

## Lectures to Young Men on Various Important Subjects

Henry Ward Beecher, 1849

### The Immoral Woman!

“All Scripture is God-breathed and is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness, so that the man of God may be thoroughly equipped for every good work.” 2 Timothy 3:16-17.

Surely one cannot declare the whole counsel of God, and leave out a subject which is interwoven with almost every chapter of the Bible. So inveterate is the prejudice against introducing into the pulpit the subject of *immorality*, that Ministers of the Gospel, knowing the vice to be singularly dangerous and frequent — have yet by silence almost complete, or broken only by circuitous allusions, manifested their submission to the popular taste. That Vice upon which it has pleased God to be more explicit and full, than upon any other; against which he uttered his voice upon Sinai, “*You shall not commit adultery;*” upon which the lawgiver, Moses, legislated with boldness; which Judges condemned; upon which the venerable Prophets spoke often and again; against which Christ with singular directness and plainness uttered the purity of religion; and upon which He inspired Paul to discourse to the Corinthians, and to almost every primitive church; this subject, upon which the Bible does not so much speak, as thunder — not by a single bolt — but peal after peal — we are solemnly warned not to introduce into the pulpit! I am entirely aware of the *delicacy* of introducing this subject into the pulpit.

The *proverbs of Solomon* are designed to furnish us a series of *maxims* for every relation of life. There will naturally be the most said where there is the most needed. If the frequency of warning against any sin measures the liability of man to that sin, then none is worse than *Impurity*. In many separate passages is the solemn warning against the immoral woman given with a force which must terrify all but the innocent or incorrigible; and with a delicacy which all will feel but those whose modesty is the fluttering of an impure imagination. I shall take such parts of all these passages as will make up a connected narrative.

When wisdom enters into your heart, and knowledge is pleasant unto your soul, discretion shall preserve you . . . to deliver you from the immoral woman, who chatters with her tongue; her lips drop as a honey-comb, her mouth is smoother than oil. She sits at the door of her house on a seat in the high places of the city, to call to passengers who go right on their ways: “Whoever is simple let him turn in here.” To him that lacks understanding, she says, “Stolen waters are sweet and bread eaten in secret is pleasant;” but he knows not that the dead are there. Lust not after her beauty, neither let her capture you with her eyelids. She forsakes the guide of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God. Remove your way far from her, and come not near the door of her house, for her house inclines unto death! She has cast down many wounded; yes, many strong men have been slain by her. Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chamber of death; none that go unto her, return again; neither take they hold of the paths of life. Let not your heart incline to her ways, lest you mourn at last, when your flesh and your body are consumed, and say: “How have I hated instruction, and my heart despised correction!”

I. Can language be found which can draw a *corrupt beauty* so vividly as this? Look out upon that fallen creature whose mirthful sally through the street calls out the significant laugh of bad men, the pity of good men, and the horror of the pure. Was not her cradle as pure as ever a beloved infant? Love soothed its cries. Sisters watched its peaceful sleep, and a mother pressed it fondly to her bosom! Had you afterwards, when spring-flowers covered the earth, and every gale was fragrance, and every sound was music, seen her, fairer than the lily or the violet, searching them, would you not have said, “Sooner shall the rose grow poisonous than she; both may wither — but neither corrupt.” And how often, at evening, did she clasp her tiny hands in prayer? How often did she put the wonder-raising questions to her mother, of God, and Heaven, and the dead — as if she had seen heavenly things in a vision!

As young womanhood advanced, and these foreshadowed graces ripened to the bud and burst into bloom, health glowed in her cheek, love looked from her eye, and purity was an atmosphere around her. Alas! she forsook the guide of her youth. Faint thoughts of evil, like a far-off cloud which the sunset gilds, came first; nor does the rosy sunset blush deeper along the Heaven, than her cheek, at the *first thought of evil*. Now, ah! mother, and you guiding elder sister, could you have seen the lurking spirit embosomed in that cloud, a holy prayer might have broken the spell, a tear have washed its stain! Alas! they saw it not; she spoke it not; she was forsaking the guide of her youth. She thinks no more of Heaven. She breathes no more prayers. She has no more penitential tears to shed; until, after a long life, she drops the bitter tear upon the *cheek of despair* — then her only suitor. You have forsaken the covenant of your God. Go down! fall never to rise! *Hell opens to be your home!*

Oh Prince of torment! if you have transforming power, give some relief to this once innocent child, whom another has corrupted! Let your deepest damnation seize him who brought her here! let his coronation be upon the very mount of torment! and the rain of fiery hail be his salutation! He shall be crowned with thorns poisoned and anguish-bearing; and every woe beat upon him, and every wave of Hell roll over the first risings of baffled hope. Your guilty thoughts, and guilty deeds, shall flit after you with *bows* which never break, and *quivers* forever emptying but never exhausted!

