

as with social problems, difficulties which were apparently insurmountable disappear when causes and conditions are carefully studied and when earnest and intelligent efforts are made to combat them.

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### WHAT IS THE RIGHT ATTITUDE OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION TOWARD THE SOCIAL EVIL? \*

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The "social evil" is a euphemism for what F. H. Gerrish better characterizes as "mercenary sexual debauchery." The marriage of one man to one wife,<sup>1</sup> by which the man and the woman are henceforth no longer twain, but one flesh, constitutes the very foundation of all true social progress; this is the unit which in the aggregate forms a social fabric in which right rules, virtue is honored and God is revered, and against which no corruptive force can ever prevail.

Prostitution is unlawful sexual commerce, in which the prostitutes, male and female, while united in the sight of God, yet seek to avoid those responsibilities of perpetual mutual care and service, the necessary concomitants of the first commandment ever given to man and associated with blessing: "Be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth." There can result from this unnatural bond no increment by which the state is built up, its traditions fostered, and its perpetuity guaranteed; this is the great moral disease ever at work on all sides seeking to undermine all those humane institutions which the experience of the ages has coupled with the good of our race.

As Prince A. Morrow testifies, there would be no question as to a social evil and venereal diseases were it not for prostitution; it is, therefore, with this root evil that we, as medical men, desire to deal to-day. I need not dwell on the facts of the disease; we all know them, for wherever we may live the foul river has its tributaries running by our door, and year by year we see thousands of young men and women (Morrow estimates 450,000 boys in our country alone) who began life with the expectation of pure living and high ideals, take the fatal plunge into the moral sewer, losing what they can never regain, even by the most careful living or conduct consistent with the standards of the world. The woman, once stigmatized in this way, hides in shame, a voluntary exile in certain haunts of seclusion; she struggles on leading a life of shame for a few short years (the average length of life of a prostitute is about six years), and then sinks, often a hopeless syphilitic and perhaps a drunkard, ending her days by suicide or with tuberculosis or in general decrepitude in an almshouse. The man, on the contrary, by reason of the double standard of morals adopted by a cowardly society, conceals his pollution, puts on a brazen face, goes freely into society, and often ends by marrying some pure girl, only to deposit in her lap—as a wedding gift from the first wife, the prostitute (*"le cadeau de nocces que les courtisanes déposaient dans le corbeilles des jeunes épousées"*)—the seeds of the foul disease which makes her innocent wifehood a source of pain and misery, and often renders motherhood impossible or makes

the child, if, indeed, one ever sees the light, a wizened monster, more fit for the grave than for sweet, happy, human relationships. The prostitute takes a poetic revenge, and by the disease she gives her paramour forever seals the fountain of nature and restrains her supplanter from acting beyond her own (the prostitute's) sphere, even though she be a thousand times legalized as wife by church and court.

I need not remind those who know so well the problems of public hygiene, of the trite fact that this has been the burning question of the ages, and that it was sexual immorality which ate the heart out of the decadent nations which have preceded us. Egypt, Assyria, Greece, Rome and the modern Latin nations are all by-words for profligacy, and before their collapse lust ran riot, until they fell a mass of corruption, destined to rise no more. Germany of to-day is saturated with this vice, and in spite of her present fair showing before the nations, owing to the splendid mentality and the law-abiding character of her citizens, she must, unless she reforms in this matter within a few generations, inevitably follow those who have walked the downward path into the pit before her. England and America are to-day honeycombed with this vice, which flaunts itself at every turn in every town, at all our frequented resorts, and nowhere more noticeably than in the very city where we now sojourn.

