

III.—*Prevention and Elimination of Disease, Insanity, Drunkenness, and Crime.—A Suggestion.* By Rev. Henry Osborne, M.A., Belfast.

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Salus populi suprema lex.  
Privatum incommodum publico bono pensatur.

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I.—THE EVIL.

*Disease.*

There are diseases which are "caught," as the saying is; that is, induced upon an otherwise healthy person by infection, contagion, malaria, climatic influence, and such like. The germ theory has thrown much light on this class of diseases. Minute organisms are borne to us on the air in a way not well understood, and are received into the body. The vigorous constitution resists these germs, throws them off or destroys them. In the person naturally feeble, or enfeebled by age or other circumstances, the germs find a suitable lodgment or nidus, attack the organ for which they have preference; the result is a definite disease which runs its course, and the patient either recovers or succumbs, and death takes place.

Influenza and scarlatina may serve as examples of this class.

Medical skill fights these induced diseases by the use of suitable remedies, by careful nursing, by stimulating and reinforcing the powers of nature to overcome the poison.

But there are other diseases which are congenital, inborn, inherited from parents, grandparents and even remoter ancestors.

In these cases the inherited tendency may lie dormant more or less in the system for years; but will show itself when the coming to maturity or any other extra demand is made on the system. Consumption, for example, often gives little sign of its presence till the age of eighteen or twenty years; other diseases, such as cancer, appear later on, and at about the same time of life that the parent or the grandparent suffered from them.

These inherited diseases are the chief causes of suffering and of death. Sometimes the life is somewhat prolonged, but afflicted with daily distress; sometimes it is cut short just when the man is at the height of his usefulness, leaving behind him a legacy of delicate children unfit for the struggle of life.

These inherited tendencies and weaknesses of constitution, render the person more subject to the first-mentioned class, the casual or induced diseases. Such a one is more open to infection, less able to resist the attack of the microbes or disease-germs. Thus in both ways the person with congenital unsoundness is at a serious disadvantage.

The inherited diseases are by far the most disastrous. One has only to mention scrofula, consumption, cancer, mania, and melancholia to see how terrible a thing is the transmission to offspring of a morbid constitution. The ravages of such diseases are found in every rank of society, are the most appalling sights in the hospital,

are heart-rending in the hovels of the poor, and but little mitigated by the luxuries and appliances of the rich.

The inborn, inherited diseases and disease-tendencies may be set down as practically incurable. It is no disgrace to the medical profession that so little is done in the cure of such disorders; cure is impossible. The proverb is true that what is bred in the bone will not come out of the flesh. Even surgery, which has made much progress of late years, can only baffle for a time the deadly evil, and stave off for awhile the inevitable doom. The constitutional taint is sure to show itself and work out its certain mischief in the end.

As inherited disease is the chief cause of ill-health in the community, is the most disastrous, and is incurable by art of man, it would be wise to turn public attention from the eager search after cures which are not to be found to the only real remedy, which is prevention. Thus Koch's cure for consumption turns out to be no satisfactory cure at all. How much wiser and better if consumption could be prevented, or even largely prevented. Vaccination, though a clumsy means, and one that will probably be superseded as science advances, is so far in the right direction that it is an attempt to prevent small-pox. It may be taken for granted that the man of science as well as the ordinary citizen would a great deal rather see some system of prevention adopted than depend any longer on bewildering efforts at cure which in some cases is imperfect, in other cases, and those the worst of all, is impossible.

#### *Insanity, Imbecility, Epilepsy, Deaf-Muteism, etc.*

These, and even some other distressing maladies, may be grouped together. Whatever else may be said of these evils, there is no doubt they are generally inherited from progenitors, and that they will almost certainly be transmitted to offspring; that is sufficient for our purpose here.

Insanity, or an aberration much resembling mania, may be induced in both sexes, but specially in women, under certain well-known conditions. Intense mental excitement, strong emotion, and such like, have caused temporary alienation of mind. Some hope of recovery may be entertained in these cases; but as to congenital insanity, cure may be set down as impossible. In the cases of persons subject only to occasional fits of insanity, cure is, of course, attempted; but no one expects any great success by treatment. We keep these persons in asylums, but chiefly for their protection and our own; only occasionally are they restored to society and to health.