If Satan has one dart more poisoned than another; if God has one bolt more transfixing and blasting than another; if there is one hideous spirit more unrelenting than others — they shall be yours, most execrable wretch! who led her to forsake the guide of her youth, and to abandon the covenant of her God.

II. The next injunction of God to the young, is upon **the ensnaring danger of Beauty**. “Desire not her beauty in your heart, neither let her capture you with her eyelids.” God did not make so much of nature with exquisite beauty, or put within us a taste for it, without an object. He meant that it should *delight* us. He made every flower to charm us. He never made a color, nor graceful-flying bird, nor silvery insect, without meaning to *please our taste*. When He clothes a man or woman with *beauty* — He confers a favor, did we know how to receive it. Beauty, with amiable dispositions and ripe intelligence — is more to any woman than a queen’s crown. The peasant’s daughter, the rustic belle, if they have woman’s sound discretion, may be rightfully prouder than kings’ daughters; for God adorns those who are both good and beautiful; man can only conceal the lack of beauty, by blazing jewels.

As moths and tiny insects flutter around the bright blaze which was kindled for no harm — so the foolish young, fall down burned and destroyed by the *blaze of beauty*. As the flame which burns to destroy the insect, is consuming itself and soon sinks into ashes — so beauty, too often, draws on itself that ruin which it inflicts upon others.

If God has given you beauty, tremble; for it is as gold in your house — thieves and robbers will prowl around and seek to possess it. If God has put beauty before your eyes, remember how many strong men have been cast down wounded by it. Are you stronger than David? Are you stronger than mighty patriarchs? — than kings and princes, who, by its fascinations, have lost peace and purity, and honor, and riches, and armies, and even kingdoms? Let *other men's destruction* be your wisdom and warning; for it is hard to reap prudence upon the field of experience.

### III. In the minute description of this dangerous creature, mark next how seriously we are cautioned of her WILES.

Her wiles of **dress**. Coverings of tapestry and the fine linen of Egypt are hers; the perfumes of myrrh and aloes and cinnamon. Silks and ribbons, laces and rings, gold and equipage; ah! how low a price for damnation! The wretch who would be hung simply for the sake of riding to the gallows in a golden chariot, clothed in king's raiment — what a fool is he! Yet how many consent to enter the chariot of Death — drawn by the fiery *steeds of lust* which fiercely fly, and stop not for food or breath until they have accomplished their fatal journey — if they may spread their seat with flowery silks, or flaunt their forms with glowing apparel and precious jewels!

Her wiles of **speech**. Beasts may not speak; this honor is too high for them. To God's imaged-sons, this prerogative belongs, to utter thought and feeling in articulate sounds. We may breathe our thoughts to a thousand ears, and inspire a multitude with the best portions of our soul. How, then, has this *soul's breath*, this echo of our thoughts, this only image of our feelings — been perverted, that from the *lips of sin* it has more persuasion, than from the lips of wisdom! What horrid wizard has put the world under a spell and charm, that words from the lips of an immoral woman shall ring upon the ear like tones of music; while words from the divine lips of religion fall upon the startled ear like the funeral tones of the burial-bell! Wisdom seems crabbed; sin seems fair. Purity sounds morose; but from the lips of the harlot, words drop as honey, and flow smoother than oil; her speech is fair, her laugh is as merry as music. The eternal glory of *purity* has no luster — but the *deep damnation of lust* is made as bright as the gate of Heaven!

Her wiles of **Love**. Love is the mind's light and heat; it is that tenuous air in which all the other faculties exist, as we exist in the atmosphere. A mind of the greatest stature without love, is like the huge pyramid of Egypt — chill and cheerless in all its dark halls and passages. A mind with love, is as a king's palace lighted for a royal festival.

Shame! that the *sweetest of all the mind's attributes* should be suborned to sin! that this *daughter of God* should become a slave to arrogant lusts! — the cup-bearer to tyrants! — yet so it is. Devil-tempter! will your poison never cease? — shall beauty be poisoned? — shall language be charmed? — shall love be made to defile like pitch, and burn as the living coals?

