

Room 5, No. 134 West 23D St., New York, Oct. 16, 1902.

To the Public:

I am taking my life, because a judge, at the instigation of Anthony Comstock, has decreed me guilty of a crime which I did not commit--the circulation of obscene literature--and has announced his intention of consigning me to prison for a long term.

The book has been favorably reviewed by medical magazines of standing, and has been approved by physicians of reputation. The Rev. Dr. Rainsford of this city, in two letters to me, partially approved this book so far as to say that if all young people were to read it, a great deal of misery, suffering, and disappointment could be avoided, and that to have arrested me on account of it, as Mr. Comstock has done, was ridiculous. This little book, "The Wedding Night," and its companion pamphlet, "Right Marital Living," have been circulated with approval among Social Purity women, members of the W.C.T.U., clergymen and reputable physicians; various physicians have ordered these books from me for their patients, or have sent their patients to me to procure them or to receive even fuller instruction orally; respectable married women have purchased them from me for their daughters, husbands for their wives, wives for husbands, young women for their betrothed lovers. On all sides, these little pamphlets have evoked from their readers commendation for their purity, their spiritual uplifting, their sound common sense in treating of healthful and happy relations between husbands and wives.

In contrast with this mass of testimony to their purity and usefulness, a paid informer, who is making his living out of entering complaints against immoral books and pictures, has lodged complaint against one of my books as "obscene, lewd, lascivious," and proposes to indict the other book later on, so as to inflict legal penalties on me a second time. This man, Anthony Comstock, who is unctuous with hypocrisy, pretends that I am placing these books in the hands of minors, even little girls and boys, with a view to the debauchment of their morals. He has not, however, produced any young person thus far who has been injured through their perusal; nor has any parent or guardian come forward who claims even the likelihood of any young persons being injured by either of these books; nor has he even vouchsafed the addresses of any of the people from whom he states he has received complaints. In addition, he has deliberately lied about the matter. He stated to Judge Thomas of the United States Circuit Court (secretly, not while in court), that I had even handed one of these books to the little daughter of the janitress of the building in which I have my office. It so happens that there is no janitress in this building, nor is there any little girl connected with same. I took a paper around among the tenants to this effect, which they signed, and which I sent to the judge by my lawyer; also a paper to the same effect, which my landlord stood prepared to attest before a notary, if need be. But even this made no impression upon Judge Thomas; he still is firmly convinced (so he says) that Anthony Comstock is a strictly truthful man.

On Friday last, October 10, I underwent what was supposed to be a fair and impartial trial by jury; but which was really a most unfair trial, before a thoroughly partisan judge, at the close of which he abolished my right of trial by jury on the main question at issue, namely the alleged obscenity of "The Wedding Night" book. My counsel was not permitted to present in evidence circulars which showed that as far back as 1898 and 1899, I was accustomed to state in print that any applicants for oral instruction upon marriage who were under 21 would have to produce written consent from a parent or a guardian. My evidence was almost wholly choked off; neither my counsel nor myself was permitted to endeavor to justify the book by argument. The most the judge would do was to permit me to read from various paragraphs in the book, without comment, if these could explain the indicted paragraphs. Even with this tiny bit of a chance, I made such good use of my opportunity before the jury, that Judge Thomas, who was evidently prejudiced in advance against both myself and my book, saw that he dared not now risk the case to the jury, or he might not manage to convict me after all. And so he announced that he himself intended to pass upon the character of the book. He stated that there is in existence a decision of the United States Supreme Court which gives him this right.

He said he would not let the question go to the jury; he considered the book "obscene, lewd, lascivious, dirty." He added that he would submit to the jury only the question of fact. Did the defendant mail the book? (The charge was "mailing an obscene book.") He said, "Gentlemen of the Jury, the question for you to pass upon is, Did the defendant mail the book? You know that she admits having mailed the book. Please render your verdict. I do not suppose you will care to leave your seats." And the poor little cowed jury could do nothing but to meekly obey the behest of this unrighteous judge, and to pass in their ballots, "Guilty of mailing the book." Which, of course, was no crime at all.

I fully expected that the public press of New York city would duly chronicle this most remarkable invasion of the rights of the people by such an abolishing of the trial by jury; but so far as I

could learn, the press remained totally silent.

It is evident that the political pull of the party which fathers Anthony Comstock is too powerful for any newspaper in New York to dare to raise a protest when, at the instigation of this ex officio informer, an innocent woman, engaged in a laudable work of sex reform, indorsed by reputable citizens, is arrested on false information and denied her right of trial by jury.

