

Document, Aldous Leonard Huxley

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From the reports of a Debate on the censorship of obscene literature in the United States Senate, March 1930. Senator Smoot of Utah: 'I did not believe there were such books printed in the world.' (Senator Smoot had brought, as exhibits, Robert Burns's Poems (unexpurgated edition), Balzac's Contes Drolatiques, Casanova's Memoirs, George Moore's Story Teller's Holiday, D. H. Lawrence's Lady Chatterley's Lover, My Life and Loves, by Frank Harris, and that Mrs Beeton's cookery book of love-making, the Kama Sutra.) 'They are lower than the beasts . . . If I were a Customs Inspector, this obscene literature would only be admitted over my dead body . . . I'd rather have a child of mine use opium than read these books.' (Compare with this the yet more heroic declaration of our own Mr James Douglas. Mr Douglas would rather give a child prussic acid than allow it to read The Well of Loneliness. In an article written at the time I offered to provide Mr Douglas with a child, a bottle of prussic acid, a copy of The Well of Loneliness, and (if he kept his word and chose to administer the acid) a handsome memorial in marble to be erected wherever he might appoint, after his execution. The offer, I regret to say, was not accepted.)

Senator Blease of South Carolina was more eloquent even than Senator Smoot. True, he was not prepared to give children opium and prussic acid in preference to improper literature, but he was quite ready to 'see the democratic and republican form of government for ever destroyed, if necessary to protect the virtue of the womanhood of America . . . The virtue of one little sixteen-year-old girl is worth more to America than every book that ever came into it from any other country . . . I love womanhood. Take from a government the purity of its womanhood and that government will be destroyed.'

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