The education of idiots has been prosecuted with wonderful zeal and a small measure of success—too small to be considered of importance. We are not aware that deaf-mutes or epileptics have been successfully treated under any system, though much has been done in alleviation of their troubles.

Here is a large, and some say increasing class of maladies and miseries for which prevention alone affords any gleam of hope. These people, numbering many thousands, are withdrawn more or

less from self-support, and thrown a burden on relatives or society. Great wretchedness is endured in some cases for many years, and all this preventable, or preventable to so great an extent that cases of failure need hardly be reckoned.

#### *Drunkenness.*

Drunkenness, or alcoholism (as it is sometimes called), may be acquired by persons without any innate tendency that way. The private or social indulgence in doses of alcohol, doses that are generally increased, will pretty surely lead to inebriety. There is, however, a congenital tendency to alcoholism which is inherited like so much else. Even if the children of the drunkard do not show this liking, it will often appear in the grandchildren, according to a well-known law which is named atavism. Congenital drunkards have been known to struggle desperately with the appetite, but generally in vain; the inherited craving proves too powerful for such strength of will as they possess. They yield and form part of that social wreckage which is so distressing to contemplate. One very sad feature of this disease (for it is a kind of disease) is that it spoils often the brightest intellects and degrades the most generous hearts that beat among men.

Temperance reformers have been fighting this huge evil for many years, but not with the success which they desire and deserve. After an expenditure of immense energy and earnestness, directed by consummate organization and backed by large outlay of money the drink curse continues to desolate our homes and degrade our humanity. As with things that are more generally called disease, this evil, when inherited and inborn, seems to baffle all remedy and remain incurable.

Inebriate asylums and retreats were thought at first to offer a means of cure; but they are generally now resorted to rather in despair of any remedy than in hope of a successful issue. The teetotal pledge, *so long as it is kept*, secures against drunkenness, but does not cure the craving for drink; and, surely, to get behind the practice and eradicate the passion should be the main object of reformer and philanthropist. Bands of Hope, which are an effort to keep the young from learning to drink, are in the direction of prevention, and so far right and good; but the plan does not hinder the craving being felt as the youth grows to man, becomes his own master, and owner of the means of indulgence.

Here, then, as well as in disease, prevention should at least be earnestly attempted, a prevention which will go to the root of the matter in the physical constitution of men and women.

#### *Crime and Criminal Impulse.*

It is admitted that a person of normal constitution may commit a crime. In a moment of special weakness, after strong provocation, under stress of unusual temptation, a sound man may be hurried into the commission of some offence against person or property. Such cases have occurred, and will probably occur again. Besides, it is to be remembered that a large proportion of this casual

crime is committed under the bad excitement of drink, so that drunkenness and crime go much together, and whatever tends to lessen the one will lessen the other.

But it is well known to sociologists, scientists, and, indeed, to the general well-informed public, that criminals almost always show a special type of physical organization. The photographs of criminals, preserved in most prisons, are a revelation on this subject to those who have seen them for the first time. There is, in the large majority, a special shape of skull and facial angle, a physiognomy markedly different from that of good and healthy people. There is a stamp of power, ferocity, cunning, low animalism, and indulgence of the passions, which is quite noticeable even by ordinary observers.

Add to this the testimony of jail chaplains and jail governors and warders, that by far the most of criminals are of a low organization, deficient in the healthy balance of intellect, and swayed by ungovernable appetites and emotions. Add the further testimony of anthropologists who have visited and examined for this purpose the prisons of Europe and America; they are all convinced, and they give sufficient arguments to convince everybody, that most criminals are born with a criminal tendency, an impulse which only waits the occasion, often makes the occasion, to break out into actual crime.

We may say here, by way of parenthesis, that this statement is made not with any view to excuse such persons or exempt them from punishment. That we believe to be a spurious sympathy, and a social mistake.

Society must vindicate eternal justice by the punishment of criminals, and protect itself from their ravages either by their imprisonment or death. Our present purpose is to show what is now widely and generally understood, that there is a congenital taint and tendency to crime in most of the cases which come into the courts of assize or into the hands of the jailer.

