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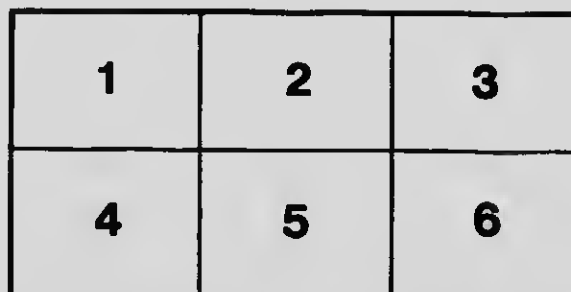
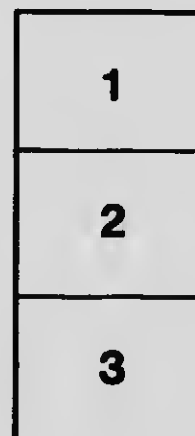
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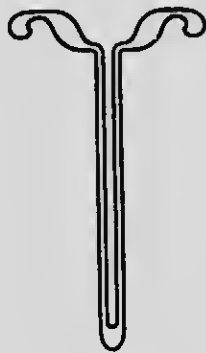
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# Sociology of the Middle and Far West



Paper read by Dr. C. J. Fagan at Meeting of the  
American Public Health Association held  
at Winnipeg, August, 1908

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## Sociology of the Middle and Far West

**T**HE theme set for this discussion is the "Sociology of the Middle and Far West." Sociology has been defined as "that branch of philosophy which treats of the constitution, phenomena and development of human Society." This definition implies a great range of subjects and a very wide field of research.

Now, within the limits of a paper such as this, it is not possible to fill the broad scope indicated by the above definition, even in regard to the circumscribed area chosen for discussion. An attempt is, however, made herein to touch on some conditions and the more important issues affecting, or likely to affect, social progress and social economy in the Great West, and, incidentally, to suggest some measures making for amelioration.

To study the evolution of conduct we must go back to man's earliest days, when we find that the individual's obligation was two-fold; namely, self-preservation and the rearing of offspring. Thus duty and pleasure went hand-in-hand. Herbert Spencer has ably traced the development of these two influences into the two principal incentives to good conduct; namely, religion and law. A third factor soon came into operation, and this gradually developed into what is known as "custom."

Thus, we now have four standards of conduct; firstly, that of the individual, framed on consideration of self-preservation, of the successful rearing of offspring, and of the harmonious living with others; then the other three standards; namely, the religious, the political and the social. In the evolution of general conduct each of the four standards has had a share.



In this skeleton outline of the development of morals, and the controlling influences, the religious phase is prominent. It is not, however, proposed to refer to prevailing religious conditions, but to confine discussion to other aspects of the question as they appear in the Middle and Far West.

The Middle West is, of course, in a sociological sense, the older part of this enormous area. It contains the larger cities, is the home of a vast industrial population, supports a large number of people dependent on agriculture, and is probably to-day the richest part of the North American continent.

The Far West, as we know it, between the broad Pacific and that great serrated barrier called the "Rockies," is a very new country endowed with wonderful resources, but with as yet a relatively small population. Within the recollection of many living men it was a wilderness. Some residents of the Pacific Slope have witnessed the birth of law and order in this great region, as yet, in comparison with its area, only peopled in small spots. These men have watched the country's institutions grow from, say, a small settlement in the midst of unpeopled wilds, governed by a Hudson's Bay Company's Factor, a man of cool head, calm judgment and unerring foresight. They have seen that little settlement become a Crown Colony, ruled by the same man, translated from the Chair of the Company's office to that of Governor representing the Crown, invested with the powers of life and death, ruling despotically but benignantly, wisely, beneficially. That Colony grew under that rule until it required a body of men, a Legislative Council, for the management of its affairs, and then it became in but a few years an important and powerful portion of the Dominion. This incomplete and condensed word-picture of British Columbia's development is descriptive *mutatis mutandis* of the growth of the entire Pacific Coast; a great region that has within a generation developed from practical barbarism into primitive civilization, from primitive civilization into organized Society; and now the Pacific Coast is a power in the land, a factor to be reckoned with in the political economy of the nation on both sides of the International Boundary Line. This country is looked upon by the political economists, statesmen and warriors of the world as the theatre

or arena of great approaching developments and events in the world's history.

