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THE SOCIAL EVIL.

The Sanitary Association of Montreal, at one of its late meetings, appointed a committee to enquire into the best modes of dealing with the social evil as it exists among us; especially in so far as it affects the health of the community from diseases arising out of it. The report of that committee is before us, and we believe that the conclusions arrived at, namely, that registration of prostitution is the best mode of dealing with the matter, will receive the support of the medical profession at large.

The question has been viewed from so many standpoints, that it becomes almost impossible to follow the arguments which have been adduced about it. If the subject merely concerned individuals following a life of prostitution, as well as those who are its customers, nothing further might be said about the evil; and we might allow it to continue unrecognised. Unfortunately, however, there are diseases which arise out of prostitution and which are the sequences of debauchery and these from the exercise of promiscuous intercourse, are spread far and wide. The medical profession of to day do not require to be told of the effects of the chief of these diseases, the merest tiro of our profession is fully conversant with its baneful powers, and not only the latter for a large proportion of the influential men of our community understand the subject to some extent. It is therefore marvellous that measures have not long before this been adopted to protect the community from a disease which is more dangerous to the individual and his offspring than small pox and is more insidious in effects.

To attack syphilis properly the causes of prostitution must be studied, and remedied wherever possible. If we could remove the evil, syphilis would in consequence die out and there would be no occasion for providing safeguards. From the very nature of humanity the causes of prostitution cannot be remedied and therefore it will always exist in our midst. There is no need to quote history to prove this fact. Have there not been Rahab's and

Mary Magdalenes in all times? and of which there is no proof that all such have been driven to a life of degradation by stern necessity? We do not think that Potiphars wife was or is a solitary exception, daily events disprove any such conclusion so that we do not *indulge* in any Utopian views contrary to well known and established facts. At the same time we do not for a moment mean to insinuate that all women would be bad if placed under certain circumstances; but think that there are both men and women prone to evil, as there are to the contrary. A class of professional prostitutes is to a great extent one of the safeguards of society, as at present constituted, but that class from the nature of their trade are peculiarly liable to contract and spread disease. Inasmuch as it is impossible to remove the predisposing causes which spread widecast certain affections, especially syphilis, we cannot see any other mode to keep them in check than by adopting a system of registration and inspection. We have no doubt that if such a system was universally carried out, syphilis might be entirely eradicated from our midst. That amelioration has followed the adoption of registration and inspection there can be no doubt. It has been proved from statistics compiled in Great Britain, that wherever the contagious diseases act has been enforced this disease has been greatly checked. From the army returns it has been shown that there is a marked decline in the admission of primary sores wherever the act is in operation. If we compare the proportion of admissions in stations at which the act is in force, with those where it is not, we find the admissions per 1000 for primary venereal sores to be 54 at the former and 113 at the latter. There is however, no use in dealing with the matter by piecemeal; any act formed for the control of prostitution, must include the whole Dominion so that the re-introduction of disease from distant parts will be prevented. Stringent laws should be enacted and enforced not only to prevent its spread but also its reintroduction whether by male or female. We have not come to this conclusion without due deliberation for we have time and again been impressed by facts which have come under our personal observation of the necessity of legislation in the matter. We are also aware that to the great majority of our respectable fellow citizens, the subject is distasteful bringing to light as it does the canker which is gnawing at the vitals of society. We see no reason why the matter should be shunned, even if disagreeable, as we deem it the duty of all conversant with the extent of the evil, to discuss the advisability of legislation and we would further suggest that no