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THE COCKPIT.

BIRTH AND BRAIN CONTROL.

A correspondent has written to us last week complaining of the article signed "Heretic," which condemned Birth Control not from a religious but a purely rationalist standpoint. The correspondent, Mr. Victor Neuburg, appears to give himself considerable airs of superiority because he is unable to believe in anything (except in Mrs. Stopes) and this is interesting, as illustrating a not un common combination of the incapacity for believing with the incapacity for thinking. It will be quite sufficient to quote about four lines of his letter, which contain more complicated contradictions and inconsequences than we have ever seen in such a space; and which end with one of those abrupt abysses of the entire absence of humour which is more laughable than the best humour in the world.

He says that a man does not practise Birth Control "in order to indulge his passions as a Heretic slipshoddily affirms; but in order that his quite natural (and therefore legitimate) sexual passion may have no unforeseen and undesired results."

Why he should repudiate the indulging of his passion if his passion is quite legitimate, and why he should want to make the indulgence safe except in order to indulge it, the Lord only knows. He will pardon this theological expression; which we apologise for not putting in quotation marks, as he so haughtily presents all theological expressions. But the muddle is much more amusing than that. The passion, let it be noted, is not natural *and* legitimate; he distinctly says it is natural and *therefore* legitimate. In other words everything that is natural is legitimate. So far so good. It is natural for a man to wish to rush out of a burning theatre, even if he tramples on women and children; it is natural and therefore it is legitimate. It is natural for a man called upon to face death or tortures for the truth (of Mrs. Stopes, let us say) to run away and hide; it is natural and therefore it is legitimate. That is quite understood; and so far we are all getting along nicely. But if everything that is natural is right, why in the world is not the birth of a baby as natural as the growth of a passion? If it is unnatural to control appetite, why is it not unnatural to control birth? They are both obviously

parts of the same natural process, which has a natural beginning and a natural end. And Mr. Neuburg who thinks all natural things legitimate, has no possible reason for interrupting it at one stage more than at another. As Nature is infallible, we must not question what progeny she produces. If Nature is not infallible, we have a right to question the passions that she inspires.

And then comes the joyous culmination and collapse; of calling a baby an unforeseen consequence of getting married. It would be entertaining to wander through the world with Mr. Neuburg sharing all the unforeseen consequences of the most ordinary actions. Life must be full of surprises for him; he strikes a match and is indignant that it burns the sulphur; he throws a stone into a puddle and is irritated that it makes a splash; he keeps bees and is furious because they fertilise flowers; he breeds dogs and stands astounded before the unforeseen consequence of puppies. Wonder is a wonderful thing and, with less irritation, might be a beautiful thing. But we rather doubt whether anyone who argues like this has any right to a tone of such extreme intellectual arrogance.