

Prostitution medically considered : with some of its social aspects : a paper read at the Harveian Medical Society of London, Jan. 1866 / by Dr. Drysdale ; with a report of the debate.

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Spencer Smith Esq. M.D. &c.
with Dr. Drysdale's profound respect

PROSTITUTION

MEDICALLY CONSIDERED.

WITH

SOME OF ITS SOCIAL ASPECTS.

A Paper read at the Harveian Medical Society of London,
Jan. 1866.

BY

DR. DRYSDALE,

HONORARY SECRETARY TO THE SOCIETY.

WITH A REPORT OF THE DEBATE.



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AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

IT has been remarked by a most eminent writer, that the attention of the ablest thinkers will probably be engaged for the next couple of centuries in discussing the fundamental laws, and ascertaining what are true doctrines of Social Science. The subject of Prostitution is in great measure connected with the science of Society; but there are peculiarities in this subject which have rendered its discussion by bodies of men, composed for the most part of persons foreign to the Medical Profession (the only *class* of men who as yet occupy themselves much with physiological and pathological inquiries), in general somewhat barren of practical results. Thus, the reports which I have read of the discussions on Prostitution, which have recently been not unfrequent in Social Science meetings, have given me the impression of want of completeness, and of the perception by the majority of the speakers of only one or two of what I may call the *medical aspects* of the question. One fact, however, these discussions have testified to is, that the subject is no longer considered one to be dogmatized upon by one privileged class of *à priori* moralists; but that there is now a strong desire on the part of the public to hear all that has to be said upon this many-sided question. The day, too, for the ignoring of such questions is fast passing by. All the nobler minds of this day have begun to discover

that there is no class of mankind so debased as not to deserve, nay to demand, our earnest sympathy. The causes which drive individuals and classes into degraded and criminal conduct, are now found to be in very many cases remediable; and hence the true moralist is now determined, in as far as possible, to discover the antecedents of crime and misery, and if possible to remove them. Punishments even are now regarded, not as a good in themselves, rather as an evil; but as an evil to the individual, which is necessary, in order to act as a motive towards the prevention of like crimes or errors in other members of society. The element of revenge, still remaining in the spirit of some laws, is acknowledged to be a pure evil.

With respect to the pretensions of some persons to expound what are the views of Deity upon particular questions of morals, they are and have been frequently shown by Mr. Stuart Mill and others to be merely another way of saying, "This is *my* opinion, and if I had the power of Deity I would punish any one who presumed to differ from *me*."

The following debate in the Harveian Society is, as far as I know, only the second debate on the subject of Prostitution in a medical society for many years past. I trust it may soon be followed by others; for, although we may hope for good results to the Army and Navy, from the Royal Venereal Commission, which has recently completed its sittings, nothing can be done in civil life for such an enormously complicated question as Prostitution, until the subject has been discussed over and over again, and regarded on every side.

C. R. D.

February, 1866.

Harbeian Medical Society of London,

JANUARY 18TH, 1866.

PRESIDENT, DR. TYLER SMITH.

DR. DRYSDALE read the following paper on *Prostitution* :—

MR. PRESIDENT,

Several circumstances have recently called my attention to the subject of Prostitution. One of these has been the presence in London of the respected and learned Professor Boeck of Christiania, with whom I have had numerous conversations. Again, one of the questions put by the members of the Venereal Diseases Commission to those examined by that Board was; "What measures would you propose for regulating prostitution and checking the spread of venereal diseases?" Although this was not one of the questions proposed to myself, I yet feel it to be perhaps the most important one that can be put. I have, therefore, been anxious to collect as much as possible of the evidence of English and foreign writers on this subject, in order to afford materials for discussion of the question in this society.

In speaking on any scientific subject before a learned society like this, it is always necessary to define our terms. No word, in my opinion, requires more to be strictly defined than the word Prostitution. For example, what end can Dr. Wardlaw's definition serve, who calls the first sexual connection of an unmarried girl, prostitution?

The most salient idea in the term Prostitution is, the granting by a woman of her favours for hire. But, although this is one part of the definition, it is not all, I believe, that is required. I think, that by a prostitute, is meant a woman who habitually, and with scarcely any distinction of persons, except for their ability to pay, gives what other women yield only from motives of affection or desire. Looked upon in this light, I believe that every lover of the race must deeply deplore the existence of a large class of women in society, who are, unwillingly or willingly, in the habit of selling those parts of their bodily functions, which are so nearly connected with all the higher affections of woman, and with the interests of children.

To give some idea of the extent to which prostitution is carried on in Europe, I may advert to a few statistical facts. The Police administration of Paris had 4,232 persons enrolled on its books as prostitutes in 1854. London, with a population of 3,000,000, has probably about 12,000 prostitutes ; Turin, with a population of 140,000, has 700.

Causes of Prostitution.—The prime mover of prostitution is evidently the sex-appetite. This appetite is, like the law of gravitation, a constant force, which tends to produce certain effects, unless counteracted by other circumstances. To appreciate the intensity of this passion we have only to cast our eyes over the novels and light literature of all countries, or consult the poetical works of all nations, or, lastly, to observe their domestic institutions. Although, however, the sex-appetite is the prime mover to prostitution in both sexes, prostitution would not exist, in its present form, were it not for other circumstances which are at present painfully frequent in the midst of the most civilized countries. Few women would lead a life which is so much despised by their neighbours, were it not for certain peculiarities in the actual position of women, which force a certain number of them into prostitution.

Among the concomitant circumstances which prompt to prostitution are enumerated vanity, and the desire of wearing fine clothes ; idleness, domestic sorrow, and the unkind treatment of parents or step-parents, Puritanism, spirit-drinking, and, lastly, by far the most common antecedent, want of education and poverty, the prolific causes of so many of the evils of society.

M. Dupin, procureur-général, recently,—June 1865, in a discussion upon prostitution in the French Senate, speaks of *vanity* as one of the chief causes among the wealthier classes of Parisian prostitutes, as follows :—“ Is there any cause of prostitution more evident than the exaggeration of luxury, those excesses of toilette which throw the whole world off its balance ? La Fontaine, in one of his fables, laughs at the frog, which desired to make itself as large as the ox : but with the modern fashions the frog would succeed.
When a woman wishes to go to a ball and cut a figure there, without sufficient means, her vanity overcomes her. She fears to tell her husband, for the conjugal purse is empty. She, therefore, dresses on credit, and signs bills, for which endorsers must be found, and the coming due of which is always fatal to virtue.”

Puritanism is a frequent cause of prostitution in this country, and especially in Ireland and the United States. One slip made by a young woman is not easily passed by, and this, in many cases, renders prostitution the only resource. Among other occasional causes, especially in northern nations, must be reckoned the habit of *spirit-drinking*, one of the great debauchers of virtue and health.

Want of Education is a frequent antecedent of prostitution. Thus, of 4,470 girls, born in Paris and educated there, inscribed on the police lists of prostitutes, 2,332 could not sign their names, 1,780 signed badly, and only 110 well. In Bordeaux, of 105 prostitutes, only nine could sign their

names. In the capital of France, where education is gratuitous and eagerly sought for by all, from the difficulty of obtaining a living without it, this is a proof how little these poor girls had usually to thank their parents for. This want of education is also found in London; and it has been remarked that, in the poorest classes, a girl rises in social position by becoming a prostitute, so poor and uneducated are many of them.

Idleness, or the desire of procuring enjoyment without industry, is a cause of prostitution, as it is of many other social ills. The idleness of many women is, however, the result of the very poor remuneration they can obtain for their labour. It is well known that the Irish cottier is idle and indifferent when living in Ireland, with its detestable land customs, where no industry of his can do more than give him a scanty meal of potatoes; whilst the same Irish cottier, transported to America, becomes industrious, because his toil is adequately remunerated

Poverty.—Duchatelet observes: “Of all the causes of prostitution, particularly at Paris, there is none more frequent than the want of work, and poverty, inevitable effect of insufficient wages. What do our sewing-women, our shirt-makers, earn, and in general all who occupy themselves with the needle? Let us compare the gains of the ablest among them with those of the unskilful, and we can calculate whether it be possible for the latter to procure for themselves the necessary quantity of food; and let us compare the price of their labour with that of their dishonour, and we shall cease to be surprised that so many of them fall into a disorder, which we may even call inevitable. This state of matters tends unfortunately to increase in the actual state of society, on account of the usurpation by men of a great number of employments which it would be more suitable and more honourable for our sex to leave to women. Is it not

a shame to see at Paris thousands of men, in the prime of life, passing in cafés and warehouses the effeminate life that is suitable for women, occupied in cleansing a cup or measuring ribbons."