The cause of such rapid development in the Great West—a development such as has taken centuries in older countries—is doubtless due to the marvelous inrush of population within the past twenty or thirty years. Probably in no part of the world is there assembled a greater variety of races than is to be found in the country under review. Here are brought together not only people of every continent, but, in appreciable numbers, of almost every national division of the continents. Every type of humanity, every form of religious belief, and many phases of social development are represented. Working side by side in domestic, manufacturing, mining, commercial, agricultural and other occupations; their off-spring associated in the same educational institutions; all avowedly entitled to equal rights and equal protection under the law and having innumerable interests in common, this congeries of races will, it appears certain, ultimately be so connected by intermarriage as to gradually evolve a people of a more distinctive type than the "Southerner" or "Yankee." Whether this new type is likely to be, from a social point of view, as good as the older ones of the North American Continent is a matter for question. Whether an admixture of the blood of the Anglo-Saxon, the Celt and the Scandinavian with that of the lowclass Slav (*et hoc genus omne*)—and possibly with that of the Indian and Asiatic—will produce a population altogether desirable may be doubted. It would seem, at least in other parts of the Globe the result of such breeding has tended toward social degeneracy.

In the Cities, phenomenally rapid of growth, industry, science and art are rapidly advancing with improved methods, ever striving to make startling departures along new lines. Money-getting is a fetish, aggressive commercialism the mode; present expediency is a ruling consideration, altruism a very remote one. Rudyard Kipling's dictum regarding Chicago, that the atmosphere is dirt and the people savages, is, of course, but a *façon de parler*. That there is, however, some modicum of truth underlying the hyperbolism is noticeable at least to the average visitor; to the visitor imbued with a regard for established moral precepts; to one expecting to find just and efficient

control as well as fair and honest methods of general conduct; to one considerate of the equal rights of all and giving some thought to the welfare of his less fortunate, or weaker, fellow-beings.

And to an extent, greater or less in degree, the social defects or shortcomings that may be noticed in the case of Chicago prevail in nearly all the larger Cities of the Middle and Far West. The repeated scandals in Municipal administration; the financial jugglery of corporations; the lamentable methods in vogue and the insanitary conditions tolerated in the preparation and packing of food supplies; the malfeasance or the misfeasance of the Courts; the ethical obtuseness of Juries; the alarming growth of juvenile crime; the light esteem in which human life and human safety are apparently held and the want of adequate care; the lack of civility shown by minor officials—whether the servants of Governments or Corporations—these and many other glaring faults have been matters of frequent comment.

As Herbert Spencer has said, "The welfare of a Society and the justice of its arrangements are at bottom dependent on the character of its members," and "no philosopher's stone of a constitution can produce golden conduct from leaden instincts." May we not, then, rightly attribute the undesirable conditions prevailing in these Cities to the moral obliquity, the ethical apathy, or culpable ignorance of the individual citizen? And should we not be able and eager to establish in this twentieth century, a standard of general conduct in the large centres of this most progressive country that will effectively supplant the prevailing low ethical tone—a tone that finds a parallel in few, if any, of the older nations of the so-called effete East? Has not the conspicuously low racial, intellectual and moral status of certain immigrants admitted to this Continent much to do with the disorder? And is not the method of our public school education defective in, or neglectful of, special moral training, also responsible?

The objectionable immigrant is everywhere in evidence. Hordes of the surplus population of Southern and South-eastern Europe of a certain class fill the steerage compartments of incoming vessels. It is an established fact that while these

people leave their own countries to improve their condition, they do not appreciably change their mode of life on reaching our shores. They help to crowd the already over-crowded Cities; they remain pedlars of fruit, candy, cheap jewelry, trinkets, ribbons and trashy dry goods, or they may be second-hand clothes dealers; but whatever the parasitic occupation they take up their wits are exercised to the fullest extent to avoid manual or physical labour. Only a small percentage of them go on the land. This is probably one of the prices we have to pay for having such an immense country, and possibly in time to come, the sturdy and desirable element among the people will efface the undesirables. That, however, is rather approaching a prophecy of the millennium.

