

The Spanish "Flu" Epidemic

Canada, in spite of the healthfulness of the climate has not escaped the terrible scourge of Spanish influenza. Not a single community has escaped, but thanks to the energetic measures taken, to stamp out the disease, what might have been a national calamity has been averted, though the danger is not over by any means. The lesson brought home to practically every community by the epidemic is that our public health systems want much reforming. In very few cases were the local public health departments prepared, though there was plenty of notice given, for before it reached Canada the Spanish "flu" had almost travelled the world and had it not been for the volunteers who came up splendidly though not called for until the last moment, many communities would have been hard put to it to even combat the disease much less control it.

We would suggest to the Canadian Public Health

Association that it has a splendid opportunity to investigate the epidemic and its causes with a view of bettering the system under which our medical officers of health work. It must be remembered that having once appointed their medical official the municipal council is largely in his hands, hence his greater responsibility to keep the mayor and aldermen not only in constant and close touch with local health and hygienic conditions but well informed with comparative data of other communities. Up to the visitation of the present epidemic the average report of the local health officer was a sorry affair. Perhaps the epidemic has brought home to these public servants that they have a duty to the community, other than merely recording the number of cases of sickness, reported by other local medical men. An office boy can do this.

Social Evils

A committee of Montreal citizens, who have been investigating the vice conditions of Canada's commercial metropolis, recently published their first report. This report, which of necessity was somewhat lurid in places, is a strong indictment of our economic and social systems, particularly as they effect young girls. In almost every community the young man would seem to have every protection—almost coddled—whereas for the young woman, who makes up the majority of our workers, there is little or no protection. With the average girl, because of our one-sided standard of social morality which says in effect, that man can do no wrong so far as the opposite sex is concerned, it is one continual struggle against temptation. With the working girl away from home it is one hell of an existence to keep from falling to the level of the prostitute. The miserable pay, the long hours, the gray life of the shop girl, the factory girl, the office girl, have proven great recruiting factors for the profession of prostitution. These and other causes are too often forgotten in the overwhelming shame of the woman. She becomes the outcast of society from whom we must **protect** our young men. She pays the price of her share of the sin but the man goes free—no stigma, attached to him.

There is no doubt about the situation in Montreal being bad, though the vice conditions as investigated by the citizens' committee are not peculiar to Canada's great seaport by any means. Every community has its own vice problem. Perhaps in a lesser degree than Montreal, but the problem is there nevertheless. The report urges the education of the public mind on the subject. This is quite right, for the public should know what a cancer of immorality it has on its body social, but when it suggests that an enlightened public opinion will help back the police to do their duty in eradicating the cancer, it is to condemn the present system of carrying out the law, which admittedly is weak. A house of prostitution is run for the profit of the keeper (usually a woman) the landlord, and the procurer—the girls are paid the least of all though they suffer all the diseases peculiar to the life. When a raid is made the keeper and the girls are

usually fined, and the proceeds, in the case of Montreal, being divided between the city and the Province. Last year the fines collected amounted to \$41,604. This means that both the city and province have in practice become unconscious partners in commercialized vice; the fines simply amounting to a special tax. This is not the fault of the law which, in the Province of Quebec, is stringent to satisfy the most rabid of moral reformers; the fault lies in the fact that the law is not carried out.

From reports of other investigations that have been made from time to time on this social disease, not only in Montreal, but in other communities, we have been forced to the conclusion that if a city, town or village has an efficient and honest police force no white slave traffic can prosper. The strict administration of the law, as it stands, by police and magistracy, will always inspire fear among the brothel keepers, and their parasites, the "pimps," or procurers. We believe that a little examination, of every "pimp" caught will bring him in that category of worse than thieves who can only be appealed to by the lash, well applied.

Montreal has a new police regime under the same man who made the fire department of the city famous for its efficiency. He has almost unlimited power delegated to him and there is absolutely no reason why he should not make Canada's commercial metropolis as clear of commercialized vice as other Canadian cities—without waiting for public opinion to back him up. He has a big job ahead of him, but we believe Director Tremblay is big enough for it.

While the police have a very definite duty in the suppression of vice where and when it exists, it is well to remind the churches and other Christian agencies that the task of suppression of vice—particularly prostitution—is getting harder each year. And the reason we take is that the great Christian tenet of virtue has lost much of its potency during these last few years. Every boy and girl brought up in the Christian faith is supposed to know the deeper meaning and significance of honor and virtue—and yet every prostitute claims to belong to some church, or at least was brought up in one. Why this laxity?