"At Hamburg," says Lippert, "as in all centres of commerce and industry, a girl can scarcely provide for her own necessities. A week of labour is less well remunerated than one act of condescension." These remarks are true, when applied to England, perhaps even more than to France. Thus, M. Léon Faucher observes, "Other things being equal, prostitution ought to be more frequent in London than in Paris, because in London the resources for young women are more limited. In all English towns men occupy the place of women: they preside over needlework, and serve behind the counter in shops, as well as in public establishments."

In an essay read before the Harveian Society, in 1865, I endeavoured to point out how the low wages of the working classes, caused by the enormous families so common among that class, especially among the rural labourers, was one of the most fruitful causes of crowding into towns and of the great prevalence of pulmonary consumption in our society. But prostitution is another of the consequences of the extremely low wages which so many women receive. In the sixth report of the medical officers to the Privy Council, there is a report by Dr. Edward Smith, "On the Food of the Labouring Classes," in which I find a table of the cost of food of various classes of English workpeople, as follows:—Silk-workers, 2s. 2½d. a week; needlewomen, 2s. 7d.; kid-glovers, 2s. 9d.; shoemakers, 2s. 7½d.; stocking-weavers, 2s. 6½d. Dr. Edward Smith, speaking of the needlewomen, observes: "This is the lowest paid class included in my inquiries. Their ordinary hours of work are from ten to twelve hours. The average weekly income was 3s. 11¼d. per adult."

Some authors have placed the *intense desire for sexual*

intercourse among the causes of prostitution. This, I think, is not strictly true. Such desire would lead to debauchery and licentiousness; but I doubt whether it would lead to prostitution as defined on setting out.

Decrease of Marriages.—On all sides, in our newspapers, &c., we hear complaints of the difficulty of obtaining husbands for young women. This difficulty has several causes; among which the most prominent are the growing fear among all the educated classes of bringing too many new beings into existence, in countries where the labour market is already so over-stocked; and, again, to the avowed or secret dislike of many to risking the whole of life upon the chances of a union from which the law of most countries has not as yet provided any *reputable* exit, except in Prussia and Indiana, U. S. Thus, in Paris, where divorce, with the power of marrying another person, is not permitted, Mr. Goodrich, in the *Westminster Review*, 1860, tells us that, “Although in the highest society of Paris, the avowed or reputed good character of the *woman* is as indispensable as elsewhere, there exists a large class of the Parisian world, where unmarried couples, and even couples cohabiting temporarily, are as well received as if they had submitted to both the ceremonies. This is especially the case in the theatrical world, and in the world closely connected with it—that of light literature.”

From 1796—1805, according to the Registrar-General, there were 1,716 marriages to 10,000 women; and from 1836—1845, only 1,533 marriages to 10,000. This fact is found to hold good for Hamburg and other continental towns.

These circumstances, at present, much favour prostitution, and (in England, at present) infanticide; a custom which Dr. Lankester has recently adverted to in the following terms, as reported in the *Morning Star*, November, 1865:—“England was spoken of as a nation of child murderers, and when Englishmen spoke of the crimes of other nations, the child

murders of their own country were thrown in their teeth. It was a very unhappy thing that this was so ; and, that it should be calculated that one out of every thirty women met with in the streets was a child murderer." In Hamburg, according to Dr. Lippert, in 1799 there was one marriage to 45 inhabitants ; and, in 1841, only one in 100. Formerly the proportion of illegitimate to legitimate births was as 1 to 16, it is now as 1 to 5.

Sir William Wyld tells us that, in Vienna, one out of two births is illegitimate ; that in Munich, in 1838, there were 270 more illegitimate than legitimate. In Sweden, according to Sanger, there were in 1838, 1,137 illegitimate children to 1,577 legitimate. And in Paris some authors say that one-third of the births are illegitimate.

Diseases of Prostitutes.—It is an interesting inquiry, what effect the various employments of mankind have upon the health of those occupied therein. In no case does the inquiry afford more food for reflection than in the case of prostitutes. In the days of asceticism, in the Middle Ages, when morality was based, not upon the greatest-happiness principle (which has been so elaborately illustrated and vindicated by J. S. Mill in his noble essay on *Utilitarianism*), but, as Bentham remarks, almost on the contradictory of this standard, it was presumed that the prostitute lived but a few years of sin and misery, and then died. This *à priori* view has not been found to be in unison with the facts. To sum up, what will be vouched for by observers in all cities, the health of prostitutes is above the present standard of female health ; the only diseases peculiar to that class being venereal diseases and itch. Thus Dr. Sanger, in his work on prostitution, p. 346, quotes Mr. Acton's speech at a London meeting, in which that gentleman said, " It was a popular error that these women died young, and made their exit from life in hospitals and poorhouses. The facts were not so. Women of that class were all picked lives, and dissipation did not usually

kill them. They lived a life of prostitution for two, three, or four years, and then either married, or got into some service or employment, and gradually became amalgamated with society. About one-fourth of the whole number amalgamated each year with the population." In Hamburg, in Brussels, in Paris, in Nantes, the same account is given of the health of the prostitutes. Could spirit-drinking become less frequent among our lower classes than it unfortunately is at present,—and the admirable efforts of Dr. Carpenter, Dr. Edward Smith, and others tend to cause it to be so,—the health of prostitutes would be very much higher in this country than it is even now. In Hamburg these women are reported as only drinking coffee, and in Paris they are never seen intoxicated.

With regard to the details of the diseases of this class, *hoarseness* is frequently observed among prostitutes, and has been ascribed chiefly to their frequent exposure to the atmosphere, when ill-clad; to their intemperate habits; and, in some few cases, to syphilitic affections of their vocal chords.

Obesity.—Duchatelet observes, "The stoutness of prostitutes and their brilliant health strikes all who behold them united in groups. We must attribute this to the number of warm baths they make use of, and to the abundant nourishment they procure. Indifferent for the future, eating at all hours, consuming more than any other women of the poorer classes, who have to toil hard for their living, rising at ten or eleven, why should they not take on fat? Everything would tend to show us that their trade is not so dangerous to health as many believe. . . . As some one has remarked to me, they have *bodies of iron*. If I compare the existence of these women with that of work-girls, accustomed to lead a sedentary life, and extenuate themselves with toil to provide for their necessities, the latter class seem to me more to be pitied than the former."

In Brussels, according to Dr. Marinus, "the health of the prostitutes is, thanks to their robust constitution, gene-

rally good, with the sole exception almost of venereal diseases." The editors of Parent Duchatelet's work, ed. 1859, say that the average number of days passed by a prostitute in hospital in Paris for ordinary diseases is two ; and for all diseases, including venereal ones, they pass on an average ten days each year in hospital.

Diseases of the Anus are remarked among some of these women, and are attributed to the unnatural habits which some of their vicious clients are accustomed to indulge in, especially in Paris and Italy. Such diseases are rare in London.

Tumours of the Labia majora are sometimes found filled with a fœtid honey-like fluid.

Abscesses of the Labia majora are common, and recto-vaginal fistula in girls of a scrofulous family.

There is nothing, as observed by Duchatelet, in the genitalia of prostitutes which generally would distinguish them from ordinary married women. Indeed, in one or two cases, prostitutes have pretended to be virgins, and it seems to have been difficult, even on medical inspection, to disprove this pretension of theirs. This must be remembered in medico-legal investigations.

Sterility of Prostitutes.—One of the most important facts in the picture of prostitution is the want of procreative power of prostitutes. Of this fact there cannot be the slightest doubt. Duchatelet says, ed. 1859, p. 217 : " It is generally recognized that prostitutes do not have children, or that, if they have any, it is only so small a number that they may be regarded as barren. . . . I find from inquiries that a thousand prostitutes scarcely furnish one birth per annum at Paris."

Madame Legrand, chief of the Maternity Hospital at Paris, stated that " there do not enter into the hospital more

than four or six prostitutes yearly. . . . These girls rarely have an easy labour, but usually require forceps. The children rarely live, often being still-born."—(*Ibid.*)

The above evidence, coupled with what I have heard from medical men in London, appears to me to be conclusive as to the comparative sterility of prostitutes. This fact is one of the most important in the phenomenon of prostitutes. Were it not for this sterility, there would either exist a far greater amount of infanticide than now obtains, or the workhouses would be overburdened by numbers of abandoned infants, so that the rate-payers of parishes would be even more severely taxed than they now are. This is the reason that prostitution is so frequent in all countries where over-population is so glaring an evil as in this.