Since Friday last, people of influence and respectability have written to the judge on my behalf and have been to see him; but he announces his inflexible intention of sending me to prison, and, he is careful to malignantly add, "for a long, long term." I am a "very dangerous woman," he adds: Mr. Comstock has told him most shocking things about me--not in court, however, this paid informer being far too cute to dare to face his victim openly with any such lies.

At my age (I was forty-five this last August) confinement under the rigors of prison life would be equivalent to my death-warrant. The judge must surely know this; and since he is evidently determined to not only totally suppress my work, but to place me where only death can release me, I consider myself justified in choosing for myself, as did Socrates, the manner of my death. I prefer to die comfortably and peacefully, on my own little bed in my own room, instead of on a prison cot.

I am making this statement to the public because I wish to call attention to some of the salient features of Comstockism, in the hope that the public may be led to put down this growing menace to the liberties of the people.

As I said not long since in the Boston Traveler, if the reading of impure books and the gazing upon impure pictures does debauch and corrupt and pervert the mind (and we know that it does), when we reflect that Anthony Comstock has himself read perhaps more obscene books, and has gazed upon perhaps more lewd pictures than has any other one man in the United States, what are we to think of the probable state of Mr. Comstock's imagination today upon sexual matters?

The man is a sex pervert; he is what physicians term a Sadist--namely a person in whom the impulses of cruelty arise concurrently with the stirring of sex emotion. The Sadist finds keen delight in inflicting either physical cruelty or mental humiliation upon the source of that emotion. Also he may find pleasure in gloating over the possibilities to others. I believe that Mr. Comstock takes pleasure in lugging in on all occasions a word picture (especially to a large audience) of the shocking possibilities of the corruption of the morals of innocent youth.

This man serves two masters; he is employed and paid by the Society of the Suppression of Vice, but he secures from the United States Government an appointment as postal inspector without pay; so that he is able, if he wishes, to use his official position for the furtherance of the private ends of his society and, presumably of himself. Ex officio informers, with their attendant spies and decoys, have been throughout history notoriously a means of exploiting the government for private and corrupt purposes.

For over nine years I have been fighting, singlehanded and alone, against Comstockism. Time and time again I have been pushed to the wall, my books have been seized and burned, and I myself have been publicly stigmatized in the press by Comstock and Comstockians as a purveyor of indecent literature. Yet this very literature has been all the while quietly circulating with approval among men and women of the utmost respectability and purity of life, and I have received numerous letters attesting its worth.

Not only this, Comstockism can be used, as was the medieval Inquisition at times, to gratify private malice, as the complainant does not need to appear in court. This was done to me in Philadelphia because, while holding a petty position as amanuensis in the Bureau of highways, I declined right along to pay political assessments to the Quay party. For months they tracked me night and day wherever I went, vainly hoping to learn something detrimental to my character, and at last they arranged to have me indicted for mailing immoral literature, as they could find no other means of successfully damaging my reputation.

John Wanamaker once stated in a political speech that the Quay party were relentless in hounding those who refused to pay political assessments. They would follow up such a person even when he went into the service of other employers, and leave no stone unturned to ruin him in after years. This may or not be so in my own case; I do not know. But I do know that when I went to Washington a secret complaint was lodged with the police My accuser never faced me openly in court. I pleaded my own case before the police judge, saved one book ("Right Marital Living") and won many encomiums from those present in court because of the uplifting character of my plea; nevertheless I was driven from the city.

Each time that I have been arrested, I have escaped by a compromise; but I resolved, when I came

to New York, that if again attacked by Comstockism, I would stand my ground and fight to the death. Perhaps it may be that in my death more than in my life, the American people may be shocked into investigating the dreadful state of affairs which permits that unctuous sexual hypocrite, Anthony Comstock, to wax fat and arrogant, and to trample upon the liberties of the people, invading, in my own case, both my right to freedom of religion and to freedom of the press. There is only one lawful excuse for the community's interfering with any one's religion or publication in America; and that is, the invasion by means of that religion or those publications, of other people's rights to life, liberty, or their pursuit of happiness. No proof of such injury wrought has been produced in my case; the testimony for the government against me rests entirely upon the mere say-so of this paid informer.

Every one of the paragraphs indicted in "The Wedding Night" is the outcome of talks which I have had with distinguished physicians and also with men and women among my pupils. I have looked into the hearts of hundreds of men and women during the nine years in which I have been engaged in sex reform work, and my soul burns within me when I see how husbands and wives are suffering, and how nearly all of the suffering could be done away with, if only Anthony Comstock were not hoodwinking the public into believing that sexual information in printed books must be kept away from them, so as to protect the morals of innocent youth. Surely, Mr. Comstock's idea of the nature of the marriage relation must be singularly impure, when he ventures to pretend that it should not be known of as to its details by young people who are sufficiently mature to be seeking for enlightenment!