While it is true that hitherto the bulk of this class of immigrant did not get farther than the Eastern centres of population, yet they are now fast reaching out Westward; and, at one time a feature of curiosity among our hardy, hospitable and care-free Western people, they are now a common feature in the make-up of City life in the Far West.

In regard to the second question, *i.e.*, the absence or deficiency of moral training in the Public Schools, the importance of the subject cannot be overrated. It is improbable that the people will ever be unanimously in favour of Sectarian or non-Sectarian Public Schools—nor is it, perhaps, necessary that they should be. However this may be, moral science or moral training should be a subject, and take a very prominent place, in the curriculum of the Schools. It is possible to instil respect for truth and honour and general good conduct into the minds of youths without encroaching on the tenets of any particular religion or offending any sect worthy of consideration.

The people of Western Canada and the Western United States are an exceptionally bright, quick and capable people; more especially is this true of the agricultural population. Untrammelled by custom, and spurred on by necessity, they seem to be willing and able to meet and deal with adverse conditions. In older countries the everyday wants are supplied, the individual seldom thinks for himself and what is presented is accepted. In this new country, ordinary facilities being absent, the man is thrown back on his own resourcefulness, and

on his capacity to meet constantly arising and often very sudden contingencies. Necessity, then, has stimulated an independent line of thought, which undoubtedly has developed an exceptional capability. Any observer with open mind will admit this if he has seen the home phases of life, as the writer has in the course of his medical experience in the West.

The home may not have all the luxuries apparent in older countries, yet the solid needs are supplied in abundance; each member of the household has his or her share in the work; the drone in the family beehive is an exception, and family love and family ties are firm. While children leave the parental home at an early age, they are, no doubt, influenced by the prevailing spirit of independence, and are stimulated by the immense possibilities of success open to all who are in good mental and physical vigour. Yet while this spirit of independence is good, it is to be regretted that youths are allowed to exercise freedom of action at an age when neither discretion nor judgment are developed. The result is that boys of tender years too frequently pass through experiences which men in older countries only know of by report.

A reprehensible characteristic, noticeable, is the shaping of their own educational courses by juveniles. They attend or leave school at will, and in the selection of a calling play to their young fancies, according to their own whims, and very often in direct opposition to their parents' wish. This false idea of independence may right itself in time, but much evil and great suffering in the meantime must result.

The "Wild and Woolly West" is an oft-repeated phrase, and conveys the idea that orgies are common in Western life. Unfortunately "orgies," though now unknown in the old Far Western acceptation of the term, are at times in evidence in another form, and it is to be regretted that the public does not set itself to seriously amend conditions now too often ignored or condoned.

The writer has known, in his own experience, instances of men arriving in Cities from lumber, mining or fishing camps, with one or two thousand dollars to their credit; they went to public houses or saloons and deposited their money with the proprietor, asking him to give them notice when this money

was expended. They proceeded to "treat" all-comers. Anyone who refused to drink with them was counted an enemy, with the result that friends were numerous, and often a few days saw the credit disappear. A week in the hospital set conditions right, and the reveler returned to his camp to once more establish a credit.

The writer has had considerable experience with such men, and can say that most of them are possessed of good and even noble characteristics. They are grateful for kindness shown them when in trouble, and honest in meeting liabilities that they contract.

The above is a sad picture, and some drastic action is needed to make such conditions impossible. What that action should be is a matter of much difference of opinion. The advocates of total prohibition are numerous; it seems certain that their numbers are increasing, and that in time a law will be passed which will meet their views. Let us trust that the effect of this law will be beneficent; but it is to be feared that our temperance friends have not carefully studied, nor do they seem to appreciate, the characteristics of our Western people, who believe in moral suasion but hold to be unsound the doctrine of coercion on questions which are not in themselves evil. At the present time, and in the present spirit of the West, the writer is convinced that compulsion by means of legislation is dangerous to the well-being of the country. Only time and education will effect the desired end.

All honest men admire persons with will-power sufficient to refuse alcoholic beverages, but it is unjust to condemn those persons who, constitutionally or otherwise, are unable to take this high plane. Such views are injurious to a great cause; for opposition is engendered where otherwise support would be forthcoming.