This being so, the proper treatment of criminals has been a puzzle to sociologists and to practical statesmen. Every method has been tried, from the overdone kindness which is called "coddling," down to the severity of the silent system of seclusion, and the plank bed. The coddling, which treated the criminal to better food and more comforts than he could earn at his work, was satirized by the vigorous scorn of Thomas Carlyle. The opposite extreme which he recommended (not seriously), of shooting down all habitual criminals, has not yet been tried, and probably never will be.

Our social experience, then, goes to show that no system yet tried is successful in the *cure* of congenital criminality. Here, therefore, as in the points previously discussed, we are driven to seek our remedy in prevention, the only path which is not blocked, the only way-out which is at all promising.

## II.—THE REMEDY.

The remedy, as we have shown—the only practicable remedy—is prevention. This prevention will be found by forbidding the union

of unsound persons, and the consequent birth of unsound children. The prevention must be sought in a reform of the marriage law, and especially of the system of marriage licence. As the case now stands the law requires a marriage licence; but whatever else it may be good for, it is quite powerless to prevent the dreadful evils we have been considering. The scrofulous man can obtain a licence, and so entail on posterity an incalculable mischief. The consumptive girl can become a mother, and so perpetuate that fountain-head of family sorrow. The man with a disease which cannot be named in decent company may marry, and infuse into the veins of another generation the virus of the most awful and malignant maladies known to our hospitals and surgeons. Inebriates are allowed to transmit to offspring that craving which paralyses will, baffles moral restraint, and perpetuates the social curse of drunkenness. The insane may, in a lucid interval, marry, and so continue in the family a tendency to dangerous lunacy or moping melancholia. The habitual criminal, who deliberately chooses a life of fraud or violence, is allowed, when his term is up, to marry and entail on society the burdens of perpetuated violence and fraud; and all this by law and with the sanction of society and the State, which is thus ruined and desolated by its own ineptitude, its blindness to the sure working of physical cause and effect.

The remedy is to prevent the legal union of all persons physically or mentally unfit to produce a healthy offspring, and, what is worse, almost certain to perpetuate suffering and sorrow to future generations. The remedy is thus to gradually eliminate from the human constitution those diseases and morbid tendencies which we have seen to be incurable; to stop the further course of any mischief by refusing to allow it, so far as we can, to be transmitted to offspring, and thus secure, in the course of some time, the unspeakable blessings of health and soundness, the race gradually becoming purer and freer from disease, insanity, drunkenness, and crime. Surely this is an object worthy of the concentrated energy of all good men, of all whose eyes are open to the facts, who deplore the present abounding evils, and who desire to see the human race something near to what it ought to be in healthy stamina, in vigour of body and mind, in resulting happiness and comfort.

#### *State Interference Necessary.*

To eliminate from human society the diseases and other terrible evils mentioned above is one of the noblest aims of a just and beneficent social science. Every effort, therefore, is worth making to teach, enlighten, inform the public mind on so great a social necessity. But more than spread of knowledge is needed, more than the awakening of the people to a just alarm on the question. The enlightening and awakening of the public can be done through the press and pulpit, but the practical working-out of the remedy will require Imperial legislation. The difficulties in the way are so great and so special that without the aid and interference of the State, any immediate reform is impossible.

The individual conscience is not sufficiently awakened or enlightened; the individual taste is not sufficiently under the control of reason; the knowledge of natural science is not sufficiently diffused among the people to ensure right action if the people are left altogether to their own discretion. The evil is not seen, or felt, or realised as it ought to be. Even if it were, the inertia of society is hard to move; there is among us that strange, unaccountable apathy which hinders action and blocks the way of reform; a thing ever so detrimental and deadly is allowed to continue and work its ruinous effects simply because it has existed for a long time, and because the remedy proposed is something new and strange. Recourse must therefore be had, first to an enlightened public opinion, and then to State interference, to reform an abuse and evils which have quite too long afflicted and desolated human life.