I need not dwell on this aspect of the case, for it is everywhere acknowledged, and nowhere more forcibly presented than in Morrow's recent plea.<sup>2</sup>

Responsibility? Who can escape it. Every intelligent adult man and woman has a real, an unavoidable responsibility touching this question, but most heavily does it rest on the shoulders of the three liberal professions—on the minister, the lawyer and the physician. On this tripod, whose members are in constant living contact with all ranks of society, rests the welfare of our body politic, and should we prove recreant to our trust where is the hope for the body at large? The minister and the priest deal with man as a responsible agent in his relationship to God, preaching first the law which says "Thou shalt not," and then the loving message of grace ever crying, "Turn ye, turn ye, why will ye die?" The lawyer who sees man differentiated into his complex relationships, deals with the great fundamental principle of the Justinian code, "*alterum non lædere*" (Thou shalt do thy neighbor no harm), in all its ramifications; and it is his province by legislative and civil process to promote virtue in the state, as the tried foundation-stone which is the essence of a good government and the sole basis of its perpetuity. It is the manifest province of the physician to prevent and to hinder the spread of the protean diseases which harrass or shorten life.

These three professions, to a superficial view entirely distinct, are yet closely united by a common bond in one aim, namely, the upholding of public morals; and not one individual member of them can escape the moral obligation which rests on him in virtue of his choice of this as a means of livelihood. The very term "liberal" advertises the fact that he who claims it stands in relations of tender sympathy and helpful interest to his fellow-men, to whom his services belong for the establishment of good and for the relief of the oppressed.

Some have ventured to question this affiliation of morals with medicine, forgetful of the fact that the very diploma which the licentiate holds proclaims him to be

\* Read in the Section on Hygiene and Sanitary Science of the American Medical Association, at the Fifty-fifth Annual Session, June, 1904.

1. Gen., 2:24.

2. Medical News, June 4, 1904.

of good moral character. Eliminate the moral side of our calling and it is no longer a calling, but a trade.

But why should we be at further trouble than to treat our patients as they come to us to be healed? Why take any active steps in these matters? I once thought long ago, when I was a medical student, that a physician's chief business was to cure diseases, but a quarter of a century of experience has shown me that the highest and noblest practice of our art is to prevent them. What a pitiable showing does the history of all the recoveries by treatment from tuberculosis, malaria, typhoid fever, yellow fever, etc., make when we think of what might be done by prevention through the enforcement of personal, domestic, municipal, state and national hygienic laws, enforcing the knowledge we already possess. It is not too much to say that these affections could be almost wiped out in a generation, did not ignorance and politics—to which some even think of appealing for the relief of venereal disease—hinder.

There are three possible attitudes in relation to the "Social Evil":

1. Indifference.
2. Government control.
3. An active personal crusade, inspired by a profound sense of personal responsibility.

Indifference has been the attitude of the past; I trust that this day sounds its death knell. I would simply impress on you the fact that we have been living in this particular period for many years, and if you observe in your midst any appalling increase in loss of honor and decadence of morality among our young people, it is due to this régime of indifference, and not to a system of any kind which has been on trial. Please note emphatically that indifference, and indifference alone, has been tried and found wanting.

The outcome of indifference has been sin and disease running riot; a system of blackmail debauching our police service; and the corruption of the whole body politic.

Governmental control, the second of these attitudes, is a question before us for consideration. It involves the acceptance by the body politic of a situation by means of which prostitution receives legal status as a recognized (honorable, shall I say?) and duly protected calling, coupled with certain restrictions. What does such an attitude as this involve on the part of our government?

1. Licensing prostitution.
2. Taxation of prostitutes, bawdy houses, or both.
3. Segregation of prostitutes in certain known quarters.
4. A new department in our municipal government, with a system of police and medical inspection and espionage.
5. The right of enforced examination and commitment to lock hospitals when disease is found.

Note that all these impositions, strange to say, refer to women alone as the sole offenders and sources of disease.

Let us consider the great and fundamental question of this inquiry, namely, Has the law a right to sanction vice for any reason whatever? We are, unfortunately, so little trained in ethics, or perhaps better, morals, that many of us may be at first puzzled to answer this question. I believe that if I were to ask a hundred people consecutively, What is the law? the reply of the great majority would be that the law is simply a statutory declaration of the will of the ma-

majority. "May the law," then, I ask, "sanction evil, if the majority so rules?" This is the real crux of the situation, and it is no trifling matter that we should hold correct views on this head, for accordingly as the millions of American citizens answer this question, must our country stand or fall. Who are better fitted to answer this question than some of the greatest minds of which the Anglo-Saxon race has ever boasted?