The causes of the sterility of prostitutes are far, in my opinion, from having been sufficiently examined and made out. I presume that over-exercise of the sexual organs of the female must cause imperfect elaboration of the ovum, and other secretions necessary for impregnation, just as, in the male sex, the spermatozooids become fewer in number and less lively in those who are impotent, either from sexual excesses, from old age, or from abstinence. Again, the constant exercise of the female organs may cause a difficulty in the retention of the male fluid in the uterus. A certain number of cases of sterility among prostitutes must be attributable to inflammations of the os and cervix uteri, or of the whole body of the organ; or, again, to that obscure affection *ovaritis*. Retroflexion of the womb, again, may occasionally produce it.

According to Duchatelet, some of the prostitutes do not menstruate for three or four years at a time: the younger ones remain regular for some time, and then menstruation ceases in many cases. Those who, touched with repentance, enter the convent of the *Bon Pasteur*, are said to arrive there, almost without exception, with absence of the menstrual function. Among the younger ones, again, menorrhagia is

frequent, and has been known to be sometimes fatal. Syphilis causes abortions in some cases, and Boeck and others have found this to be most the case when much mercury has been used. The mortality of the children of prostitutes is excessive : almost all die within their first year.

Cancer of the womb was said by Lisfranc to be more common in prostitutes than among women in general ; but this is denied by Duchatelet, who says, ed. 1859, p. 236, "It results from what I have seen, that prostitutes are not exempt from cancer of the uterus ; but that this disease is rarer in them than we should be led to suppose from their occupation. What I have just said may be applied to the elongations, irritations, and inflammations of the cervix uteri. They are rarely affected by them I have too often seen cancer of the womb in old maids, to believe that it has anything to do with local irritation we know that it used to be very common in convents : and old physicians, who had the confidence of these establishments, and have given me the details, have been so persuaded of the good conduct of their patients, that they have attributed the frequency of these diseases to celibacy and infraction of nature's laws."

Dr. Lippert of Hamburg says, "Cancer of the womb occurred only once in my experience of eleven years at the general infirmary ; and cases of prolapse of the womb are very rare among the prostitutes in Hamburg."

Feebleness of intellect has been not unfrequently observed among the prostitutes in Paris. Twenty-one of their number entered the Salpêtrière lunatic wards in 1830. Erotic mania is not seen among them.

Hysteria, a disease admitted by all medical authorities to be very common among the generality of the female sex, appears to be almost unknown among prostitutes. This is vouched for by Parent Duchatelet in several parts of his

work, and also by Dr. Lippert of Hamburg, who says, "Convulsions are rarer among prostitutes than in the female sex in general, and of hysteria there is scarcely a trace."

M. Villermay, in his "Dictionnaire des Sciences Médicales," says, "It is assuredly true that absolute and involuntary abstinence is the most common cause of hysteria." Again, at a meeting of the Medico-Chirurgical Society, reported in the *Lancet* of February 14, 1859, Mr. Holmes Coote is reported to have said, "No doubt incontinence was a great sin; but the evils connected with continence were productive of far greater misery to society. Any person could bear witness to this, who had had experience in the wards of lunatic asylums." Again, Sir Benjamin Brodie, at the Birmingham Social Science Meeting, is reported to have said, in a discussion on prostitution, that "the evils of celibacy were so great, that he would not mention them; but that they quite equalled those of prostitution."

Dr. Copland, in his learned *Dictionary of Medicine*, has laid great stress on the production of leucorrhœa and dysmenorrhœa among single women of all classes by habits of solitary indulgence. In this view he has recently been corroborated by Mr. Baker Brown (*Lancet*, 1865). Among prostitutes confined in prisons this vice is said to be so universal that two of these women are never allowed to sleep in the same bed.

I should have imagined that every medical observer would have been ready to admit, from *à priori* reasons even, not to speak of clinical observations, that a life of abstinence from sexual exercise would be likely to produce grave diseases. Among the lower animals, I am informed that the males are apt to become rabid when excluded from the females. The disordered emotions of persons of both sexes who pass lives of voluntary or enforced celibacy, is a fact of every-day observation. Their bad temper, fretfulness, and excitability are proverbial.

But, as is usual in questions of such deep import to human

happiness as these, there is the greatest diversity of opinion on this point. Some authors, even, seem to consider all connection of the sexes opposed to longevity and health. Thus, Dr. Carpenter, in his *Manual of Physiology*, ed. 1856, p. 503, says, "It may be stated as a general law, prevailing equally in the vegetable and animal kingdom, that the development of the individual and the reproduction of the species stand in an inverse ratio to one another. We have seen that in many organized beings the death of the parent is necessary to the production of a new generation; and even, in numerous species of insects, it follows very rapidly upon sexual intercourse. It is a curious fact that insects, which usually die, the male almost immediately after the act of copulation, the female soon after the deposition of eggs, may be kept alive for many weeks, or even months, by simply preventing copulation: and there can be no doubt, that in the human race early death is by no means an unfrequent result of the excessive or premature exercise of the generative organs; and when this does not produce an immediately fatal result, it lays the foundation of future debility, that contributes to produce any form of disease to which there may be a constitutional predisposition, especially those of a scrofulous nature."

The truth contained in Dr. Carpenter's statement I presume is this, that excesses in sex-exercise are very frequent causes of disease in both sexes, although more especially in the male, as appears from the evidence already cited from Acton, Lippert, Duchatelet, and others. The error consists in that distinguished physiologist not appearing to perceive that, as Mr. Holmes Coote has so truly and boldly observed, continence causes far *greater* evils, at this time and in this country, than incontinence, as is seen in the frequency of hysterical convulsions and erotic and other mania, so common in our lunatic asylums. I can quite well understand a non-medical or clerical moralist not seeing this fact; because he is not in daily contact with the consequences of repressed emotions,

and, moreover, he is frequently biassed by a foregone conclusion, as in the case of such eminent advocates for celibacy as M. Comte, who was in favour of indissoluble marriage and the permanent chastity of widows and widowers, who were in his system not to marry again ; but I am unable to comprehend how the medical man, accustomed to hospital, dispensary, or private practice, can fail to perceive the truth of Mr. Holmes Coote's remarks. A gentleman, official in the Lunacy Board, has informed me that, in the histories of the cases of lunatics sent to the different asylums, solitary indulgence is constantly mentioned in the majority of the cases. Such are the evils of celibacy hinted at by Sir Benjamin Brodie ; but by no means well understood by men of science in general, from the extreme dread felt in all families with insane relatives to let the fact be known, in case it should be thought that the disease is hereditary. No wonder that Mr. Coote says that there are worse evils than prostitution.

VENEREAL DISEASES AND PROSTITUTION.

VENEREAL diseases are connected with prostitution in the same way that lead-colic is with the occupation of the painter. There are few diseases which give so much distress to adult human beings as the venereal ; although there can be no doubt that their severity has been greatly exaggerated in many cases—partly from ignorance, partly from interest, and not unfrequently from design.

“ Of all diseases,” says the benevolent Duchatelet (ed. 1859, p. 603), “ which affect the human race by contagion, and which bring the greatest misfortunes upon society, there are none graver, none more to be feared than syphilis. . . . Plagues, and in general all epidemics, terrify us, because they

strike at one instant a large number of victims, and because they deride the measures we oppose to them ; but they are all of them transitory ; long intervals generally separate their epochs of apparition, and the blows they strike fall by preference on the aged, and those whose feeble health will not allow of their hoping for length of days. Syphilis is amidst us, among our neighbours, and throughout the world. It does not kill at once, like many other diseases ; but this does not prevent the number of its victims being immense. Millions have been annually expended for the plague and yellow fever, and nothing to arrest the progress of the gravest and most frightful of plagues.”

This eloquent appeal of Duchatelet has produced the desired effect in France and other continental countries ; but it still might be said with much justice in this country and in the United States, where no efforts have as yet been made to arrest the evils produced by prostitution.

Dr. Holland, in an article in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, 1854, gives a calculation of the amount of venereal disease annually existing in Great Britain, placing it at about one million and a half cases. It has been said, also, that about 50,000 venereal cases are seen in London hospital practice in the course of a year, among the in and out-patients.

Mr. Acton, in a pamphlet written in 1851, says that 1 in 5 of the troops in Great Britain were affected in 1851, whilst only 1 in 200 of the Belgian troops were affected at the same epoch. Again, 1 in 7 in the English navy, and 1 in 3 in the merchant service were affected. Also, that about one half the cases of out-patients at St. Bartholomew's Hospital were venereal cases.