The results of intemperance rank amongst the greatest evils known. The question, then, should be studied from a practical and scientific standpoint, and not from a sentimental or religious one.

The chronic drunkard freely admits his action to be degrading and disgraceful, and in most cases makes an honest effort to reform—and generally fails. Why is this? It is

because he is suffering from inability to control his desire for sensual stimulation; just as the lunatic loses his power to control his actions and speech in presence of mental irritation.

The overwhelming evil resulting from drunkenness is evident to everyone, and all thinking men and women recognize the necessity for the adoption of measures to check the curse. But the question is how?

Viewing the evil in its medical aspect, it seems questionable whether so-called total abstinence is complete as a curative process. It certainly does something, it checks symptoms, but leaves untouched the fundamental disorder, namely, sensuality and want of self-control.

Was it not John Bright who said that "Force is no remedy for immorality"? Substitution is the natural law. A vessel cannot be completely emptied of air by a pump, even if we use all the force at our command; but if distilled water is poured in to overflowing air will no longer be in the vessel. Apply the idea to dangerous or undesirable tendencies; substitute some reasonable form of diversion to meet the nervous demands but do not try to defeat the natural impulse by spiritual arguments, however meritorious. Provide diversions, under proper control, that can be safely indulged in. Remember that the law decides what is wrong, and do not obtrude personal views on persons thinking differently.

Anyone observing the conditions governing a large number of workers in Western enterprises must have noted the mental attitude of young men arriving in town from mining or logging camps. The locations of such camps are generally isolated and at a distance from centres. The work is hard and monotonous; entertainment is uncommon; work, feed and sleep is the order of each day; and this order steadily continues week after week, month after month. Does this, can this, satisfy one's natural desires? Is it not unreasonable to expect such persons to be happy and content?

Some philosopher has said that "Man is a creature of desires and all his activities are concerned with the satisfaction of these desires"

Provided the desires are in accordance with reason, this view may be accepted. Now, our hard-working logging-camp

friends have natural desires, and although in some instances the tendencies are not of a highly aesthetic or elevating character, yet, on the whole, they are, humanly-speaking, moderate. When these men come to centres it is well recognized that they are looking for healthy entertainment and convivial amusement. What is done to provide this? Nothing. On the contrary, much is being done by way of discountenancing. It will probably be said that certain forms of entertainment are wrong in principle and in fact. But who shall presume to judge?

In this regard, the views of many people in the West are not unlike those held in the East of this Continent. The use of liquors to any extent is largely condemned, and places of entertainment or resorts of pleasure are regarded with suspicion; add to this the uncompromising attitude of Theology. As a result the endeavour of the men instanced above is to suppress the natural inclinations, and if this endeavour fails, as it generally does, the tendency of these men is to fly to excess and then conceal their acts by subterfuge and deceit—in themselves morally degrading and possibly more evil in effect on character than the indulgences shielded.

On the other hand, let us look at Continental Europe. Musical entertainments, wine drinking, card playing, etc., are carried on in public places; and for the one drunken man or woman seen around, there can be found twenty in the streets of towns on this Continent where rigid ideas prevail.

What, then, happens to our friends from the logging-camp? What does Society do? It offers nothing but cold advice, and when he seeks oblivion in low theatres, thieving, criminal public houses or saloons, and is discovered, he is sternly criticised and condemned; and so another name is added to those ruined by drink, whilst in reality Society is the cause and drink only the medium.

What is the remedy? Let Society do its duty and substitute something salutary for the filthy low drinking hells and resorts existing in most of our towns to-day; let it hesitate to condemn as wrong that which, misguided, may lead to wrong; let it step in and influence by the light of reason.

These views on the great liquor problem will probably meet with but limited approval. It must, however, be remem-



bered that the question is yet a problem, and that every man should truthfully and honestly put himself on record. Where, it is to be feared, most dishonesty creeps in is in the persons of ostensibly ardent advocates of prohibition who use this as a slogan to carry them into the arena of Federal, State, Provincial or Municipal politics.

