PROSTITUTION

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The last decade has seen a most radical change in all that relates to this ancient social problem from sociological, legislative, medical, and even ethical viewpoints. The development has not been an independent one but so closely interrelated to progress in laboratory technique in medicine, the utilization of trained social workers, the development of psychological methods, changes in the economic and political status of women, and the impetus felt in all of these fields because of the war, that any discussion of the subject per se necessitates a definite understanding of progress in these lines.

The first half of the decade may be justly characterized as a period of surveys and systematic investigations. Over thirty cities in the United States made attempts to ascertain something which would serve as a basis for a constructive policy. These reports varied in length, accuracy, detail from the four page non-effective statement issued by the New York Bureau of Municipal Research concerning Columbus, Ohio (7), to the elaborate statistical reports compiled by Kneeland whose work deserves high credit for perspective given. The study of Chicago (6) conditions reported prostitution as a social evil dependent upon many factors. Local conditions, police morale, ease of supply, prevalence of crime, activity of educational and protective agencies, stringency of prosecution, medical inspection and attitude, and legislation all shared in the responsibility. Segregated districts and police registration similar to European custom were declared insufficient and "constant and persistent repression of prostitution the immediate method," with "absolute annihilation the ultimate ideal" was the final summary of the report.

In 1911, as a result of the work of the Special Grand Jury which investigated the white slave traffic in New York City, the Bureau of Social Hygiene was established to systematize and render continuous effort against the problem of prostitution. To this agency we owe a series of volumes which have been fundamental in stimulating thought and action on this matter. Their first report (11),

compiled by Kneeland, is a step in advance of any civic reports preceding it. It brings out with new emphasis the part played by the double standard for men and women, involving penalty always for the woman, escape as frequently for the man. Exploitation is treated clearly and definitely and shows definitely the relation of social evil to enforcement of law. A later edition of the same report shows the demolition of the system under law enforcement. Careful analyses are submitted of prostitutes under imprisonment but unfortunately the tabular presentation shows each factor individually and little attempt is made to study correlation or multiple determination.

The Massachusetts report, made under the direction of Fernald (13), issued in 1914 differs from those preceding it in its utilization of modern methods for determining the status of the prostitute herself. A study was made of 100 unselected cases in prison, another hundred awaiting trial and another hundred in the Industrial Schools. The study involved examination by the Binet, a school examination, practical information and an attempt to obtain the family, personal, social and economic history of each girl studied. 154 of the 300 women examined showed mental defect "so pronounced and evident as to warrant legal commitment of each one as a feeble-minded person or as a defective delinquent" (p. 29). It is to be regretted that a medical examination of similar thoroughness, including laboratory tests for venereal diseases was not made in all cases. There is a high probability that much of the low mentality found may be a by-product of syphilis and thus at least a concomitant of prostitution rather than a factor in its causation.

Miner (16) in the *Slavery of Prostitution* gives the best illustration of what can be done by individual study of the prostitute. Unfortunately her case studies do not give the scientific data on the individual which could have been gathered even at the date when the study appeared. Psychological, psychiatric, neurological and physiological study would undoubtedly have de-limited her various problems in a fashion which would have enabled others to profit more by the writer's experience and success. The study embodies primarily woman's tolerance, understanding of and struggle for the victim of prostitution, woman. The study is a forerunner of the protective work done throughout the country during the war.

The European situation in its historical perspective, covering

conditions up to 1914, has been presented in rather inconvenient statistical fashion by Burgess (3). Probably the greatest value of the book is its chapter on a constructive policy by Olson. The writer is too little scientific and cannot keep even his discussion of the religious aspects of the problem free from his own conviction.

Calhoun (4) gives one a chance to relate the historical development of prostitution in America in its relation to changing social conditions. Although the subject is but incidental to his analysis of family life it provides a well-oriented point of departure for more specialized investigation. The study loses somewhat from the writer's unjustified assumption that the new status of women will eliminate prostitution.

The condition in Europe at the outbreak of the war is most ably and independently stated by Flexner (9). Prostitution, under his pen, becomes an end result of supply and demand, wealth, occupation, law, race, education, the double standard, "unschooled human nature and imperfect social institutions." His application of European experience to American problems involves correlative study of other social problems and the reconstruction of the prostitute.

The religious attitude of this data is presented independently by Begbie (2). He demonstrates the fallacy of the assumption that any one lack or fault may completely account for a social phenomenon as complex as prostitution. A proper ideal of purity is his compensation. "Virtue knows nothing of geography, is indifferent to climate, and triumphs over heredity and environment," p. 97, is his emphatic assertion. But little of this viewpoint remains today, such practical discussions of morals as that by McKeever (15) seeming to replace it.

The government assumption of responsibility for the health of the army and navy upon our entrance into the world war materially changed the angle from which prostitution was viewed. Prostitution became merely a means of decreasing man power because it presented constantly and in constantly aggravated fashion the possibility of infection by gonorrhea and syphilis. The prostitute was merely the conveyer or carrier of this danger. It is impossible for one to believe that anything short of years of propaganda would have brought any such change in attitude in a time of peace.

Blue (25) outlined a policy for the control of venereal diseases which covered control through legislation and strict enforcement,

quarantine, treatment, and education of the public. His circular letter to the states refers directly to venereal disease, discussing prostitution incidentally. Lane (12) presents the opposite side of the question in outlining the work of the Committee on Protective Work for Girls. The aim of this committee is not primarily one of making arrests but of preventing crime through education of the girl, the provision of proper living and recreational conditions and the enforcement of legislation.