Dr. John Francis, of New York, says (Sanger, p. 666), “ Venereal diseases prevail to an alarming extent among the poor of this city. . . . Authorities believe that there is no vice among the unavoidable diseases, however prevalent, for the treatment of which the well-to-do citizens

of New York pay half as much as they pay to be relieved from the consequences of their illicit pleasures."

Such being the picture of these diseases in this country and the United States, let us glance at continental statistics.

Paris has three venereal hospitals—Midi, Lourcine, and St. Lazare; the first for men, the second for women, and the third for prostitutes under police control. The Midi has 336 beds, and about 100 out-patients daily; about 4,500 in-patients are treated there yearly. In the year 1854 occurred 34 deaths in this hospital; only two of these from stricture of the urethra—a very fatal surgical disease in all hospitals, and 90 per cent. of which are caused by gleet. The other 32 deaths were due to tertiary accidents,—adenitis, balanitis, buboes, indurated chancres, epididymitis, orchitis, phymosis, mucous-plates, roseola, syphilis, urethritis, and varicocele. From this we may observe how many deaths are, in the male sex, attributable to the diseases kept up by prostitution. The misery and bad health caused by stricture of the male urethra are not to be measured only by the number of deaths caused by this disease, which, as before said, is great among all classes. It is a curious fact, however, that, among prostitutes themselves, venereal diseases are very seldom the cause of death. In the St. Lazare hospital for prostitutes, with 193 beds, only 16 deaths took place in 1853. Of these, almost all were from ordinary non-venereal complaints. In the Lourcine hospital, again, with 276 beds for female venereal cases, in the year 1854 there was not a single death attributable to venereal diseases. This fact is true for London, Dublin, and Edinburgh; in the Lock hospitals of these towns death from syphilis is very rare among the women. The patients in the Lourcine, in 1854, suffered from abscess of the vulva, bubo, uterine catarrh, chancres, phlegmons, mucous tubercles, roseola, syphilis, ulcers, urethritis, vaginitis, and vulvitis; in all 1,358 cases.

The following account of prostitution in the French town of Nantes, by Dr. Baré, shows what can be accomplished for

the hygiene of contagious diseases by the activity, skill, and devotion of the medical staff. —(Duchatelet, ed. 1859.)

“Formerly,” says Dr. Baré, “from 1833-39, in the prison infirmary of Nantes, we could daily exhibit to our confrères forms of constitutional syphilis of the most various kinds. In one of these visits I remember our friend Lucas Championnière was astonished to find so many symptoms, which he rarely met with in Cullerier’s wards in Paris. What a contrast to the present state of matters! Here and there we indeed see syphilides, such as mucous-plates’ on the vulva or perinæum; but only in clandestine prostitutes, or on the unfortunate girls who are arrested in the course of a life of debauchery by the ravages of the venereal disease; or in foreign girls, arrested in a state of mendicity, and sent by me out of charity into the hospital. The only forms now remarked among girls regularly visited are chancres, vulvo-vaginitis, uterine catarrh, and some mucous tubercles. Buboës are rarely seen. Secondary symptoms, I repeat, are exceptions. *As to tertiary symptoms, I never see them nowadays.* Strange tale, or rather benefit of the wise forethought of our age! The prostitute, formerly so dangerous for her own health, uncleanly personage, whom none save those utterly careless of their health could be supposed to approach,—this prostitute, regularly inspected, may be frequented almost with impunity, certainly not occasioning the fifth part of the affections contracted either by the civil population or by the military.” Contrast this picture with what occurred in the Bicêtre hospital, in Paris, in the reign of Louis XV. In Parent Duchatelet, ed. 1859, t. ii. p. 15, we find the following:—“As only one hundred venereal patients were admitted to treatment at a time, and the treatment was only commenced at the beginning of every two months, during the long delay the disease made progress, new symptoms arose, the organs of generation were destroyed, some were attacked with gangrene, others by hospital fever, and death carried off a great number.”

Belgium is remarkable for the regulations with respect to prostitution and the spread of venereal disease. The perfection of the arrangements is shown in the fact that out of an army of 30,000 men there were less than 200 cases of disease in 1855. All classes of women are examined weekly in Brussels. Hamburg again, a town of 150,000 inhabitants, has 400 prostitutes, and Dr. Lippert reports that venereal diseases are now very mild there. In the month of December, 1854, there were, in the female venereal hospital, only eighteen cases, of which only six were venereal. Tertiary syphilis is rare. This is attributed to the good effects of weekly inspection of the prostitutes. At Lyons an esteemed and devoted physician, Dr. Munaret, established a special dispensary for these diseases in 1841. The town of Lyons now gives a small subscription to assist this dispensary. The comparative rarity of spirit-drinking in Paris aids the carrying out of hygienic measures for the prevention of the venereal contagion. A French gentleman thus writes to Dr. Sanger (Sanger, p. 661) : " One of the greatest aids to the Parisian police in the maintenance of public decency in this class is the fact that they do not use strong drinks. A drunken public woman is never seen. As liquor is the great debaucher of mankind, this fact strikes out a marked line of distinction between the class here and in England and the United States." My own observation, as far as it goes, would corroborate the writer's statement. I know of no more important social undertaking for the regeneration of the lower classes in this country than that which has for its object to induce them to abandon the dangerous vice of spirit-drinking.

The striking results above mentioned, favourable in so many respects, although not in all, from the serious interference they necessitate with the individual liberty of women, have been obtained, as is well known, by the system of the *Dispensary of Salubrity*, the first of which was established in Paris in 1802. This dispensary is under police regulation. In Paris there are ten physicians and two assistant-phy-

sicians, employed to examine all the prostitutes. Visits are made at the dispensary, where the isolated women go once a fortnight for examination, and at the tolerated houses, which are visited once a week. In 1854 no less than 155,807 examinations were made. These visits are made privately, only the patient and medical man being present in the chamber. In order to prevent the occurrence of prostitution at a very early age, *i. e.* from 12 to 16, a circumstance which, according to Ryan, is not at all unfrequent in London and our large towns, the police in Paris place such girls in a part of the St. Lazare prison until their parents are communicated with, and no inscription is permitted before the age of 16. This age is ascertained from legal documents. The tolerated houses are not allowed in certain localities in Paris, and only one of the inmates is allowed to walk the streets; the others are confined to the house.

In Brussels, with 161,826 inhabitants, the prostitutes are divided into four classes, the first three of which pay for examination, and the fourth do not. Sanitary regulations are enforced in all the houses. In 1842 a circular was issued by M. Vleminckx, chief of the army medical staff, of which the following are some of the heads:—

- “ 1. No venereal patient is to be treated in the casernes.
2. All who enter hospital are to be asked where they were infected.
3. They shall be punished if they will not tell.
4. Any soldier concealing his disease to be punished, but if he reveals it, nothing humiliating is to be done to him.
5. A close relation to be kept up between the army medical men and those of the town.”

We have already seen how these wise measures have almost purged the Belgian army of venereal diseases, still so common among our troops. Nothing can be more unjust than to keep a body of men, like our troops, in a state of enforced celibacy, and yet to permit the poor fellows to become a prey to the

diseases, which they are so certain to contract in the present state of public hygiene.

Dr. Boeck has informed me that in Christiania, a town of 38,000 inhabitants, the prostitutes are inscribed in the register of the officer of health of the town, and have a book given to them, which contains their name, age, &c. This must be given up at each visit to the dispensary. The medical inspectors inspect at least once a week. At the end of the visit they mention the day when the next visit is to take place, and the physician is required to give a gratuitous certificate of health to those who are healthy, and to send the diseased into hospital. In Hamburg, with 180,000 inhabitants, one of the regulations of police orders the keepers of tolerated houses to advise the women in their house to have nothing to do with any man who is diseased. Three medical men are required for the inspection in Hamburg. Were a like proportion required for London, with three millions of population, forty or fifty inspectors would be necessary.

In Berlin, a city of 300,000 inhabitants, there was formerly exhibited a great deal of puritanical zeal in putting down prostitution, without remembering the difficulties of the task. Dr. Behrend (Parent Duchatlet, ed. 1859) tells us that in 1840 there commenced petitions of the neighbouring proprietors, demanding the suppression of tolerated houses. In spite of all the police could say, the Government in 1844 decreed the suppression of these houses, and banished the inmates from Berlin. In consequence of this, not only was syphilis more frequent, but the gravity of the disease was augmented. Infamous habits were the fruits of the suppression. Venereal accidents at the anus were frequently observed, along with onanism. Illegitimate births were multiplied. The authorities were, therefore, obliged again to tolerate houses of prostitutes as before.