Her *tongue* is like a bended bow, which sends the *silvery shaft of flattering words*. Her *eyes* shall cheat you, her *dress* shall beguile you, her *beauty* is a trap, her *sighs* are baits, her *words* are lures, her *love* is poisonous, her *flattery* is the *spider's web* spread for you. Oh! trust not your heart nor ear with Delilah! The locks of the mightiest Samson are soon shorn off, if he will but lay his slumbering head upon her lap. He who could slay heaps upon heaps of Philistines, and bear upon his huge shoulders the ponderous iron-gate, and pull down the vast temple — was yet too weak to contend with one wicked artful woman! Trust the sea with your tiny boat, trust the fickle wind, trust the changing skies of April, trust the miser's generosity, the tyrant's mercy; but ah! simple man, trust not yourself near the artful woman, armed in her beauty, her cunning clothing, her dimpled smiles, her sighs of sorrow, her look of love, her voice of flattery — for if you had the strength of ten Ulysses, unless God helps you — “Her house is a highway to Hell, leading down to the chambers of death!”

Next beware the wile of her **reasonings**. “To him who lacks understanding she says, stolen waters are sweet, and bread eaten in secret is pleasant. I came forth to meet you, and I have found you.”

What says she in the credulous ear of inexperience? Why, she tells him that *sin is safe*; she swears to him that *sin is pure*; she protests to him that *sin is innocent*. Out of *history* she will entice him, and say: What *king* have I not sought? What *conqueror* have I not conquered? Philosophers have not, in all their wisdom, learned to hate me. I have been the guest of the world's greatest men. The Egyptian priest, the Athenian sage, the Roman censor, the crude Gaul — have all worshiped in my temple. Are you afraid to tread where Plato trod, and the pious Socrates? Are you wiser than all that ever lived?

Nay, she reads the Bible to him; she goes back along the line of history, and reads of *Abraham*, and of his glorious compeers; she skips past Joseph with averted looks, and reads of *David* and of *Solomon*; and whatever chapter tells how good men stumbled, there she has turned down a leaf, and will persuade you, with honeyed speech, that the best deeds of good men were their sins; and that you should only imitate them in their stumbling and falls!

Or, if the Bible will not cheat you, how will she plead your own nature; how will she *whisper*, “God has made you so!” How, like her father Adam, will she lure you to pluck the apple, saying, “You shall not surely die!” And she will hiss at virtuous men, and spit on modest women, and shake her serpent-tongue at any purity which shall keep you from her ways. Oh! then, listen to what God says: “With much fair speech she causes him to yield; with the flattery of her lips she forced him. He goes after her as an ox goes to slaughter, or as a fool to the correction of the stocks, until a dart strike through his liver — as a bird hastens to a snare, and knows not that it is for his life!”

I will point only to another wile. When inexperience has been beguiled by her infernal machinations, how, like a flock of startled birds, will spring up late *regrets*, and *shame*, and *fear*. And worst of all, how will *conscience* ply her scorpion-whip and lash you, uttering with stern visage, “you are dishonored, you are a wretch, you are lost!” When the soul is full of such outcry, memory cannot sleep; she wakes, and while conscience still plies the scourge, will bring back to your thoughts, youthful purity, home, a mother's face, a sister's love, a father's counsel.

Perhaps it is out of the high Heaven that your mother looks down to see your baseness. Oh! if she has a mother's heart — nay — but she cannot weep for you there!

These wholesome pains, not to be felt if there were not yet health in the mind, would save the victim, could they have time to work. But how often have I seen the *spider* watch, from his dark round hole, the *struggling fly*, until he began to break his web; and then dart out to cast his long lithe arms about him, and fasten new cords stronger than ever! So, God says, the immoral woman shall secure her ensnared victims, if they struggle. Lest you should ponder the path of life, her ways are changeable that you can not know them.

She is afraid to see you soberly thinking of leaving her, and entering the path of life; therefore her ways are changeable. She multiplies devices, she studies a thousand new wiles, she has some sweet word for every sense — lust for your pride, praise for your vanity, generosity for your selfishness, religion for your conscience, racy quips for your wearisomeness, spicy scandal for your curiosity. She is never still, nor the same; but evolving as many shapes as the rolling cloud, and as many colors as dress the wide prairie.

**IV. Having disclosed her wiles, let me show you what God says of the *chances of ESCAPE to those who once follow her*:** “None who go to her return, or attain the paths of life!” The strength of this language was not meant absolutely to *exclude hope* from those who, having wasted their substance in riotous living, would yet return; but to *warn the unfallen*, into what an *almost hopeless gulf* they plunge, if they venture. Some may escape — as here and there a mangled sailor crawls out of the water upon the beach — the only one or two of the whole crew; the rest are gurgling in the waves with impotent struggles, or already sunk to the bottom!

