. It is a *menace* because, among other liberties, it means freedom to choose their own sex relations unhampered by older social (mainly masculine) "expectations" as to the form which these should assume. It is full of *hope* because it gives the clue to the regulation of this freedom in the spread of the sense among men and women alike of what is due to such personality. The principle was laid down by Kant, the greatest of modern moralists, in his celebrated maxim: "So act as to treat humanity whether in thine own person or in that of any other always as an end, and never as a means only." What Kant, as a typical son of the "age of reason," and with his Stoic distrust of feeling, failed to see was that the guarantee of obedience to this maxim was not the abstract reason, but that essentially rational emotion which we know as Love. Given love, in no merely sentimental or romantic sense, but in the sense of devotion to another for his or her own sake as an embodiment of humanity with all that this means, it may be seen to contain at once the only and the all-sufficient principle for the regulation of the sexual life whether inside or outside the bonds of matrimony. I have no space for the further development of this text. It is all the more unnecessary as it has recently been developed in a masterly way by a member of the Committee of the British Institute of Philosophy, Professor John Macmurray, in the seventh chapter of his book on *Reason and Emotion*. I venture, in conclusion, to quote a sentence or two from it which seems to me to sum up far better than in anything I could say the truth on the whole matter. After giving what is in effect a modern version of Kant's maxim, he goes on: "In all enjoyment there is a choice between enjoying the other and enjoying yourself through the instrumentality of the other. The first is the enjoyment of love, the second the enjoyment of lust. When people enjoy themselves through each other . . . they do not meet as persons at all; their reality is lost. They meet as ghosts of themselves, and their pleasure is a ghostly pleasure that cannot begin to satisfy a human soul, and which only vitiates its capacity for reality."

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