NOTWITHSTANDING the many advantages which we thus observe to have arisen to continental states, in regard to the lessening of the frequency and gravity of contagious venereal diseases, by means of police supervision of the prostitutes, there is much to be said against such police supervision. For my own part, I do not hesitate to assert, that I should be averse to seeing the liberty of the female sex in any way lessened, more than it is at present, unless it were clearly proved, which it has not yet been, that there is no other way of checking the spread of venereal contagion. No continental country has sufficient idea of the paramount importance of as much as possible maintaining inviolate the liberty of the individual, whether man or woman. As for the liberty, or rights of women, no *nation* has as yet had even the faintest idea of anything of the kind, having always kept women in the position in which the black race has until very lately been enthralled.

Duchatelet, for example, exclaims, "Will any one invoke in favour of prostitutes the liberty that all desire to possess, to do what he or she desires, the most precious of the rights of the citizen?" In another part of his work a French magistrate thus addresses the Chamber of Deputies:—"Do you not prosecute all games of hazard which are established on the highway? would you permit roulette to be carried on in the streets, and expose its glittering heaps of gold to the passers-by? Why, then, do you not keep out of sight by force the objects of a more deplorable passion—the picture of debauchery?"

One of the strongest arguments for police regulations is the following: it is used by a Strasburg physician:—"In cases of grave epidemics," says this gentleman, "we do not hesitate to employ exceptional measures, often violating the rights that belong to every one, for the sake of the common

safety ; yet, in face of a permanent epidemic, which not only costs enormous sums to Government, to the hospitals, and to private persons, but which undermines the constitution and weakens the entire race, it feels itself powerless. Should it be urged that in the case of epidemics no one can shelter himself from the influence of these, whilst the individual in the case of syphilis runs himself into the midst of the danger, this reasoning is valueless when the facts are inspected. It will some day become a telling argument, when society shall be composed of eunuchs, or when it shall be organized so as to permit of any young man having recourse to legal marriage at eighteen or twenty ; meanwhile we must take matters as they exist."

The arguments derived from the apparent incompatibility of police regulation of prostitution with the sacred rights of female liberty are left out of view in most of the French writers on the subject, although they are seen clearly by a few of them. They are well put by Sanger :—" Able writers," he says, " especially the continental, have forgotten to take into account the inherent and innate right which every woman has in her own person. Society has legislated only against woman, ignoring her rights—innate and external—to use her own person as she may think fit, so long as she commits no outrage on society." Again, Mrs. Mill, wife of Mr. J. S. Mill, in her essay on the " Enfranchisement of Women," shows what the most noble-minded and highly-educated women think of the disabilities under which their sex now labour, which are aggravated by such laws as those of police regulation of prostitutes. " The world is yet very young, and has just begun to cast off injustice. It is only now getting rid of monarchical despotism. It is only now getting rid of a feudal nobility. It is only now getting rid of disabilities on the ground of religion. It is only now beginning to treat any *men* as citizens except the rich, and favoured portions of the middle class. But of all relations, that between man and woman, being the nearest and most

intimate, and connected with the greatest number of strong emotions, was sure to be the last to throw off the old rule and receive the new ; for, in proportion to the strength of a feeling is the tenacity with which it clings to the forms and circumstances with which it has accidentally been associated."

The argument, then, against the police regulation of prostitution is chiefly to be based upon the extreme importance of in every way extending, instead of lessening, the liberty of women to use their industry and talents to the best advantage for themselves. There can be no doubt that this argument is an extremely telling one ; indeed, so strong is it, as to render it extremely improbable that the French system of *police* supervision will ever be established, either in this country or in the now *free* United States of America.

There are, doubtless, evils connected with the liberty of individuals, for example, in the recent case of Windham ; but these are but as dust in the balance, compared to the numerous abuses which arise, when the sacred principle of human liberty has once been violated. As Mr. Mill shows in his *Essay on Liberty*, Augustus enslaved Rome, and prepared the way for the demon Tiberius.

In this country, however, it is to be hoped that a great *social* effort may before long be made by the people, if not by the Government, to check the spread of venereal contagion ; and this might be accomplished by means of special officers of health being appointed by the various town-corporations, to inspect all prostitutes in their district, who were willing to submit, to send those with diseases into hospitals, where they should only be admitted on promising to remain until all fear of contagion was over ; and to give certificates of health to the rest, as is done in Christiania, with the only difference that, in this country, the inspection should be voluntary, not enforced by the police. The certificate of health would act as an inducement to prostitutes to seek the inspection.

Unfortunately, however, for such plans for lessening the sufferings which arise from the contagion of venereal diseases,

there is still a strong desire, avowed by some and secretly entertained by a greater number, to prevent any such sanitary measures. Thus, it is highly important to be acquainted with what has already been said by medical men, and not only by theologians, as to the propriety of such attempts.

In the debate on Mr. Acton's paper on "the Rarity and Mildness of Syphilis among the Belgian troops quartered in Brussels, as compared with its prevalence and severity among the Foot-guards in London," read before the Medico-Chirurgical Society (*Lancet*, February 25th, 1859), in which paper the author stated that out of 3,500 troops quartered at Brussels whilst he was there, there were only eleven men laid up with venereal complaints; whilst at that very time, out of 600 Fusilier Guards in London, there were no less than 64 cases. Mr. Holmes Coote, surgeon to Bartholomew's Hospital, is reported to have said that "he was much indebted to Mr. Acton for the bold manner in which he had brought the subject of his paper before them. It was proper to call diseases by their right names, and to present them in their true aspect to the public. The manner in which venereal diseases were spread in London at present was disgraceful to the legislature, and the remedies which had recently been suggested at meetings for its control were puerile and silly. Meetings were held and subscriptions raised, with the view of recovering girls from the streets, really to make vacancies for others. . . . The evils attendant on the spread of venereal diseases were most serious. He was constantly in the habit of seeing, at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, most respectable women, mothers of families, covered with various forms of venereal eruptions, who were compelled still to live with their husbands, and give birth to diseased or dead children. Evils such as these, and others equally grave, were permitted to exist, because, forsooth, we were so remarkably pious a people, that we could not take any legislative steps, which would appear to be sanctioning vice."

Mr. Solly, surgeon to St. Thomas's Hospital, is reported to

have said that, "far from regarding syphilis as an evil, he regarded it, on the contrary, as a blessing, and believed that it was inflicted by the Almighty to act as a restraint upon the indulgence of evil passions. Could the disease be extirpated, which he hoped it could not (marks of disapprobation), fornication would ride rampant through the land."

Mr. Solly's remarks show how strong is the pressure of opinoin in many quarters in this country against any attempts towards the prevention of venereal diseases, which are, with much truth, looked upon as one of the best methods of terrifying recusants into matrimony. It is, however, doubtful, whether this object is so beneficial as, at first sight, it might appear to enthusiastic but unscientific moralists. In Ireland, for example, where detestable land-customs and other causes have enabled the priesthood to have so much power over the peasantry, as to drive them, in most cases, into early and indissoluble marriage, the pauperism and abject condition of the people has long been a by-word throughout the civilized world, on account of the enormous influx of children that have been thus brought into existence, destined to starvation, or the sorrows of a life-long expatriation. In the ten years ending with 1856, the United Kingdom sent out 2,800,000 emigrants, and the *Times* newspaper, of April 20th, 1857, tells us that "the sister island must have, in the course of a few months, lost at least 1,500,000 by famine and emigration."

Sir Benjamin Brodie recommended early marriage as a remedy for prostitution, at the Birmingham Social Science meeting; but in this already over-peopled country, this advice, if followed, would only reduce the ill-paid labourer to the starvation level of the Hindoo or Irish cottier. It is only in France that early marriages seem possible, without much lowering the standard of comfort of the labouring class, since it is only in France that the question of the size of families seems ever to be considered. Once a couple are married in this country, as remarked by Mr. J. S. Mill, it seems

to be almost universally thought that prudence as to the numbers of their offspring is out of the question. Not so in France. The *Times* of April, 1857, remarks, "Who can wonder at the families of these people (the French peasants), and that they carry out to the letter the teachings of Malthus and Mill, and deliberately marry with the intention of having only one or two children, or none at all?" In this country, as yet, *à priori* views of providential interference, and other fallacies, seem to prevent all but the very few from seeing the great social error of engendering a numerous progeny, destined to grow up ill-educated, miserable, and to jostle each other in what Mr. Darwin calls the "struggle for existence." So little heed, indeed, is paid to this fact, that it has been observed by Mr. Mill, in his "Principles of Political Economy," that "whilst a man who is intemperate in drink is discountenanced and despised by all who profess to be moral people, it is one of the chief grounds made use of in appeals to the benevolent that the applicant has a large family, and is unable to support them. Little advance," he adds, "can be expected in morality, until the producing of large families is looked upon in the same light as drunkenness, or any other physical excess; but, whilst the aristocracy and clergy are foremost to set the example of this species of incontinence, what can we expect from the poor?"