There are many evils which hold their victims by the *force of habit*; there are others which fasten them, by breaking their return to society. Many a person never reforms, because reform would bring no relief. There are other evils which hold men to them, because they are like the beginning of a fire; they tend to burn with fiercer and wider flames, until all fuel is consumed, and go out only when there is nothing to burn! Of this last kind is the sin of immorality: and when the *conflagration* once breaks out, experience has shown, what the Bible long ago declared — that the chances of reformation are few indeed. The certainty of continuance is so great, that the chances of escape are dropped from the calculation; and it is said roundly, “*None who go unto her, return again!*”

**V. We are repeatedly warned against *the immoral woman's house*.** There is no vice like immorality, to delude with the most *fascinating offers of delight* — and fulfill the promise with the most *loathsome experience*. All vices at the *beginning*, are silver-tongued — but none so impassioned as this. All vices in the *end*, cheat their dupes — but none with such overwhelming disaster as immorality. I shall describe by an *allegory* . . .

its specious *seductions*;  
its plausible *promises*;  
its apparent *innocence*;  
its delusive *safety*;  
its deceptive *joys* — their change, their sting, their flight, their misery;

and the victim's ruin!

HER HOUSE has been cunningly planned by an Evil Architect to attract and please the attention. It stands in a vast *garden* full of *enchanted objects*. It shines in glowing colors, and seems full of *happiness* and full of *pleasure*. All the signs are of *unbounded enjoyment* — safe, if not innocent. Though every beam is rotten, and the house is the house of death, and in it are all the vicissitudes of infernal misery; yet to the young, it appears like a *palace of delight*. They will not believe that *death and damnation* can lurk behind so brilliant a fabric. Those who are within, look out and pine to return; and those who are without, look in and pine to enter. Such is the *mastery of deluding sin*.

That part of the *garden* which borders on the highway of innocence, is carefully planted. There is not a poison-weed, nor thorn, nor thistle there. Ten thousand flowers bloom, and waft a thousand fragrances. A *victim* cautiously inspects it; but it has been too carefully patterned upon *innocency*, to be easily detected. This outer garden is innocent — innocence is the *lure* to wile you from the right path, into her grounds — innocence is the *bait* of that trap by which she has secured all her victims.

At the gate stands a lovely porter, welcoming kindly: “Whoever is simple, let him turn in here!” Will the youth enter? Will he seek her house? To himself he says, “I will enter only to *see the garden* — its fruits, its flowers, its birds, its arbors, its warbling fountains!” He is resolved in virtue. He seeks wisdom, not sinful pleasure! — Dupe! you are deceived already! And this is your first lesson of wisdom.

He passes, and the porter leers behind him! He is within an *Enchanter's garden*! Can he not now return, if he wishes? — he will not *wish* to return, until it is too late. He ranges the outer garden near to the highway, thinking as he walks: “How foolishly have I been alarmed at pious lies about this beautiful place! I heard it was Hell — I find it is Paradise!”

Emboldened by the innocency of his *first* steps, he explores the garden *further* from the road. The flowers grow richer; their fragrances exhilarate; the very fruit breathes perfume like flowers; and birds seem intoxicated with delight among the fragrant shrubs and loaded trees. Soft and silvery music steals along the air. “Are *angels* singing? — Oh! fool that I was, to *fear* this place — it is all the Heaven I need! Ridiculous minister, to tell me that death was here — where all is beauty, fragrance, and melody! Surely, death never lurked in so gorgeous apparel as this! Death is grim and hideous!”

He has now come near to the immoral woman's house. If it was *beautiful* from afar — it is *celestial* now; for his eyes are bewitched with magic. When our passions enchant us — how beautiful is the way to death! In every window are sights of pleasure; from every opening, issue sounds of joy — the lute, the harp, bounding feet, and echoing laughter. Nymphs have spotted this *pilgrim of temptation* — they smile and beckon him. Where are his *resolutions* now? This is the virtuous youth who came only to *observe*! He has already seen too much! But he *will* see more; he will taste, feel, regret, weep, wail, and die!