Among wild animals the elimination of unfitness may be left to the cosmic struggle, the operation of natural forces; among men the matter cannot be safely so left; organised society must interfere. Statesmen and scientists are already aware of the facts here recounted—that disease and the other evils mentioned, some of them worse than ordinary disease, are transmitted to offspring; that they are disastrous and deadly; and that in most cases, in the present state of science, they are incurable. All this is or ought to be well known. It is also known that we have a marriage licence law in operation which is of no use in staying these plagues. The conclusion seems inevitable that the State must come to the rescue and in mere self-defence protect itself from evils which some individuals see and feel, but are powerless to prevent. Says a modern writer on ethics (Dr. Newman Smyth), “the facts of heredity justify the State in forbidding marriages which threaten to become sources of disease and crime.”

Before proceeding to outline our plan of reform we may notice an objection *in limine* made by Professor Huxley in his latest work. Among wild animals, as we have seen, the physically unfit are persecuted to death, and thus the race is kept healthy. Professor Huxley declares that human society is not ready for this. No; but we do not plead for extirpation of the unfit, but merely that they should not be allowed to propagate their unfitness. Professor Huxley also declares his opinion that no one could be found capable of selecting the fittest at the age of fourteen. Possibly not; but our contention is that in most cases a skilled man can be got quite competent to discern and reject the unfit.

#### *Plan of Marriage Licence.*

The following outline of a plan is here suggested for the consideration of statesmen, social science men, and the public generally.

A reformed marriage law shall ordain a system of marriage licence based on the physical facts here established, and calculated to prevent the transmission and perpetuation of disease and all unsoundness of mind or body. The licenser shall be a State official appointed by and responsible to the Government. The licenser shall in every case be a fully qualified physician. The licenser shall be

paid by the State a salary sufficient to make him independent of private practice and secure from undue influence. Although the salary cannot be equal to the income of a successful practitioner in a large town, yet there are many qualified men who would be glad of the certainty of a State paid salary, of the pension for old age, and the advantage of having their evenings and nights free and at their own disposal. The licenser shall have a district assigned to him large enough to keep him thoroughly occupied, with an allowance for travelling expenses, as in the case of civil servants of the Crown. In the district centres shall be arranged, with regular days and hours to meet with applicants for licence.

Applicants, both male and female, shall be examined by the licenser as applicants for life insurance are now, only with far more strictness, as the issues depending are far more important. The results and details of the examination shall be entered on a printed form which shall be filed for reference. These results and details shall not be disclosed to anyone by the licenser upon pain of dismissal from his office.

A marriage licence shall not be granted in such cases as the following:—Persons afflicted by malignant disease, or showing marked constitutional tendencies to malignant disease, or acquired physical taint, such as would be transmitted to offspring; inebriates, and all persons who have had *delirium tremens*, or are in the habit of excessive alcoholism; persons insane, or such as have insanity in the family; imbeciles, congenital deaf-mutes, and all such abnormalities as would be injuriously transmitted to offspring; all persons who have been justly convicted more than once of crimes against either person or property, and who have shown congenital criminal tendencies; all persons under age and physically immature; habitual and incorrigible paupers.

In all such cases a licence is to be refused, just as it is now refused to parties who are within the prohibited degrees of relationship. An applicant may apply again and be re-examined any time.

Should an applicant feel aggrieved, he or she may appeal to a court of three licensers, consisting of the licenser of the district, and two neighbouring licensers; the decision of this court, whether in confirmation or reversal, is to be final. The licence, when granted, shall be granted free of all cost to the applicant; also, in order that the licenser may have no personal pecuniary interest in granting it, he shall not be permitted to receive any fee or gift for himself.

#### *How the Licence System will work.*

Supposing the plan to be given a fair trial, and to be faithfully carried out, let us see how it will operate. The scientific, who understand the action of heredity, will have no difficulty in foreseeing the result; but it will appear plain enough to any person who reflects and uses his common sense.

The new system will not secure at first the union of persons perfectly sound and healthy, for few such exist at present, especially in large centres. But it will secure the union of the healthiest persons in the community, *and of these only.*

The offspring of these persons will (according to a well-known principle) be considerably in advance of the preceding generation in general development. They will be stronger and sounder both in body and mind. Thus even the second generation will be a great improvement on the one preceding; diseases and all morbid tendencies and constitutional taints will be considerably diminished.