I should be quite ready to agree with Sir Benjamin Brodie's recommendation of early marriage as a remedy for prostitution; but only on condition of a far greater facility of divorce than at present obtains in any country, except, perhaps, in Prussia, and, as appears from *Fraser's Magazine* of January, 1866, is now the custom in Indiana, U.S. It appears that in 1864, according to the *Star* of November, 1865, there were 7,596 couples who applied for divorce in Prussia; and in Indiana, U.S., a recent law permits of divorce for incompatibility of temper alone, six months' notice being given by either party. Such a law would discou-

rage over-population, and probably abolish prostitution almost entirely. But, in addition to this, the sphere of women should be as far as possible extended, and they should be encouraged, as well as permitted, to attempt any trade and occupation they feel inclined for. Should they fail to compete with men in most trades, which is possible, it will be time enough to say that woman's only sphere is the domestic. The professions should of course be thrown open to educated women, as well as the trades to the others; and I can, for my part, see no reason why a woman should not succeed in many cases in the professions of law, divinity, or physic. Surgeons might then take a partner in practice, who might end by becoming their wives. I am glad that one lady has already set a good example, and that she has selected the noble profession of medicine as a field for her energies—the rest will follow.

Mrs. Mill, in the essay before quoted, observes, “ Numbers of women are wives and mothers only because there is no other career open to them; all other paths to independence are fenced round as the exclusive domain of the predominant section, scarcely any doors being left open to the dependent class, except such as all who can enter elsewhere disdainfully pass by. . . . When the reasons for excluding women from active life are stripped of their declamatory phrases, and reduced to the simple expression of a meaning, they seem to be mainly three. First, the incompatibility of active life with maternity, and with the cares of a household; secondly, its alleged hardening effect on the character; and, thirdly, the inexpediency of making any addition to the already excessive pressure of competition in every kind of professional or lucrative employment. The first, or maternity argument, is usually laid the most stress on, although it need hardly be said this reason, if it be one, can only apply to *mothers*. It is neither necessary nor just to make it imperative on women that they shall either be mothers or nothing; or that, if they have been mothers once, they shall be nothing else during the whole remainder of their lives. There is no inherent reason

or necessity that all women should voluntarily choose to devote their lives to one animal function and its consequences."

In summing up the results of the present inquiry into prostitution, we have found that the causes of the phenomenon are to be sought for in the sex-appetite, in idleness, the love of dress and luxury, in habits of drinking, in the decreasing number of marriages, and the stringency of the marriage laws in most countries; but above all, in the low wages and want of education of the female sex.

The health of prostitutes has been shown to be better than that of average women of their age; and in particular far more free from nervous diseases and hysteria, probably on account of the unrestrained enjoyment of the appetite of sex. The diseases they are most exposed to are sterility, venereal diseases, and itch.

Venereal diseases do not appear greatly to influence the longevity of prostitutes, since women do not suffer from stricture of the urethra, like men, who frequently die from this sequela of gleet; and syphilis, when not absurdly treated, as it used to be, is, in the great majority of cases, a mild disease, although in some few cases, and especially when foolishly treated, it is quite the contrary, and in rare cases may cause rapid death, like variola. . . . The foreign methods of regulating prostitution by means of police supervision have had, in France, Belgium, Hamburg, and Christiania, the effect of lessening greatly the severity and extent of venereal diseases in these localities. In some cases tertiary symptoms are said never to be seen. The English *laissez faire* system has certainly as yet nothing to boast of, since the spread of venereal diseases in civil, and especially in military and naval life, is exceedingly extensive. There have not as yet been any serious attempts made in this country to lessen the evils of prostitution, or combat the diseases it foments; since even the number of hospital beds in our towns has always been quite inadequate to the sufferers from this disease, who, when ill,

have been obliged to go on with their trade. In many hospitals venereal cases, however distressing, in *women*, are not admitted into the wards, although males equally affected are admitted. This is a disgrace as well to the humanity as to the intellect of the day.

“The practical conclusions I have drawn from the facts and opinions brought forward and discussed in this paper are, that we should not in this country desire to imitate too closely the system of police regulation of prostitution which obtains so generally in France, Belgium, &c., however excellent the results have been in limiting the spread of the disease, until we have tried means more suited to the manners of a free country. These plans are all interferences with the already over-restricted liberty of women, a liberty which stands in need, not of further repression, but of far greater extension. Instead of putting prostitutes under more stringent police supervision, I think society has no right to interfere with them unless they create a disturbance, or violate the laws of common decency, just as men would be interfered with under similar circumstances. A far greater attempt, however, should be made than has hitherto been made, to cure and to prevent the spread of the diseases parasitical on prostitution. To do this we should make calculations, as has been done in Paris, as to the number of beds requisite to accommodate women likely to be diseased in the course of a year, and admit them readily to these beds, in order that they may not spread contagion by continuing their trade when diseased. A number of medical inspectors—say 30 or 40 for London—should be appointed in two or three centres of the large towns to examine, once a week, all women who voluntarily presented themselves for examination, to send the diseased to hospital, or refuse them a certificate, and to give a certificate of health to the rest, as is done, according to Professor Boeck, in Christiania.

“The last part of the question is the social one; not, perhaps, the less medical on that account. It is essential that women should be allowed to follow any occupation they

have an inclination for. They should, therefore, be educated not only in domestic economy and accomplishments, but in science, which, as Mr. Herbert Spencer truly says, comprises almost all human knowledge. In addition to this they should be enfranchised, in order that their voice should be heard on questions which relate to their interests and existence. Prostitution will cease when poverty ceases to exist, and when the relation between the sexes has been more frequently discussed and better understood than it has hitherto been. In the mean time let us try to alleviate the condition of the prostitute, both for the sake of our common brotherhood with her, and because she is at present the focus of dangerous contagious diseases.

“Mr. President, I have had a difficult subject to treat,—one avoided by many, but soon I trust to be able to be discussed by all. If I have in the course of my remarks said anything that has offended any of my audience, I hope they will forgive me, and that they will combat any opinions they consider unpractical or erroneous. Discussion alone can elicit truth, I believe, in this many-sided question.”

Mr. R. W. Dunn said :—“Mr. President, I have listened with great pleasure to Dr. Drysdale’s able paper on this most important subject. Amongst the causes of prostitution I think he has omitted one,—namely, *seduction*. This is certainly in many cases the first step towards prostitution. There are in this, as there are in every other large city, a certain class of men who make a boast of how many girls they have seduced. For this class of men no kind of punishment can be too great. The law ought to compel them either to marry, or to allow the unfortunate girl enough money to live in a respectable manner; and if they refuse this, they should be punished severely in some other way. Society might do much to remedy the evil. It might refuse to admit within its pale any person who can be found to be a seducer. I agree completely with the author of the paper,

that the scarcity of employment for women, and the low rate of their wages, is another cause, particularly in this country, where there are so few trades or professions left open to women. Again, the great excess of the female population here causes the supply to exceed the demand for their work. All trades should be thrown open, therefore, to women, and their employment should be encouraged as much as possible. Emigration of women should also be encouraged to countries where there is a large excess of men. There is, however, another cause I think of prostitution,—namely, *nymphomania*. A great number of women, again, take to this calling as a matter of business, from the mere fact that they see other women walking about the streets dressed splendidly, whilst they, as respectable women, can scarcely obtain food on the miserable pittance they earn. For example, the poor work-girl, who has been sewing as fast as her fingers and strength will permit her at shirts or mantles, and earning perhaps a shilling or little more a day, as she returns home at night completely exhausted with toil, sees these gay, flaunting creatures in fine dresses, whilst she, poor girl, in her well-worn gown and boots, is perhaps suffering the pangs of hunger. She may, perhaps, too, have heard of the fabulous sums earned by some women by prostitution, more pounds, perhaps, in a day than she earns shillings in a week. Is not this a temptation we should all find it difficult to resist? Are we not all, more or less, envious of the better fortune of our neighbours? We should then endeavour to lower the wages of the prostitute. Let the women of England refuse to admit into society any man who is the known associate of such women.