The most beautiful nymph that eye ever rested on, approaches with decent guise and modest gestures, to give him hospitable welcome. For a moment he recalls his home, his mother, his sister-circle; but they seem far-away, dim, powerless! Into his ear, the beautiful herald pours the sweetest sounds of love: “You are welcome here, and worthy! You have great wisdom, to break the bounds of superstition, and to seek these grounds where summer never ceases, and sorrow never comes! Hail! and welcome to the *House of Pleasure!*”

There seemed to be a response to these words — the house, the trees, and the very air, seemed to echo, “Hail! and welcome!” In the stillness which followed, had the victim been less *intoxicated*, he might have heard a clear and solemn voice which seemed to fall straight down from Heaven: “*Do not come near the door of her house. Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death!*”

It is too late! He has gone in — and shall never return. He goes after her immediately, as an ox goes to the slaughter; or as a fool to the correction of the stocks — and knows not that it is for his life!

Enter with me, in *imagination*, the immoral woman’s house — where, God grant *you* may never enter in any other way. There are *five rooms* — Pleasure, Satiety, Reality, Disease, and Damnation.

**1. The Room of PLEASURE.** The eye is dazzled with the *magnificence of its apparel* — soft velvet, glossy silks, burnished satins, crimson draperies, plushy carpets. Exquisite pictures glow upon the walls, carved marble adorns every niche. The inhabitants deceive by these lying shows; they dance, they sing; with beaming eyes they utter softest strains of flattery and graceful compliment. They partake the amorous wine, and the feast which loads the table. They eat, they drink, they are blithe and merry.

Surely, they should be happy; for after this brief hour, they shall never know purity nor joy again! For this moment’s revelry — they are selling their soul and Heaven! The immoral woman walks among her guests in all her charms; fans the flame of joy, scatters grateful fragrances, and urges on the *fatal revelry*. As her *poisoned wine* is quaffed, and the mirthful creatures begin to reel, the torches wane and cast but a twilight. One by one, the guests grow *somnolent*; and, at length, they all *repose*. Their cup is exhausted, their pleasure is forever over — life has exhaled to a vapor, and that is consumed! While they sleep, servants, practiced to the work — and remove them all to another room.

**2. The Room of SATIETY.** An *excess of sensual gratification* — excites wearisomeness or loathing! Here reigns a bewildering twilight through which can hardly be discerned the wearied inhabitants — yet sluggish upon their couches.

Over-flushed with dance, sated with wine and sweets — a fitful drowsiness vexes them. They wake — to crave; they taste — to loathe; they sleep — to dream; they wake again from unquiet visions. They long for the sharp taste of pleasure — so grateful yesterday. Again they sink, repining to sleep; by starts, they rouse at an ominous dream; by starts, they hear strange cries! The *sweets* burn and torment; the *wine* shoots sharp pains through their body. Strange wonder

fills them. They remember the recent joy — as a reveler in the morning thinks of his midnight madness. The glowing *garden* and the sumptuous *banquet* now seem all stripped and gloomy. They meditate return; pensively they long for their native spot! At sleepless moments, mighty resolutions form — as substantial as a dream. Memory grows dark. Hope will not shine.

The *past* is not pleasant!  
The *present* is wearisome!  
And the *future* is gloomy!

**3. The Room of REALITY.** In the third room, no *deception* remains.

The *floors* are bare;  
the naked *walls* drip filth;  
the *air* is poisonous with sickly fumes, and echoes with mirth concealing hideous misery!

None supposes that he has been happy. The *past* seems like the dream of the miser, who gathers gold spilled like rain upon the road, and awakes, clutching his bed, and crying “*Where is it?*”

On your right hand, as you enter, close by the door, is a group of fierce felons in deep drink with drugged liquor. With red and swollen faces; or white and thin; or scarred with ghastly corruption; with scowling brows, malevolent eyes, bloated lips and demoniac grins — in person all filthy, in morals all debauched, in peace, bankrupt. The desperate wretches wrangle one with the other, swearing bitter oaths, and heaping reproaches each upon each!

Around the room you see miserable creatures unclothed, or dressed in rags — sobbing and moaning.

That one who gazes out at the window, calling for her mother and weeping — was rightly, tenderly, and purely bred. She has been baptized twice — once to *God*, and once to the *Devil!* She sought this place in the very vestments of God’s house. “*Do not call upon your mother! She is a saint in Heaven, and cannot hear you!*” Yet, all night long she dreams of home, and childhood, and wakes to sigh and weep; and between her sobs, she cries “*Mother! mother!*”

Yonder is another youth, once a servant at God’s house. His hair hangs tangled and torn; his eyes are bloodshot; his face is ashen; his fist is clenched. All the day, he wanders up and down, cursing sometimes himself, and sometimes the *wretch* that brought him here! And when he sleeps — he *dreams* of Hell; and then he awakes to *feel* all he dreamed!