Every one knows of the preventive work done in similar fashion among the soldiers themselves. A brief but clear news report of this, at the time, is made by Seymour (22). The war shows us the state laxity in the detection and treatment of this problem. Every avenue leads back to the necessary elimination of the prostitute if venereal disease is to be controlled. The same writer (21) gives us a summary of conditions abroad. Prostitution is a menace because of venereal disease so spread. The civilian must share responsibility with the soldier. Scientific research into cure must go hand in hand with self-control for the sake of the individual, the family and the race. The tradition of sex necessity must go. Education, proper recreation and the relief of debasing monotony because of economic stress must all bear their part in prevention.

As a result of these changes in method of attack the literature of 1918, 1919 and 1920 bears superficially little relation to the subject of Prostitution. Instead the tendency is to drop a discussion of prostitution per se for it is merely the anti-social end product which may be much better understood and dealt with from the standpoint of various factors causing it. Several of these factors have become more prominent than others.

The prostitute herself has been more thoroughly studied. Practically all studies of delinquency devote a part of their analyses to the sex offender, whether merely immoral, a "charity" girl or an actual prostitute. Anderson and Leonard (1) find that venereal disease is not limited to "chastity offenders," although the percentage of disease is much higher in this group. They point out the relation to alcoholism, stealing and other offenses. Fewer of those who were diseased were self supporting no matter what the offense. No data as to mental status are presented in this study. A brief study by Purcell-Guild (19) gives a clear view of the basis in delinquency from which the prostitute is often developed. One hundred of the hundred and thirty-one girls studied were sex delinquents, thirty-five claiming to have been raped but sixteen

of this group had had other sex experiences. Thirteen per cent. of these girls, averaging only fifteen years of age, were already infected with venereal disease. Their delinquency is shown to be the result of low educational (and mental?) ability, economic stress, environment, parental example, and other concomitants.

Norton (17) finds that the median mental age of 127 prostitutes under surveillance for treatment is nine years and ten months and only 16 have a mental age of thirteen or over. Unfortunately only an abbreviated Stanford Binet was used as the basis of this study so that the findings must be suggestive rather than final. McCord (14) finds that 54 per cent. had a mentality of ten or less.

A most important movement has been the development of brief expositions of the dangers of prostitution, the fallacy of the double standard, etc., in pamphlet form for general distribution. Many state Boards of Health, some local boards and private agencies have developed such a series. The series published by the American Social Hygiene Association is undoubtedly one of the best. The various pamphlets cover sex instruction for young children, for boys and girls, help for educators, parents, physicians, and even for those diseased. "Warnings about prostitutes" is published in various tongues, as are other pamphlets.

Closely related to this work is the development of new magazines which deal chiefly with this problem and which, in conjunction with reports and bulletins, reflect most of today's movement against prostitution. A brief and simple manual by Pusey (20) will be found distinctly valuable as an aid to the social worker to whom the subject is a new one. It offers an outline for preventive and control procedures, discusses the suppression of prostitution, and also gives some instruction for the treatment of diseased individuals.

Besides the lines of more or less scientific study of the individual as a factor in prostitution and the development of educational propaganda there has been distinct advance in legislative control, medical enforcement, actual medical research, and recreational prophylaxis.

Written reports on legislation are not easily located and are usually brief and partial in presentation. Law in the making cannot develop a proper critical perspective from which to view itself. Now and then more comprehensive statements are found such as that by Deardorff (8) giving us some of the "local color" back of the continuance of the Interdepartmental Social Hygiene Board.

We await with interest the promised appearance of a government monograph giving us data on the study of 15,000 delinquent women studied by this department. Similarly brief reports, for instance, inform us of the federal aid given to Chicago (5) to reenforce legislation which has carried out the commission recommendations of 1911; and of the recent establishment in Pittsburg (18) of a new Morals Court as recommended so long ago as 1912.

It is too soon to say whether any permanence of change in ethics will grow out of our recent experiences but the stimulus for such a growth and creed is already at hand. Hall (10) in his volume on morale devotes several chapters to the discussion of sex and its sublimation. The greater part of the book is an exposition of the principles of human behavior which justify all the seeming indirectness of the decade's attack on vice. Undirected energy, unfilled time, negative supervision condone and aid vice. Morale, consciously fostered, eliminates much of it.

The field of the greatest development stimulated by the new social consciousness of prostitution is that of medical research on venereal diseases. With the demand for the study of these diseases has come all of the refinements of laboratory technique for their detection and the clinical development of diagnosis. One individual cannot estimate the amount of study involved nor appreciate, as yet, the advance made. Southard's texts on Neurosyphilis (23) and Shellshock and other Neuro-psychiatric problems (24) are splendid illustrations of the work done in relating syphilis to delinquency, disease, war, economics, and social ethics.

The end is not yet, however. Most of the studies made of prostitution or of one of its causative factors are unfinished or so partial and lacking in correlation with other factors that the conclusions reached cannot help being distorted or lacking in balance. There is so far no prolonged and intensive study of young sex delinquents to see whether they furnish the mass of prostitutes. There is no study of prostitutes prolonged and intensive enough to tell what happens to them. Statistics give their disappearance from the group. The death rate does not account for the disappearance. They are not in custody. Is prostitution an incidence in their lives? There is no study prolonged enough to tell how many, affected with venereal disease, become insane. The state hospitals do not know how many of their diseased women have long since been prostitutes. No one has as yet determined the relation between low mental age in the prostitute and deterioration due to

disease of the nervous system. We need to know what per cent. of the so-called "normal" adolescents in our country practise sex experimentation. It is too soon to say how the recent change in the economic and political status of woman will affect prostitution, and illegitimacy. What may the socializing of the church and the school accomplish? What will public health organization and education on sex hygiene accomplish? All we can say is that prostitution is being attacked by modern methods. All work so far is simply rudimentary.

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