“ In London, according to Dr. Drysdale’s paper, there are about 12,000 prostitutes. I think the number is underrated; but let us now ask what amount of hospital accommodation there is in this large metropolis for these women? I believe I overstate the amount when I say there are not in all the hospitals in London, Lock Hospital included, more

than 200 beds. Is this accommodation sufficient? I think not. What is the consequence if one of these unfortunate 12,000 women becomes diseased? If very fortunate she may get into hospital; but if the beds are full, what alternative has she? Why, she must either go into the workhouse, or become an out-door patient at some hospital or dispensary, or, perhaps, she may be able to afford to consult some private practitioner. But this class of women, we know, is very improvident, and cannot often afford either time or money. How are they then to live during the time they are diseased? Can they obtain employment of any kind? No; they are still obliged to follow their old calling, and by so doing propagate the disease to an immense extent. Any one who has visited the out-patient department of any large hospital or dispensary in London, must have been struck with the large number of venereal cases he sees; I think I might say that almost every second surgical case is venereal.

“I know that at the dispensary I am connected with the number of cases I see of this disease, yearly, is very great; and it constantly is coming before my mind how this evil can be remedied. The only way I can propose (and yet I dislike the idea of interfering with individual liberty) is that all prostitutes should be placed under police control for some years to come, at least until the present numerous venereal cases are gradually diminished in this country. I agree with Dr. Drysdale that medical men should be appointed in every large city to examine women; but I differ from him in that I think that instead of such examinations being voluntary, every public woman should be compelled by law to present herself for examination at least once in ten days. If upon examination any contagious disease was found, she should be sent immediately to the *Lock hospital*. Each district should have its own *Lock hospital*, and the medical men who examine the women in the district should also be the officers of the hospital. Women ought to be forced to remain in these hospitals until they are quite well, and during their

residence in hospital there would be time to try to reform them. A trade or business should be taught them, and those who cannot read and write should be taught to do so; and when they are cured, and leave hospital, some employment if possible should be sought out for them to prevent them from falling back upon their old trade. By such means, I think, much good might be done, and the dreadful scourge of venereal disease might be diminished in this country. What an amount of happiness this would produce, and what a saving to the country? How many unfortunate new-born infants might be saved from early death, or a life of misery?"

Dr. Tilbury Fox said:—"Mr. President, I rise merely to explain to the Society, that Dr. Lankester has informed me, that the observations reported to have emanated from him, as to the frequency of infanticide in London, were not his. He, Dr. Lankester, only quoted from a recent work of a French writer, an Abbé, who had pointed to the large number of cases of infanticide occurring in London. The words quoted were that author's, not his."

Mr. Holmes Cooté said:—"Mr. President, I acknowledge that I made use of the expressions which I am reported to have uttered at the Medical and Chirurgical Society on the occasion referred to, and I still entertain the opinion that there are worse evils appertaining to human weaknesses than prostitution. I happen to possess opportunities of witnessing the fact, that among the young there is no cause of insanity more common than indulgence in habits which I will not further particularize even in a medical society, but which are well known to result in the most complete bodily and mental prostration.

"Idleness and vanity may rank among the causes of prostitution in women; but occupation alone will not avail to prevent it. There is a peculiar condition of the mind when the passions become excited, and women thus affected seek

the opportunity of going astray. After a period of repose in a proper asylum, the mind recovers its equilibrium, and the patient returns to society ; but she is liable to relapse. This condition I have seen both among the married and unmarried.

“ With regard to the question of trying to check the spread of venereal disease, I say that which I said before the Venereal Commission,—namely, that, in my opinion, legislative enactments *are* required. Women should not be permitted to quit the hospitals partly cured. It is known that, at Portsmouth and other naval stations, they leave the wards and crowd down, still diseased, to meet the seamen of a ship just paid off. In the London hospitals they leave the wards at certain periods of the year, such as Christmas, for purposes of festivity.

“ With reference to men, it is impossible to institute any system of inspection. Even in public services such an order would lead to discontent, breaches of discipline, and concealment. Moreover, what classes are to be included in this inspection ? Is it to comprise officers ? But I quite approve of the inspection of all houses where prostitutes dwell, and of examination and registration of such women. The spread of venereal diseases is a very grave evil. It makes its appearance in houses where it never should be known, and falls upon the innocent young mother and her offspring. I am glad that the subject has been so fairly discussed before this learned Society, and that the members have the moral courage and philanthropy to grapple with the evil. My opinions are the same as those which I expressed at the Medico-Chirurgical Society in February, 1859, where, however, I heard from one or two of the members some statements on that occasion of an opposite character, which, to say the least, were startling.”

Mr. Acton said :—“ Mr. President, It gives me great pleasure to find that the author of this paper has taken up the subject of prostitution. That he has done so marks a great

progress in the question, since, a few years ago, it would not have been possible to bring this question before a society like that of the Harveian Society of London. The subject of prostitution cannot be too often discussed.

“ One of the recommendations I made to the Venereal Diseases Commission, when I gave my evidence there, was, that they should not attempt to go too fast. They should, I think, commence by attempting to make the army less over-run by venereal diseases, before they attempt any measures for restraining these diseases in civil life. If this suggestion be carried out for the army, I trust that it will be carried out efficiently, and not negligently ; for if well done, it cannot fail greatly to lessen the amount and gravity of venereal diseases in the service. With regard to examinations in civil life, I am not an advocate for indiscriminate examinations, such as are made in Paris.

“ For example, were such a case to happen in London as I am about to relate, there can be no doubt that the Puritan party, who are most opposed to any such prevention of venereal diseases, would raise such an outcry, that in all probability the practice would have to be given up. When I was in Paris some years ago, I visited the *dispensary* ; and was admitted to the examination of the prostitutes, which, as you know, is carried on to an immense extent. One of the patients examined was pronounced to be sound by the medical inspector. I said to him, ‘ Do you not think that that girl is a virgin ? ’ He replied, ‘ It is possible ; but that is not our business.’ It turned out, from inquiries that I made, that this girl had quarrelled with her mother, and had come at once to be enrolled as a prostitute, and to be examined. Now it almost seemed, as if Government were by this sanctioning this girl in taking to prostitution for a livelihood. I do not know what has become of her. She may have married a duke, or some person in high rank, for anything I know ; but, I repeat, such a thing occurring in London could not fail to excite the zeal of that portion of the

religious party who are at present sulkily acquiescent, but may be easily roused.

