

SYPHILIS AND PROSTITUTION IN AUSTRIA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a communication to your journal a few months ago I gave some account of the system pursued by the Italian Government with reference to prostitution, and I beg to add now what information I was able to glean on this subject during a visit I lately made to Vienna. I found, somewhat to my surprise, that hitherto the Austrian Government had not interfered in this question; and that, however restricted their liberty in most ways, people were at least allowed to contract what diseases they pleased without let or hindrance. The Government, however, has of late had under serious consideration how it can best deal with the evil of syphilis—an evil which of course assumes great magnitude in a country where the army is of the first importance,—and the chief surgeons of Vienna have been consulted on the matter. The result of their deliberations has been decidedly in favour of bringing all prostitutes under police *surveillance*, as the only means of diminishing the extent of syphilis; and Professor Sigmund, who has charge of all the venereal wards at the great hospital, the Allgemeines Krankenhaus, furnished me with the programme on which the faculty had agreed as the proper basis for legislation, of which the following is a brief *résumé*:—

1. Prostitution is a necessary evil: it can never be suppressed, but must be regulated, as syphilis increases at an equal rate with prostitution.

2. Its regulation necessitates new and special laws.

3. The establishment of these laws and the strict supervision of their operation should be the special task of State government.

4. In Vienna, a sanitary police office should be established, provided with administrative police, and an able and well-paid staff, both medical and lay, to guarantee the efficient carrying out of the appointed laws.

5. Unlicensed brothels are objected to, as tending to the spread of syphilis, and offering no protection to the women.

6. Prostitutes defined.

7. All prostitutes without exception to be registered; and so long as their names appear in the police-list they are to be considered under police and medical control and inspection.

8. Every woman registered must appear at the office at stated times, and pay the regular taxes.

9. They must also undergo medical inspection at least twice a week.

10. The registered women shall not be restricted in their personal freedom more than is necessary for the main object in view.

11. Those who act as habitual prostitutes without being registered should be severely punished; and those registered who do not observe the regulations must also be punished according to the extent of their fault.

12. The punishments must be as fixed and certain as the rules, and especially should those be severely dealt with who lead the registered women into breaking the rules or who support them in so doing.

These opinions are not, perhaps, in accordance with those of the majority of English surgeons; but the belief in the utility of such measures in diminishing both the extent and the virulence of syphilis is very general on the Continent. Of one thing there is no doubt—namely, that the terrible cases which are not unfrequently seen in London hospitals are rarely met with abroad. And the reason is obvious: early treatment is not denied to any sufferer, and no distinction of persons is recognised in the matter of disease. In London, the scanty accommodation for venereal cases in our great hospitals practically excludes them; and the result is that the public health suffers accordingly, while public morality shows no corresponding improvement.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Lewes, April, 1864.

G. MACKENZIE BACON, M.D.

THE MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH FOR ST. MARYLEBONE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have just had a copy of THE LANCET forwarded to me containing some remarks on the canvass for the successor to Dr. Dundas Thomson. I regret to learn that that gentleman is seriously ill. Yesterday, and again to-day, I have received two letters already asking for my support in favour of a gentleman, no doubt, of merit. My reply to both parties was, that

I made it a rule, where the public is concerned, not to pledge myself beforehand; *this* before seeing your article. I quite agree with the general tone of your advice to the vestrymen, of whom I am one.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Great Malvern, July 27th, 1864.

WILLIAM WAKE.

Parliamentary Intelligence.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

JULY 22.

INDIAN MEDICAL SERVICE BILL.

The adjourned debate upon this Bill was resumed.

Mr. HENNESSY moved the addition of the following clause:—
“Any person, being a natural born subject of her Majesty, who may be desirous of being appointed an assistant-surgeon in the said forces, shall be admitted to be examined as a candidate for such appointment.” He believed that the right hon. gentleman and himself differed very little as to their opinions upon the subject, and his motion, if carried, would only put into the Act what the right hon. gentleman had declared to be the intention of the Government. His motion was taken verbatim from the existing law, and would prevent the exercise of arbitrary power which would be warranted by the Bill in its present form. The present Bill was only a device to cover the misconduct of the Government in reference to their treatment of these officers, for in respect to rank, pay, and general position they had been so badly treated that there was a difficulty in procuring officers in that department of the service. He would quote the opinion of that day’s LANCET, a high authority in such matters:—

“Sir Charles Wood alleged on Tuesday night last in the House of Commons that competitive examinations for the army medical service had entirely failed, and has introduced an Indian Medical Service Bill which would do away with competitive examinations. We do not hesitate to declare that Sir Charles Wood has been completely misinformed on this subject, and has entirely misled the House. The examinations have been highly successful, and Sir Charles Wood could not have consulted either the civil profession or the army medical service, much less the examiners themselves, before he made the statement of their complete failure. They have only been a little too successful for the Government. They have interposed a check on the proceedings of the Horse Guards by affording an index of the depression in the quality and the number of the candidates which the uniform harshness, *morgue*, and injustice of that department have caused. They propose, then, to do away with competitive examinations; to destroy the index and silence the tell-tale. It is no doubt an ingenious device to cover the injury which they have done and are doing to the army; but it can only serve to increase the defect in the quality of the candidates, and to damage the efficiency of the service by admitting indiscriminately those whom the competitive examinations would have rejected, and such as were utterly inefficient. If the House of Commons would take the trouble to investigate the question at all, we feel assured that it would never consent to abolish the competitive examinations for the Army Medical Department. Mr. Longfield and Mr. Hennessy have rendered a public service in offering a spirited opposition to the progress of the India Medical Service Bill in its present form; and we hope that Mr. Hennessy will further master the details of the question, which will show how greatly such an abolition would be opposed to the best interests of the army.”

As regarded the system of competitive examination, Sir John Lawrence in 1860 or 1861 said that its results had been within his own experience eminently successful. (Hear, hear.) He would ask the right hon. gentleman distinctly whether he was of opinion that the competitive examinations ought to be kept up. He wished to have an explicit answer, because they must not put their faith in Princes, much less Secretaries of State. (A laugh.) He begged to move the addition of the clause.

Colonel SYKES could not understand the objection which his right hon. friend entertained towards the clause, because it was almost word for word a portion of the Queen’s proclamation to the people of India. He was glad to find that his right hon. friend had removed many of the grievances under which the old service had laboured. He thought that the new officers should be grafted upon the old service. He had heard that day that a native had been appointed to the office of judge of the