In the courts, however, in obscene literature cases, a precedent has been established by which the defendant is forbidden to produce witnesses in behalf of the accused book, so that I was legally prohibited from summoning physicians to testify on behalf of the book.

Owing to this and to other legal precedents which hamper the defendant in obscene literature cases as is done in no other criminal cases anywhere; owing also the dense ignorance and prejudice which prevail in regard to the scientific open discussion of sexual matters; and, most of all, owing to Mr. Comstock's persistent lies and to his adroitness in depicting the shocking possibilities of corrupting the morals of innocent youth by permitting young people to peruse any enlightening literature upon the details of normal, healthy, pure marital relations--matters have now reached the point where it is only necessary to accuse a person of mailing so-called "obscene" literature in order to convict him. As no witnesses are allowed to testify as to the effect of the book upon themselves or their young daughters or young sons, or, if physicians, upon their patients, neither judge nor jury are in a position to learn the actual facts in the case. And now, in my own case the other day, the legal precedent has been established by the action of Judge Thomas, in the United States Circuit Court, of not only excluding witnesses in behalf of the indicted book, but even forbidding either the defendant or her counsel to attempt to explain the reasons for printing the indicted paragraphs or in any way seeking to justify, in an argument, the publication of the book and then finally, by a legal subterfuge, abolishing the defendant's right of trial by jury; the latter being a proceeding which has always been recognized by true patriots as a serious menace to the liberties of the people.

In addition, in my own case, there is the matter of persecution for my religious views. Although this question did not directly arise before Judge Thomas, yet, from the paragraph which I read from my book, and which I was permitted to read only without explanation, it must have been evident that the book contained a religious propaganda, and that, indeed, the religious teaching was the foremost matter, the physical teachings being only subservient thereto.

But in my trial under the New York state law last March, before three judges the religious question did very decidedly arise. In that court, Judge McKean so far forgot his oath of office (to administer justice impartially) as to hotly denounce my book as "blasphemous" (presumably because I am teaching the duty and the joy of communion with God in the marriage relation so as to render it sacramental). Of course this was illegal on his part. No judge has any right to denounce a prisoner because he differs with that prisoner in his religious belief.

I earnestly hope that the American public will awaken to a sense of the danger which threatens it from Comstockism, and that it will demand that Mr. Comstock shall no longer be permitted to suppress works on sexology. The American people have a right to seek and to obtain knowledge upon right living in the marriage relation, either orally or in print, without molestation by this paid informer, Anthony Comstock, or by anybody else.

Dear fellow-citizens of America, for nine long years I have faced social ostracism, poverty, and the dangers of persecution by Anthony Comstock for your sakes. I had a beautiful gospel of right living in the marriage relation, which I wanted you to share with me. For your sakes, I have struggled along in the face of great odds; for your sakes I have come at last to the place where I must lay down my life for you, either in prison or out of prison. Will you not do something for me now?

Well, this is what I want the American public to do for me. Only one of my books, that on "The Wedding Night," is at present under legal ban. "Right Marital Living," which is by far the more important book of the two, and which contains the gist of my teachings, has not yet been indicted. Mr. Comstock, however, told me, when arresting me, that he expected to get both books indicted. If sufficient of a popular demand be made for this book, and especially if the demand voice itself in the public press, he will not dare to attack the book in the courts. Will you do this one thing for me, those of you who have public influence? Remember, it is for you and for your children that I have fought this nine-years' fight. And although I am going to a brighter and a happier land, nevertheless, I shall still look down upon you all here, and long and long and long that you may know something of the radiantly happy and holy life which is possible fore every married couple who will practice these teachings. Even in Paradise I cannot be as happy as I might, unless you share with me this beautiful knowledge.

I beg of you, for your own sakes, and for the future happiness of the young people who are dear to you, to protect my little book, "Right Marital Living."

I have still other teachings to follow this, upon the marriage relation, later on. I have written a book of between 450 and 500 pages upon "Marriage" in which my teachings are set forth more fully. This book, in manuscript form, is at present stored in a safe place, in friendly hands. It will not be given to the public until such time as the public shows itself ready for it, and prepared to protect this fuller and franker book from prosecution. Meanwhile, however, "Right Marital Living" remains unindicted; it sets forth a gospel of marriage which is being preached by no other teacher in America. Its teachings will make your married lives healthier, happier, holier. Will you publicly voice your demand for this little book, "Right Marital Living," and protect it from Anthony Comstock?

Ida C. Craddock.