This is the *Room of Reality*. All know why the first rooms looked so gay — they were *enchanted!* It was enchanted wine they drank; and enchanted fruit they ate! Now they know the pain of *fatal poison* in every limb!

**4. The Room of DISEASE.** You who look wistfully at the pleasant *front* of this lovely house — come with me now, and look long into the *terror* of this room; for here are the *seeds of sin* in their *full harvest* form! We are in a *leper-room!*

Its *air* disgusts every sense;  
its *sights* confound our thoughts;  
its *sounds* appall our ear;  
its *stench* repels us;  
it is full of diseases!

Here a shuddering wretch is clawing at his breast — to tear away that *worm* which gnaws his heart!

By him, is another wretch, whose limbs are dropping from his ghastly trunk.

Next, swelters another wretch in reeking filth — his eyes rolling in bony sockets, every breath a pang, and every pang a groan!

But yonder, on a pile of rags, lies one whose *yells of frantic agony* appall every ear! Clutching his rags with spasmodic grasp, his swollen tongue lolling from a blackened mouth, his bloodshot eyes glaring and rolling — he shrieks curses; now *blaspheming* God — and now *imploring* him. He hoots and shouts, and shakes his grisly head from side to side, cursing or praying; now calling death, and then, as if driving away fiends, abhorrently yelling, “*Get away! Be gone!*”

Another has been ridden by pain, until he can no longer shriek; but lies foaming and grinding his teeth, and clenches his bony hands, until the finger-nails pierce the palm — though there is no blood there to flow out — trembling all the time with the shudders and chills of utter agony.

The happiest wretch in all this room, is an *Idiot* — confused, distorted, and moping! All day, he wags his head, and chatters, and laughs, and bites his nails! Then he will sit for hours motionless, with open jaw, and glassy eye fixed on nothing at all.

In this room are huddled all the **Diseases of Immoral Pleasure**. This is the *torture-room* of the immoral woman’s house, and it exceeds the Catholic Inquisition. The wheel, the rack; the bed of knives, the roasting-fire, the brazen-room slowly heated, the slivers driven under the finger-nails, the hot pincers — what are these tortures of the Inquisition — compared to the agonies of the last days of immoral vice? Hundreds of rotting wretches would change their couch of torment in the immoral woman’s house — for the gloomiest terror of the Inquisition — and profit by the change!

Nature herself becomes the tormentor. Nature, long trespassed on and abused, at length casts down the wretch; searches every vein, makes a road of every nerve for the *scorching feet of pain* to travel on, pulls at every muscle, breaks in the breast, builds fires in the brain, eats out the skin, and casts living coals of torment on the heart!

What are hot pincers — compared to the envenomed claws of disease? What is it to be put into a pit of snakes and slimy toads, and feel their cold coil or piercing fang — compared to the creeping of a whole body of vipers? — where every nerve is a viper, and every vein a viper, and every muscle a serpent; and the whole body, in all its parts, coils and twists upon itself in unimaginable anguish?

I tell you, there is no *Inquisition* so bad, as that which the *Doctor* looks upon! Young man! I can show you in this room, worse pangs than ever a *savage* produced at the stake! — than ever a *tyrant* wrung out by engines of torment! — than ever an *Inquisitor* devised! Every year, in every town — immoral wretches die *scalded* and *scorched* with agony. Were the sum of all the pain that comes with the last stages of immorality collected — it would rend the very heavens with its outcry; it would shake the earth; it would even blanch the cheek of Infatuation!

You who are listening in the *garden* of this immoral woman, among her cheating flowers; you who are dancing in her halls in the first room — come here! Look upon her fourth room — its vomited blood, its sores and fiery blotches, its purulence, and rotten bones! *Stop, young man!* You turn your head from this *ghastly* room; and yet, stop! — and stop soon — or *you* shall soon lie here yourself! Mark the solemn signals of your passage! You have had already enough of warnings in your cheek, in your bosom, in your pangs of forewarning!

But ah! Every one of you who are dancing in the immoral woman's first hall — let me break your spell; for now I shall open the doors of the *last* room. Look! Listen! Witness *your own end*, unless you take quickly a warning!

