

CONTROL OF VENEREAL DISEASES.

How best to control the spread of venereal diseases has long engaged the attention of many earnest and honest workers for the public weal. On this topic as on almost all others, there have been wide differences of opinion. Some have taken up the position that there should be recognized houses; others that cases of venereal diseases should be reported; and others that there should be free dispensaries for the treatment of these diseases. All these methods have been tried at some time, or in some place. Quite recently Abraham Flexner, who has been studying this subject in Europe under the foundation of John D. Rockefeller Jr. has issued the result of his observations. He declares that police regulation of the evil is a failure and in Europe is fast dying out. Europe, we are told, is a man's domain, has been long ruled by man for his own advantages. He has long ruled and in a very selfish way. The vast majority of depraved women in Europe live beyond the range of police control. Licensed resorts do not effect segregation, and the evil goes on unabated. Segregation is no longer practised in any large European city. It has also been found to be inadvisable, as no attempt at thoroughness in this direction is possible. But this method has been found to give to vice undue prominence. Finally, the segregated districts have been found to be corruptors of the surrounding parts of the city, and to allure the unemployed young women to these sections.

Compulsory medical attendance is severely condemned. It is never thorough, and, yet, it gives an appearance of security that does not exist, and takes away one of the influences that tend to repress the evil, the fear of disease. This, then, is the final and weightiest objection to regulation; not that it fails as hygiene, not that it is contemptible as espionage, not that it is unnecessary as a police measure, but that it obstructs and confounds the proper attitude of society toward all social evils.

In the hands of good women lies the power for reform. Though no quantitative evidence of improving morality can be given, various movements supply proof that opinion is undergoing a change which must in the end effect conduct. The woman's movement will unquestionably destroy the passivity of women in respect to masculine irregularities. Mr. Flexner argues that if the social evil can be increased by artificial stimulation, it can likewise be lessened. Its complete stamping out cannot be hopefully prophesied even if summary and persistent action were taken, but that repression can be directed with such results against the exploiters of the traffic.