

Prostitution dates, unhappily, from the earliest stages of human culture, and was a recognised institution in the times of the Jewish patriarchs. It was recognised in ancient Babylonia, Athens, and Rome, Christian Kings issued at various times, strenuous laws aiming at the suppression of the vice; Charlemagne was one of the earliest of these. In modern times various laws have been made to regulate and to suppress the vice, but all to no purpose, and often worse than useless. For example, "The Contagious Diseases Act" (an Act by which a system of inspection was established, and by which Magistrates were empowered to order the examination and detention in hospital of women suffering from contagious diseases), which was repealed in England, in 1866, operated unequally, and therefore unfairly, as between the sexes, it was degrading to women, and failed to limit or mitigate the evils which it was intended to mitigate, and did not lessen the consequences of those evils in the shape of venereal diseases.

No legislation is likely to improve the morals of the people, and so education is our main hope.

Immorality results from bad heredity, bad environment, and bad or defective education.

At the Portsmouth Conference held last year, Dr. Helen Wilson pointed out what an important part home conditions play as a cause of immorality; out of 165 consecutive cases in an institution for fallen girls, she found that in 60 the mother was dead, in 40 the mother was bad, and in 81 the father was dead or worthless. Again, in another series of 356 cases, investigated by her, she found that only 88, a quarter of the whole, had good homes.

At the same meeting, Dr. Skinner, of Sheffield, stated that our best line of attack on syphilis was to compel early treatment of those infected, and to improve the general state of morals by such educational methods as are best fitted to that end.

We must not forget that many people, including nurses and doctors, contract the disease innocently. The fact that the saliva of patients, in the secondary stage of the disease, conveys infection makes it important that all cases should be notified and segregated, for even cups and glasses used by them become sources of danger,

Hence you must all agree that in the interests of the community these cases should be not only isolated, but also thoroughly treated.

The Special Committee pointed out that the medical profession is concerned as a profession with the prevention of venereal disease, and cannot associate itself with the penalising of certain members of a sex which contains the minority of infected individuals, and who certainly are not the greatest cause of the syphilis prevalent in New Zealand. The only legislation now relating to the social evil is directed, not for the purpose of checking it or preventing the spread of the disease, but for the purpose of preventing disorder in public places and annoyance to neighbours. Thus the "Police Offences Act, 1908," imposes a punishment on any "Common prostitute," who, for the purpose of prostitution loiters or importunes passengers in a public place, or who behaves in a riotous or indecent manner in any such place. It also provides for the punishment of persons who have no lawful and visible means of support, or who habitually consort with reputed thieves or prostitutes. There are other provisions in the "Justices of the Peace Act," imposing punishment on persons who keep or assist in the Management of brothels, or who knowingly permit their premises to be used as brothels. It has been decided that a place in which only one woman receives her patrons is not a "brothel."

There is no legislation providing for the compulsory treatment of persons suffering from venereal disease, except in the case of persons voluntarily submitting themselves for treatment. Then they may be detained until they cease to be a menace to the public health. (Clause 19, Hospital and Charitable Institutions Amendment 1913, No. 56).

#### CONTROL.

This Committee recommends:—

(1). The provision of free treatment at all General Hospitals and Public Dispensaries; advice to be available at hours suitable for all classes of patients.

Beds should be provided in all General Hospitals for treatment of such disease, no reference being made to any wards as being Lock Wards.

(2). The control of the disease amongst