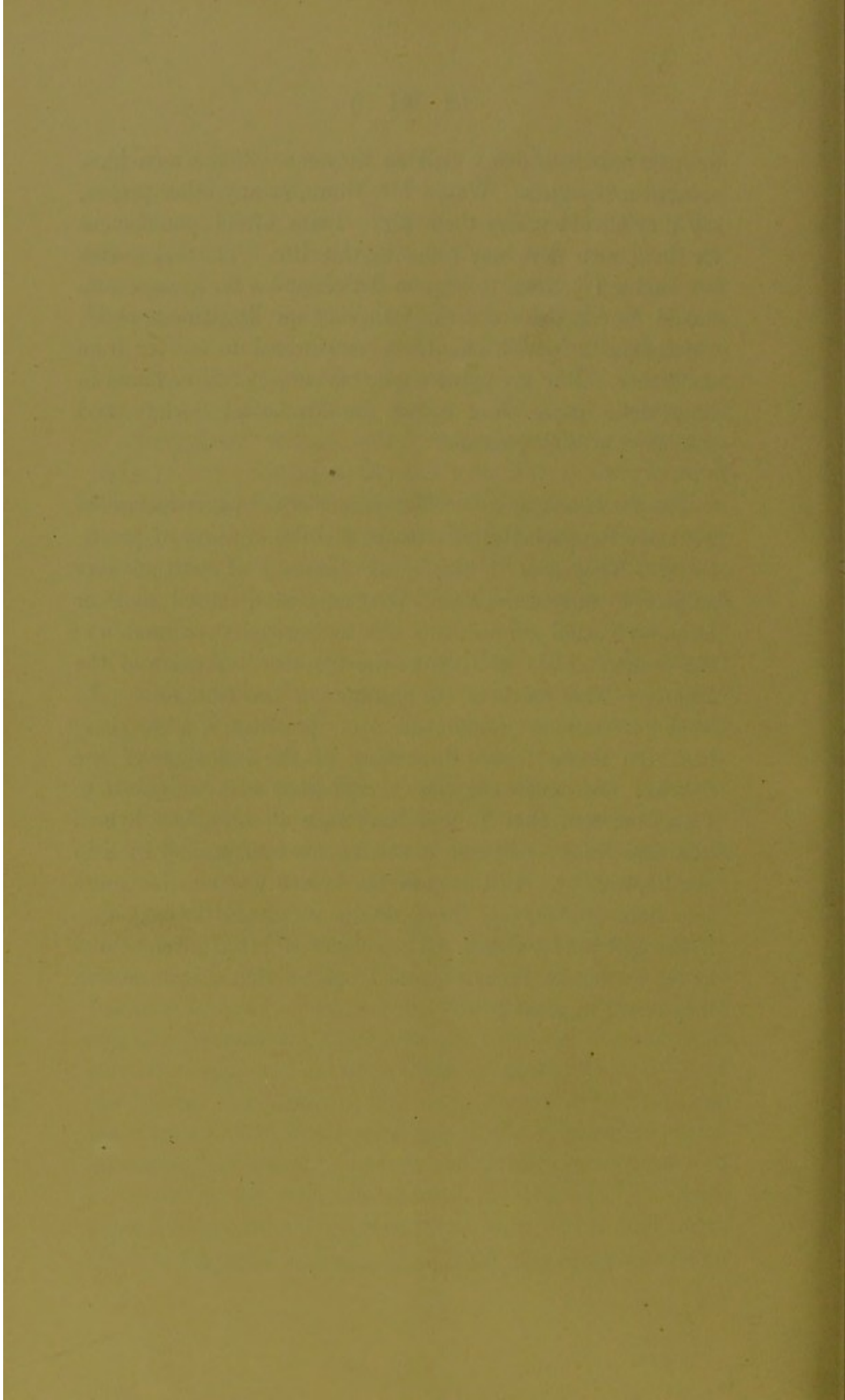
“Two or three questions have been mooted this evening with regard to prostitution, which I cannot quite coincide in. I cannot think that want of education alone, or poverty, can be such frequent causes of it as has been supposed. Thus, it is not low wages that causes prostitution, so much as the desire of getting money easily; a failing which, I think, is common to men as well as women. When a half-educated or ill-regulated woman sees that by prostitution she can make twenty guineas a day and wear fine clothes, I think there is not much wonder that she often prefers it to working. It appears, that in the streets of Melbourne, where every woman that wishes can earn a good living, prostitution is more rampant than it is even in London. Again, with regard to emigration, many of the women who have been lately sent out to Australia do not like working. It is a well-known fact, too, that in Paris the students do not so much take to mistresses who are idle; they prefer those who are earning good wages, in order not to have so much trouble with them. It is the temptation of living easily in most cases that conduces to prostitution; and, also, as Mr. Holmes Coote truly observes, in some cases the sexual passions are very strong in women. Whatever the virtuous portion of society may wish, prostitution will go on.

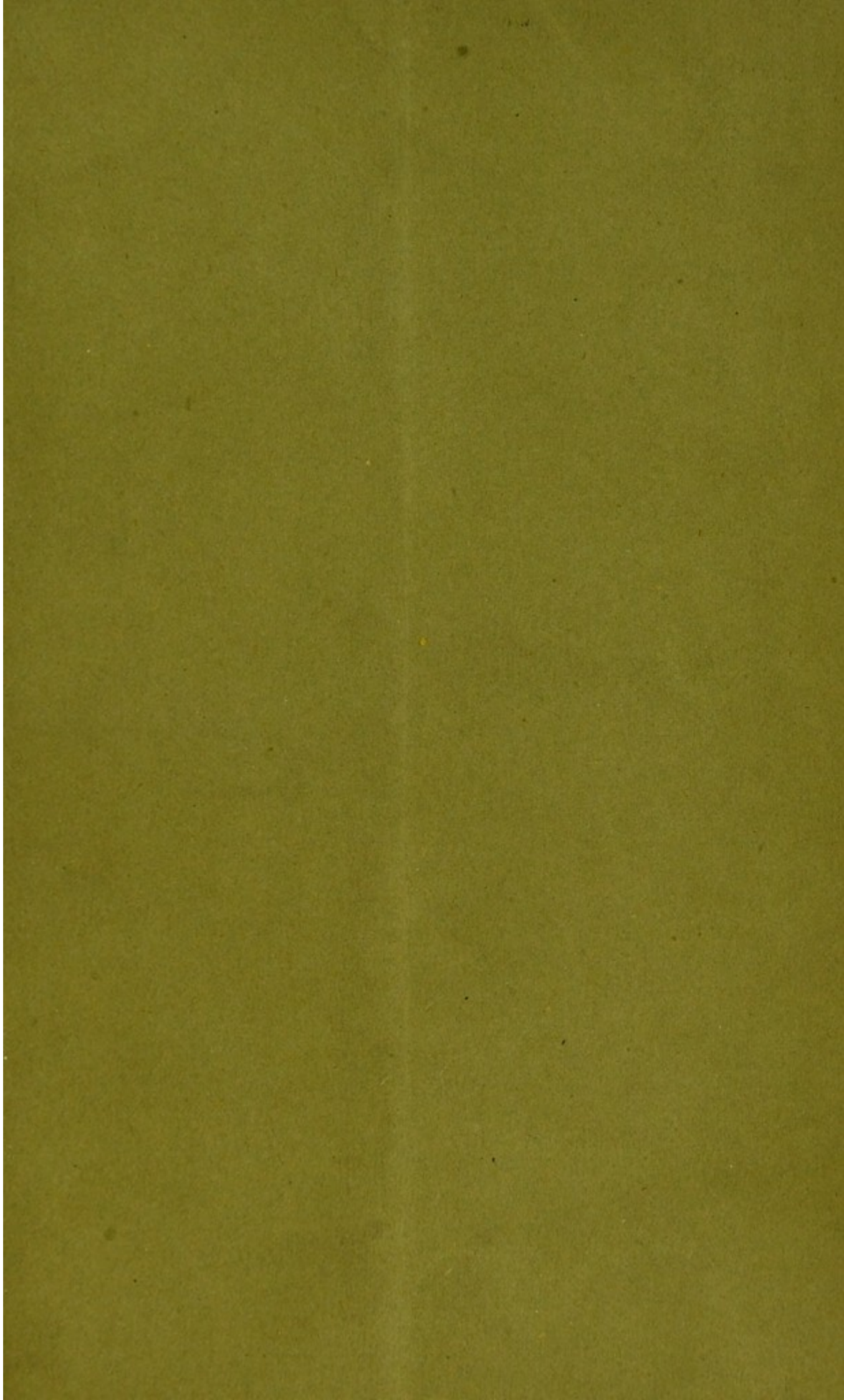
“Again, Mr. Dunn has spoken of seduction being a great crime, and no doubt this is true; but how are you to punish the man for this? I remember, when young in my medical career, accompanying a deputation, composed for the most part of clergymen, on the subject of prostitution, to Lord Brougham. On some of the party proposing to the noble lord that a still more stringent law should be passed to punish seduction, he replied, ‘But, are you certain, gentlemen, that it is always the *man* who seduces the *woman*?’ I quite agree that no sin can be greater than that which men about town are known to boast of, namely, the sedately sitting

down to seduce as many girls as they can. Some men have seduced many girls. Would Mr. Dunn, or any other person, say they should marry them all? I am afraid punishment for these men does not come in this life. The old parish law ought, I believe, to be remodelled, and a far greater sum should be exacted from the father of an illegitimate child, which sum the parish should be empowered to recover from the father. But my opinion on this subject will be found in detail in a paper read before the Statistical Society, and published in their journal."

The President said :—" The author of the paper has asked what are the pathological reasons for the sterility of prostitutes. They are, I think, as follows :—Prostitutes are subject to amenorrhœa and dysmenorrhœa, caused by their frequent sexual connection ; also to spasmodic contraction of the os and cervix uteri, from the frequent repetition of the orgasm. This prevents the entrance of the male fluid. In some *post-mortem* examinations of prostitutes, also, there has been found to be thickening of the indusium of the ovaries. Although not closely connected with the question, I may mention that I once have seen an unbroken hymen in a prostitute. She was a well-known woman, and lived in great splendour. In this case the hymen was elastic—quite like india-rubber, and the genitalia presented the aspect as if the girl were a virgin. The subject of prostitution cannot be too frequently discussed, and I believe that this discussion may result in great good."

THE END.





H. Heuer Smith Esq
with Dr. Dickson's
Compliment