I gather my extracts from Ritter's book on "Moral Law and Civil Law Parts of the Same Thing." Sheldon Amos, in his "Systematic View of the Science of Jurisprudence," says "the purpose of the law is to fortify and to maintain the public morality." Bishop, for thirty years recognized in the United States as a standard authority on criminal law, says: "Morality, religion and education are the three great pillars of the state and the substance of all private good. A community from which they are banished represents more than the gloom of the original chaos. Therefore, they should be objects of primary regard by the law." "Further, the common law practically and fully cherishes the public morals, and it punishes as a crime every act which it deems sufficiently evil and directly tending to impair the public morals." What, then, is morality? "Morality requires a man to treat his neighbor honestly and fairly; it can compel him to do so and punish him if he does not. Religion is a matter of belief; morality is a matter of conduct." "At common law," says Lieber on Penal Law, "indictability and immorality are convertible terms." In Well's "Pollock on Torts" he says: "All positive law presupposes a moral principle." Amos, quoted above, says that "the law as a mode of benevolent guidance and aid, characteristically stands forth as the ever-present and incarnate witness of that ultimate morality of which it is at best no more than the symbol and the counterpart." Furthermore, "morality and moral character are exactly the same in legal contemplation as are they when viewed from any other standpoint."

To go back to another very old authority: "By the law is the knowledge of sin." The law itself must be a righteous standard, and if it deflects at all, the reign of evil has begun, for there is no longer any standard by which sin can be proved. If that which should be the instrument to convict of sin becomes sin itself, to what, then, are we to appeal? Such are the opinions of eminent authorities whom none can gainsay.

As for myself, and I trust I speak for all in this professedly Christian land, I would declare: "We can not consent to sanction of evil that good may come from it." If appealed to to be practical, we answer that we can not afford to be "practical" at the sacrifice of principle; we will fight evil wherever we see it, and under all circumstances we will oppose the debasement of the public standards of right and morality. This we will do in entire confidence that in spite of all appearance the right so upheld will in the end prove victorious. Pure laws are the heritage we would leave to our generations yet unborn, and let not those who are caught in a final cataclysm of evil, point back to this day of boasted civilization as the memorable era when the public standards of right were first debased.

Does the legalization of vice bringing even the majority of the prostitutes under control and by lessening disease in the community afford the protection which it promises? Any statistical inquiry, drawn from foreign sources, for purposes of comparison, is valueless, since it serves only to contrast an era of indifference

with an era of regulation. For the present status of the question in Paris, I would refer to a brief but admirably clear presentation of the subject by Frederic Griffith of New York.<sup>3</sup>

The result of legalizing prostitution, in America, for I trust I speak for Canada as well as for the United States, would be to place the whole burden of proof that unrestrained sexual commerce is wrong in the sight of God and man, on the chaste men and women, who teach their boys and girls that purity is of heaven, and is their best heritage in life, and that uncleanness, born of hell, is their worst foe. Of what avail is all my teaching when prostitution is legalized and the leading minds of our country declare that the gratification of lust is venial; for the sanction of the law makes that which it ordains presumptively right. Moral purity is practically unknown and held in contempt in Germany as well as in France, where the term *pucelle* expresses the contempt felt for chastity. Shall we come to this!