**5. The Room of DAMNATION!** No longer does the incarnate wretch pretend to conceal her cruelty. She *thrusts* — yes! as if they were dirt — she *shovels* out the wretches. Some fall headlong through the rotten floor — a long fall to a *fiery bottom!* The floor trembles to deep thunders which roll below. Here and there, jets of flame sprout up, and give a ghastly light to the murky hall. Some would gladly escape; and flying across the treacherous floor, which man never safely passed, they go through pitfalls and treacherous traps — with hideous outcries and astounding yells — to eternal perdition! *Fiends* laugh! The *infernal* laugh! The cry of agony, the thunder of damnation — shake the very roof and echo from wall to wall.

Oh! that the young might see the *end* of immorality — before they see the *beginning!* I know that you *shrink* from this picture; but your safety requires that you should look long into the *Room of Damnation* — that fear may supply strength to your virtue. See the *blood* oozing from the wall, the *fiery hands* which pluck the wretches down, the *light of Hell* gleaming through, and hear its *roar* as of a distant ocean chafed with storms!

Will you sprinkle the wall with *your* blood?

Will you feed those flames with *your* flesh?

Will you add *your* voice to those thundering wails?

Will *you* go down a prey through the fiery floor of the chamber of damnation?

Believe then the word of God: “*Her house is the way to Hell, going down to the chambers of death! Avoid it, pass not by it, turn from it, and go on your way!*”

I have described the *immoral woman's house* in strong language — and it needed it. If your taste shrinks from the description — so does mine. Hell, and all the *ways* of Hell — when we pierce through the cheating disguises and see the truth — are terrible to behold! And if men would not *walk* there — neither would we pursue their steps. We wish to sound the alarm, and gather back whom we can!

Allow me to close, by directing your attention to a few points of especial danger.

**I. I solemnly warn you against indulging a sensual imagination.** In that busy and mischievous faculty, begins the evil. Were it not for his evil imaginations, man might stand his own master — not overmatched by the worst part of himself. But ah! these summer-reveries, these venturesome dreams, these fairy-castles — built for no good purposes — they are haunted by impure spirits, who will fascinate, bewitch, and corrupt you! Blessed are the *pure in heart*. Blessed are you, most favored of God, whose *thoughts* are pure; whose *imagination* will not breathe or fly in *tainted air*; and whose path has been measured by the *Golden Rod of Purity*.

May I not paint **PURITY**, as a saintly virgin, in spotless white, walking with open face, in an air so clear that no vapor can stain it? Her steps are a queen's steps; God is her father, and you her brother — if you will make her yours! Let your heart be her dwelling. Wear her *ring* upon your hand — and her *charm* on your heart.

**II. Next to evil imaginations, I warn the young of evil companions.** Decaying fruit corrupts the neighboring fruit. You cannot make your *head* a metropolis of base stories, the *ear* and *tongue* a highway of immodest words — and yet be pure. Another, as well as yourself — may throw a spark on the *gun-powder of your passions* — beware how your companions do it! No man is your friend who will corrupt you. An impure man is every godly man's enemy — your deadly foe; and all the worse, if he hides his *poisoned dagger* under the *cloak of friendship*. Therefore, select your associates, assort them, winnow them. Keep the *grain* — and let the wind sweep away the *chaff*.

**III. But I warn you, with yet more solemn emphasis — against Evil Books and Evil Pictures!** There is in every town an *under-current* which glides beneath our feet, unsuspected by the pure; out of which, notwithstanding, our sons scoop many a *poisoned goblet*. *Books* are hidden in trunks, concealed in dark holes; *pictures* are stored in sly portfolios, or trafficked from hand to hand; and the *handiwork of depraved art* is seen in forms which ought to make a *harlot blush!*

I would think a man would loathe himself, and wake up from owning such things, as from a horrible nightmare! Those who *circulate* them — are *incendiaries of all morality!* And those who *make* them — are the worst public criminals! A pure heart would shrink from these abominable things — as from death itself!

*France*, where true religion long ago was extinguished, smothered in immorality — has flooded the world with a species of literature redolent of the vilest depravity. Upon the plea of exhibiting human nature — novels are now scooped out of the very *lava of corrupt passions*. They are true to nature — but to nature as it exists in grossly vile and immoral hearts. Under a plea of *reality* — we have shown to us, troops of harlots — to prove that they are not so bad as purists think; and gangs of desperadoes — to show that there is nothing in crime inconsistent with the noblest feelings. We have in French and English, novels of the *infernal school* — humane murderers, lascivious saints, upright infidels, honest robbers. The devotion of these artists, is such as might be expected from vile thieves, in the vortex of thrice-deformed vice.