The general abuse of liquor is decreasing in the writer's opinion. He is, though, unable at the moment to support this opinion by statistics. Mere statistics along this line are not, however, a reliable criterion. The number of persons in the Police Court charged with drunkenness represents but a small proportion of the drunkards. The experience of the writer and his medical friends is that fewer families are being made miserable in this country by drunken husbands, fathers or brothers than was the case twenty years ago.

This fact may be attributed to the establishment of more general and better educational facilities. The Public Schools in the West are the product of that independent spirit which dominates all classes. It is recognised that a trained mind is essential to success, and in a country of opportunities, such as ours, it is felt to be but fair and just that every chance should be given to the rising generation in their fight for the better things of life. As a result of this feeling, a good, sound, practical education is now open to all without distinction of class or race.

While on the subject of our schools, a neglect not peculiar to the West should be noticed—the want of teaching of Hygiene. The writer's opinion is that the teachers are unlearned in the science and that the text books used are a farce.

The younger generation should be properly and thoroughly instructed in the principles of hygiene, not only that they themselves may reap the benefit, but that as fathers and mothers they may be able to impress their children with a knowledge of the proper condition of living.

At the same time, we must condemn the want of adequate teaching as to healthy living, it must be admitted that the intelligence displayed in so many walks of life is not altogether wanting in hygienic matters. Here are some extracts from a Frenchman's review of Western life as it appeared to him:

"The intellectual and moral aspects of the people are exclusively practical." "Outdoor sports take the first place in the amusements of the people." "From the fine residences which grace the elegant suburbs of the Cities to the small wooden houses in the mining camps, we find electric lights, telephones, bathrooms—an astonishing fact to a European."

A building is said to be a reflection of the wealth and intelligence of the responsible promoter. To a greater extent, then, it may be asserted, are Public Institutions a reflection of the wealth and intelligence of a people. Such an aphorism is probably true, but, like so many general statements, this one must be qualified. It is to be feared the words "Reflection of wealth and intelligence" are too often misconstrued. Politicians and estate promoters and tourist guides point with pride to our magnificent structures built at the public expense. They delight to explain the architectural beauties and the rich designs, and point to the costly embellished stone facades and marble fittings. No doubt such structures appeal to the aesthetic and the artist and are educationally of advantage. But a question arises here. Might not some of the money expended on these buildings have been devoted to more pressing public needs with greater advantage? We see City Halls, Public Libraries, Court Houses, Post Offices, etc., etc., that cost huge sums of money which, from an architectural and artistic point of view, leave nothing to be desired. Here, then, is where our general statement must be "qualified." Have those who are responsible for these grand buildings made all necessary provision for other more pressing demands? This question might well be submitted for discussion.

However open we may be in this Western country to adverse criticism for undue expenditure on unnecessary architectural grandeur, there is one class of building we can point to in honest pride, namely, our Hospital accommodation. So far as the writer knows, the West in general is well equipped with hospital buildings. In British Columbia there is no town of any size which has not its Hospital equipped and furnished as completely as any Hospital in Montreal or New York. And what is better, there is in attendance a Physician and Surgeon—not

only one who can, but one who does perform with success all the operations known to surgery.

This paper has perhaps trespassed too much on your time, but one more point should be touched on, namely, the difficulties met by the experts in preventive medicine.

In days gone by the greatness of a country was gauged by its wars and their results. When the history of our country is written, its greatness will be judged by the results obtained in the development of ideas and agencies which look to the preservation of health and life rather than their destruction.

Contradictory as it may seem of this statement, it may be remarked that the people as a whole, instead of co-operating in matters and movements tending towards the preservation and development of public health, in reality oppose them. This may be explained in a measure by the spirit which dominates in all communities having a representative form of Government, a tendency to criticise and oppose all public measures up to a certain stage. The result in the end is, of course, to obtain the best form of law, although in the process of development, injury is being done and lives are being lost. Examples of this are seen in the opposition of a section of the Western public to compulsory vaccination; to the use of antitoxine in diphtheria; to the reporting to the Medical Health Officer of infectious or contagious diseases. But in these, as in all measures that make for the public good, time, patience, firmness and tact, combined with the beneficial results obtained, are the greatest educators. It takes time to educate, and it is for medical reformers to be patient but unceasing in their efforts.