If we legalize this infamous business, where shall we look to recruit the ever-fading ranks of these poor creatures as they die yearly by the tens of thousands? Which of the little girls of our land shall we designate for this traffic? Mark their sweet innocence to-day as they run about in our streets and parks, prattling and playing, ever busy about nothing, and earth's only memento of the angels in their guilelessness. Which of them shall we snatch as they approach maturity to supply the foul mart of the insatiable cravings of lust? Perish the thought. Again, we surely would not allow the daughters of our rich men to enter our legalized brothels. The poor man must suffer and be robbed of the flower of his family—the poor man who, Jacob Riis tells us, has no appeal beyond the policeman on the beat and practically no rights in our courts. What can he do against the lavish use of money by the rich man's son and the brothel keeper's oath and the policeman? Sherman said "War is hell," but war is a sweet, a noble and a choice calling compared with a life in this pit of iniquity which some have proposed to open in our land. The only way out of the difficulty is to assert that the young girls naturally love this debauched life, but before I believe that you will have to rob me of my years of experience with women who, for the most part, began by being seduced.

The most specious claim yet made has been that the legalization of vice is but a step toward its abolition. What does experience in regard to this teach? Where has this ever been done? Tell me, too, why, after more than a century of boasted national progress we should now take a step backward in order that we may go forward?

Consider for a moment, gentlemen, what effect the legalization of vice will have on the medical profession. The necessity for examining women licensed to carry on their business will create in our midst a vile and an odious specialty, akin and closely allied to the professional abortionist, degrading to our profession and justly bringing it into contempt by making it thus pander to vice. I surely need only to suggest and not to dwell on this insufferable degradation. Read Griffith's article, and see how some of the Paris medical men are employed with two tables examining prostitutes at the rate of about 450 an hour! What a lowering of our standards when we come to that! What an occupation for the man who starts out full of the hope of ac-

complishing great things for humanity armed with a diploma certifying to his "good moral character."

Finally, I come to the third attitude toward prostitution, namely, a moral crusade sustained by an intense sense of personal responsibility. What does this mean? It means that we shall recognize our individual responsibility toward all whom we can in any way hope to influence, toward our own children first, and then toward our patients, laboring in season and out of season to inculcate good morals, not omitting to warn them that the penalty of sin is death, the worst of all kinds of death—a living death to all moral sense.

This is the difficult path, for, instead of shifting the responsibility on to others by voting to pass a law, it places the burden where it belongs—right on the shoulders of every man and woman in this country. This and this alone is the course of that "eternal vigilance which is the price of liberty."

If as sincere Christian men you will take this course, then I have great hopes for the future; if you adopt any other course as more "practical," my hope is gone.

### SYPHILIS AS A DISEASE INNOCENTLY ACQUIRED.\*

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Syphilis is not necessarily a venereal disease. Syphilis is one of the great diseases affecting the human race, and if its entire clinical history could be perfectly known, for ages past, it would be recognized that this one poison had caused greater damage and misery and more decided race degeneration than any other one malady, except tuberculosis. And yet, thus far, except in a few isolated localities, there has been no general and intelligent attempt to restrict its ravages.

The common occurrence of syphilis as a result of unlawful sexual intercourse, and its inclusion among venereal diseases in so many text-books of late years, are undoubtedly the cause of much of the feeling existing in regard to it as a disease not to be mentioned in good society, and one whose recognition should be tabooed. It has been ignored through ignorance and neglected through negligence.

In studying the older literature of syphilis, it is seen that often quite another view was taken. It is often described as an epidemic disease, which spread through families and communities, in the ordinary run of domestic, industrial and professional life; as, for instance, by kissing, nursing, hand feeding, eating utensils, etc.; likewise in factories, by gas-blowing, weaving, etc.; also by cupping and leeching; while it was also recognized that the disease might be communicated in sexual intercourse, in families.

But with the spread of civilization and the luxury and license attending it, and especially with the growth of cities and the increased use of intoxicants, syphilis has come to be more and more diffused by illicit intercourse, and to be regarded wholly as a venereal disease; and by some it is considered as a just penalty for sexual transgressions, much to the detriment of its proper recognition as a contagious malady which should be guarded against by proper legal restrictions.

Syphilis is undoubtedly a disease of cities, where

\* Read in the Section on Hygiene and Sanitary Science of the American Medical Association, at the Fifty-fifth Annual Session, June, 1904.

3. New York Med. Record, April 23, 1904.