Obscene libertines are now our *professors of morality*. They scrape the very sediment and muck of society — to mold their creations; and their books are monster-galleries, in which the inhabitants of old Sodom would have felt at home as connoisseurs.

Over loathsome women, and unutterably vile men, huddled together in motley groups, and over all their monstrous deeds — their lies, their plots, their crimes, their horrendous pleasures, their appalling conversation — is thrown the impure light of a *sensual imagination* — until they glow with an infernal luster!

Such novels are *the common-sewers of society*, into which drain the concentrated filth of the worst *passions*, of the worst *creatures*, of the worst *cities*! Such novels come to us impudently pretending to be *reformers of morals, and liberalizers of religion*; they propose to instruct our laws, and teach justice to a discreet humanity!

The *Ten Plagues* have visited our literature: water is turned to blood; frogs and lice creep and hop over our most familiar things — the couch, the cradle, and the bread-box; locusts, plague, and fire — are smiting every green thing. I am ashamed and outraged, when I think that wretches could be found to open these foreign *seals* — and let out their *plagues* upon us — that any Satanic pilgrim should voyage to France to dip from the *dead sea of her abomination* — such immoral filth for our children.

It were a mercy compared to this, to import . . .  
*venomous serpents* from Africa — and pour them out in our homes;  
*ferocious lions* — and free them in our towns;  
poisonous lizards and scorpions and black tarantulas — and put them in our gardens!

Men could slay these — but those *offspring-reptiles of the French mind* — who can kill these? You might as well draw sword on a *plague* — or charge *malaria* with the bayonet!

This *black smut-lettered literature* circulates in our towns, floats in our stores, nestles in the shops, is fingered and read nightly, and hatches *broods of obscene thoughts* in the young mind! While the parent strives to infuse Christian purity into his child's heart — he is checked by most accursed messengers of evil; and the child's heart hisses already like a nest of young and nimble vipers!

**IV. Once more, let me persuade you that no *examples in high places* — can justify *imitation in low places*.** Your purity is too precious to be bartered, because an *official rogue* tempts by his example! I wish that every eminent place of state were a sphere of purity and light, from which should be flung down on your path a cheering glow to guide you on to virtue. But if these *wandering stars*, reserved I do believe for final blackness of darkness, wheel their malignant spheres in the orbits of corruption — do not follow after them! God is greater than wicked great men; Heaven is higher than the highest places of nations; and if God and Heaven are not brighter to your eyes than great men in high places — then you must take part in their doom, when, before long, God shall dash them to pieces!

**V. Let me beseech you, lastly, to guard your heart-purity.** Never lose it! If it is gone — you have lost from the casket the most precious gift of God. The first purity of imagination, of thought, and of feeling, if *soiled* — can be cleansed by no fuller's soap. If lost — it cannot be found, though sought carefully with tears! If a *harp* is broken — it may be repaired; if a *light* is quenched — the flame may enkindle it; but if a *flower* is crushed — what art can repair it? If an *fragrance* is wafted away — who can collect or bring it back?

The *heart* of youth is a wide prairie. Over it hang the clouds of Heaven, to water it; and the sun throws its broad sheets of light upon it, to awake its life. Out of its bosom spring, the long season through, flowers of a hundred names and hues, entwining together their lovely forms, wafting to each other a grateful fragrance, and nodding each to each in the summer-breeze. Oh! such would man be — did he sustain that *purity of heart* which God gave him!

But you now have a *Depraved Heart*. It is a vast continent; on it are mountain-ranges of evil powers, and dark deep streams, and pools, and morasses. If once the full and terrible clouds of temptation settle thick and fixedly upon you, and begin to cast down their dreadful stores — may *God* save whom *man* can never! Then the heart shall feel tides and streams of irresistible power, mocking its control, and hurrying fiercely down from steep to steep, with growing desolation. Your only resource is to *avoid the uprising of your giant-passions*.

We are drawing near to Christmas day, by the usage of ages, consecrated to celebrate the birth of Christ. At his advent, God hung out a prophet-star in the Heaven; guided by it, the wise men journeyed from the east and worshiped at his feet. Oh! let the star of *Purity* hang out to your eye, brighter than the orient orb to the Magi; let it lead you, not to the Babe — but to His feet who now stands in Heaven, a Prince and Savior! If you have sinned — one look, one touch, shall cleanse you while you are worshiping, and you shall rise up healed.