

relative sense and the last absolutely. Prostitution was a flourishing institution in ancient Greece and Rome and was rampant throughout Europe in the Middle Ages and has continued in a gradually evanescent form down to the present day. But just as, while a decrease of drunkenness has been going on, temperance fanatics have ranted and raved for strenuous measures to put down intemperance, so now that the "social evil," as it is termed, is gradually diminishing and with it the incidence of venereal disease we are gravely told of the fearful perils of the streets and rigorous measures are demanded to check its progress by State interference. Next turn to the continental system and its supposed efficacy.

To the advocates of State interference I put this question: Can they explain how it is that in spite of years and years (quite half a century) of police registration and strict medical supervision of prostitutes we yet find all forms of venereal disease prevalent in continental towns? To the usual reply that the regulations are not sufficiently stringent or the medical inspection is not sufficiently frequent I rejoin that not only is this so but that the whole system of registration and supervision is a proved and convicted fraud and that this constitutes the ineradicable vice not only of this but of any possible system of State regulation. For all over the continent the police complain of the amount of clandestine prostitution which *they cannot control* and which tends always to *increase*. This disproportion between registered and clandestine prostitution has reduced the whole system to an absurdity. How, then, can this system protect the health of the population when it so signally fails to maintain those conditions by which alone the extension of the disease can be prevented? Thus taken on its own merits the continental system does not turn out to be a brilliant success but there is a still graver objection to be formulated. Even if the community could be adequately safeguarded (which it cannot) this system would still warrant the condemnation of every thoughtful man as productive of evils far more disastrous to the body politic than the evil from which it is supposed to protect the body of the individual.

As Professor Amos Sheldon says, "Our form of judicial procedure in the main embodies the principle that some overt injury must be committed before legal instrumentalities can be brought into play; and conformity to this principle was in past time gradually brought about by efforts to avoid the terrific evils that otherwise arose. The object of the whole complicated system of checks and safeguards provided by English law and secured by a long train of constitutional conflicts has been to prevent an innocent man being even momentarily treated as a criminal on the mere alleged or real suspicion of a police officer." Yet now that personal liberty, which is the right of the meanest of citizens, is to be menaced for the sake of a more than problematical gain to certain men who lead ill-regulated lives. That irresponsible power is always abused, a fact of daily experience verifying the experiences of mankind at large, is tacitly denied and it is tacitly asserted that irresponsible power given to officials over these women will not be abused. Yet on the continent certain evils are notorious as the result of State interference—e.g., blackmail, &c. Another great evil of this system is the immense multiplication of brothels with all their attendant secret vice, ten times worse for the moral health of a community than a dozen Regent streets or a score of Piccadillys.

Finally, this system encourages and fosters the growth of the most degraded class that ever disgraced the name of man, the creatures who live upon the earnings of individual prostitutes with whom they cohabit. Thus State regulation, while impotently failing to bring about the benefits claimed, very successfully produces more disastrous and more extensive evils than the evil it is designed to prevent.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Feb. 17th, 1906.

DUDLEY BURNEY.

THE COLOUR OF THE HAIR IN DERMoids.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have been interested in reading the letter with the above heading in THE LANCET of Feb. 10th, p. 402, and in reply to Mr. C. J. Bond's request for information as to the colour and character of the hair and epithelial appendages found in the ovarian dermoids of animals I am able to state, as one who has made a special study of the operation for

the removal of the retained testes of animals and of the removal of the ovaries, that dermoids of the ovaries are practically unknown. For the past 12 years I have searched carefully on every possible occasion without success and I am unable to trace a single record of this occurrence in veterinary literature. In the testes, however, especially of the horse, dermoids are not infrequent, and they usually contain either hair, molar or incisor teeth, or bone. In one case, a photograph of which has appeared in a little work which I published in 1903,¹ I have recorded one specimen in which the hairs were of three colours—black, brown, and grey, some of them measuring seven inches in length, and in a case which I have had recently the contents consisted of a large quantity of dark-brown hairs interwoven together. Unfortunately I did not at the time note down the colour of the animal in either case. In one other instance I obtained a cyst from the leg of a sheep, this containing a mass of wool of a natural colour.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

FRED HOBDAV, F.R.C.V.S., F.R.S.E.

Silver-street, Kensington, W., Feb. 20th, 1906.

ABERRANT VACCINIA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In connexion with this subject, upon which a note appeared in your issue of Feb. 10th, the following notes may be of interest. On Feb. 10th last a young man, aged 22 years, came as usual to the out-patient department to have his hand dressed; it had been injured in his employment in one of the carpet factories here some weeks ago. The condition of his face immediately attracted one's attention. The left side of the face and neck was very considerably swollen, while situated over the malar eminence of that side was an area of about one centimetre in diameter, circular, and surrounded by a ring of vesicles, while the neighbouring skin was inflamed. The general appearance very closely resembled a case of anthrax which had been in hospital two months previously.

In order to assist in the diagnosis I made a film from the fluid in the vesicle and stained with methylene blue; a few polymorphonuclear leucocytes were seen but no bacilli; this did not necessarily exclude anthrax, for the organism is not always found in the vesicle, though in the case referred to it was present in large numbers. The fact that the patient worked in the woollen trade and the appearance of his face inclined one to regard the case as anthrax; on further questioning him it turned out that he was a married man and that his child had been vaccinated about three weeks previously. The further development of the case has demonstrated that the condition is vaccinia.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

W. A. WILSON-SMITH, M.B. Edin.,

House Surgeon, Kidderminster Infirmary.

Kidderminster, Feb. 14th, 1906.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The case of aberrant vaccinia recorded by Dr. M. Eden Paul in THE LANCET of Feb. 3rd, p. 286, recalls one or two instances of the appearance of well developed vaccine vesicles in unusual situations occurring in a very extensive vaccination practice during my nearly 30 years' tenure of office as medical superintendent of St. Pancras Infirmary. Many years ago, in the days of humanised lymph and arm-to-arm inoculation, and when doubtless some crude methods of procedure were often followed and now safeguarded against by the Local Government Board Order, a young friend of mine, recently qualified, was desirous of seeing and doing some vaccination work and used to assist me occasionally. He broke off the ends of the capillary tubes, one of the little jagged ends of which he applied to his mouth to eject the contents on to the lancet. In the course of a few days a vesicle formed on the tip of his tongue; the virus insertion occurred presumably whilst he had the tube between his lips. Beyond causing some obvious difficulties in the way of speaking and taking food the vaccination pursued a normal course except that cicatrisation was delayed on account of the restlessness of the organ and the difficulty in protecting its lesion.

Another instance happened in my own person. Whilst I

¹ Castration of Cryptorchid Horses and the Ovariotomy of Troublesome Mares.