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Statement by L. Crozier French regarding Stough Case

L. Crozier French

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AUG 23, 1916

TO THE SPECIAL COMMITTEE APPOINTED BY THE TRUSTEES OF THE
UNIVERSITY OF TENNESSEE TO ACT UPON THE STOUGH CASE,
MESSRS. BOLTON SMITH, H. CLAY EVANS, and WILLIAM P. COOPER:

GENTLEMEN:

In the Knoxville Journal and Tribune of July 25th is published a resolution signed by you that reflects upon the veracity of several ladies, myself among the number. The implication is there made that we were in part responsible for and involved with Dr. Stough in an attack made upon the character of the teaching of a Professor of the University of Tennessee, your statement in part is : "the charges are so enormous that we could not find any man of clean life guilty of them unless the evidence were conclusive, and no one can claim this to be true in this case." Mesdames _____ Dodson, Megrannahan, Craft, with myself, are named as having given this evidence. I am writing you to say that this is a base slander upon these respectable women. We furnished absolutely no evidence upon which Dr. Stough could be justified in making charges "so enormous that no man of clean life could be guilty of them". Just here I wish to emphasize the fact that no one could possibly disapprove more of the public attack of Dr. Stough's against the Professor and the University than I do. Hence, it seems most unjust that I should be put conspicuously forward as either his aid^{er} abettor, or informer.

Yet my alleged action is made the basis upon which your decision

is given which exonerates the Professor and reflects upon the veracity, intelligence and discretion of myself and others.

Your resolution states that Mrs. L. Crozier French wrote a complimentary article of a lecture of the Professor's, delivered on June 19th, 1913, and in 1916 she made contrary statements. The evidence upon which you make this charge against me was furnished you by said Professor, himself. I pronounce this evidence false. I wrote no article complimentary of the lecture, and I did verbally condemn in no uncertain terms that part of the lecture treating of prostitution. I took issue with the Professor himself during the delivery of the lecture in order to give him a hint that he was touching on dangerous ground. For he was addressing an anti-vice league composed of women organized for the purpose of helping the churches to do away with the segregated district and to furnish a refuge and homes for the inmates of houses to be closed. He said during his lecture that it was useless to work for the breaking up of prostitution, that as far back as any record of peoples existed this institution had been maintained in all the countries of the world, and that it always would continue. That the prostitute was such because of her heredity, and that she could not escape from that destiny. I interrupted the Professor here to ask if he did not think many young girls through ignorance or innocence or because of violence were reduced to so low a social position that they could not rise, and in consequence were forced to join the professional class of unfortunates?

He said no doubt there were some such, but comparatively few.

I had been so accustomed during thirty years of public work to have men who held that man's necessities caused this condition of a permanent class of women to be sacrificed, that I could not help but suspect that the Professor held, with many of these, the necessity of a double standard of morals, but not being willing to place him in that class without confirmation of my conclusions, at the close of his lecture I went up to him and said: "From things you have said in this lecture I am forced to certain conclusions, and I wish to put to you a direct question: Do you believe in a double standard of morals?" His reply was "Yes, I do." I said, with indignation, "Then I have nothing more to say to you", and left the room. Other ladies remonstrated with him on his position and were confirmed in the opinions they had formed, that he believed in a double standard of morals along sex lines.

It troubled me so much to think we had a teacher of biology in the University who was not ashamed to confess he believed in a double standard of morals that I went to the Professor's class room the next day to try and convince him of his error. I can give some of our discussion almost verbatim for the reason that I repeated it so many times directly after its occurrence. I began:- "Professor, I said to you yesterday when you told me you believed in the double standard of morals that I had nothing more to say to you, but to-day I come to renew the subject." He said: "Yes,

I was told by Mrs. _____ that you had been criticising me very ^{well} seriously". I said "Yes, I have, but I have said nothing behind your back that I am not willing to say to your face. I think you are entirely wrong to believe in a double standard of morals, &c. &c." He said: "I did not say that I approved or endorsed it; I did not make the double standard, but you, yourself, know that it exists". I replied: " I certainly do know that large numbers of people hold that man is excusable for sexual irregularity, but woman is not, for I have been fighting this with all my might for thirty years. I did not ask you if many people believed in a double standard, I asked if you believed in it, and you said yes." In concluding our discussion the Professor put this hypothetical case:

"Do you mean to say that if a boy and girl, say brother and sister, are raised in the same circumstances with similar teachings and surroundings that it is not worse for the girl to commit unchaste acts than the boy?" You see here that the Professor shows that he believes the girl should be judged more strictly than the boy.--This is, of course, what is called the double standard of morals. I replied that I did not think the girl should be held to stricter accountability than the boy. I tried to show him that the laws of nature, those of our civil codes, and ethical law all demand alike chastity on the part of both man and woman, and that custom must be made to conform to these demands. Having no assurance that I had in any way succeeded in changing the Professor's views I

deemed it my duty to inform the President of the University concerning the position of the Professor on the double standard. I therefore had a long interview with Dr. Ayres on this matter. I took him two books on the subject of the necessity of chastity in men to place in the University Library.

Dr. Ayres stated he believed the Professor was a moral man, that he would not do anything to injure the students. To this I replied that I made no charges against the man's moral conduct, never having heard of him until a few days before his lecture, but that I thought that any teacher of biology was dangerous for the young who excused a double standard of morals because a number of people condoned sexual immorality in men. I considered that my responsibility ended with my report to the President of the University.

Three years later, and several days after Dr. Stough's criticism against the professor I was asked by Mrs. Knox if I would add my testimony to hers and others that the Professor had said that he believed in a double standard of morals. I said that I would, and I did do so by signing my name to the following statement:→ "At the close of Prof. Schaeffer's lecture I put this direct question to him—Do you believe in a double standard of morals? His reply was, 'Yes, I do' ".

Aug. 23, 1916
Howell Penn.

Lerozier French