The same system being carried on, and marriage permitted only to the sound, their offspring again will show a further advance in physique and general healthiness; so that by the time the third generation is reached an immense, an incalculable benefit will be realised. Consumption and scrofula would be largely eliminated. Cancer and epilepsy are less known in their nature and cause; but even they would be greatly lessened in virulence if not entirely got rid of. Hereditary alcoholism would come to an end. Drunkards might still be made by self-indulgence, but the inherited craving would cease. Congenital mental defects would cease to impair the usefulness of individuals and the happiness of families. Inborn criminal tendencies would be eradicated, and those are now the cause of, by far, the greatest number of crimes actually committed. Thus the blood of the race will grow purer and ever purer by the simple hindering of impure elements from flowing into it; sound health and happiness will become the general rule.

A further result of the system after it is some time in operation will be a decided diminution of pauperism, a pauperism which is one of the most obstinate of our social problems. It is true any man may become poor through his own fault or misfortune, or through the fault or misfortune of others; yet the qualities which make ordinary pauperism, such as improvidence, thriftlessness, self-indulgence and the like, are all connected with imperfect organisation, physical and mental; sound and healthy persons do not usually become paupers. This particular crux of our civilisation may be expected to be in large measure removed.

Another result of the system—the union of sound persons only—will be an increase in physical beauty. Whereas now a well-made man or handsome woman is a much admired rarity; then, at the second generation, there will be many such; and certainly at the third a healthy physical development will produce in both sexes forms and faces of loveliness and grace.

In other directions improvements will show themselves as time moves on, and heredity has scope to work in producing a normal healthy humanity. We may probably expect an increase in the musical ear and artistic eye. These are now attached frequently to unbalanced natures with consequent neurotic or morbid accompaniments; but then they would be part of a healthy organisation and all-round development, and would become general. The whole æsthetic sense, with its enjoyment of the beautiful, will be much heightened.

A result which will be readily foreseen by everyone is the increase of the general happiness; for happiness depends, we all know, more on physical health and soundness than on wealth or any other condition of life. But a further effect, which may not be anticipated

by many, will be the vast improvement in temper. Simply incalculable is the aggregate amount of personal and domestic misery endured by persons of irritable temper, and inflicted by them on those who are compelled to live with them. All disagreeable tempers, whether sour or sulky, melancholy or morose, are entirely caused by bad health and bad organization. In this direction alone the gain to human life and society will be immense. There will be moral effects also. Many vices which religion condemns and contends against are the result of bad organization; a prurience which hankers after forbidden things, and a feeble will which too easily yields to temptation. The *mens sana in corpore sano* is now but an ideal and a dream; but it will be realised in the gradual working out of evil through the union of sound persons only. Thus sobriety and chastity, and other virtues as well, will become much easier to practise.

### Objections.

The general objection at first sight will be, the thing is impracticable. But every social reform which the world is now enjoying was thought at first to be impracticable by wise people, and only when *tried* was then found practicable enough. However, let the objections be stated fully and fairly and in detail, with such answers appended as it is hoped will be satisfactory.

(1.) *Undue interference with the liberty of the individual.*—This objection has been brought against every reform in which the State has had a hand. The answer is simple and is two-fold:—The State must interfere with the liberty of the individual; and, the State has interfered already in many things, and in this very matter of marriage. The liberty of the individual must give way to the social necessity, “the greatest happiness of the greatest number.” The liberty of the individual cannot be allowed to injure the community as a whole. No man is to be permitted to scatter firebrands, arrows, and death, and then plead his liberty as a subject. No man is allowed to poison the air or water used by his neighbours. The unlimited right of an individual to marry and bring into the world diseased or depraved or insane offspring is no right—it is a grievous wrong to society. Therefore, if the individual has not the wisdom to see this, and the grace to refrain, he or she must be restrained by the will of the sovereign people, which is what is meant by the State. The debauchee must not be allowed to entail unspeakable miseries on legitimate offspring. The State cannot hinder sin, but it endeavours to hinder crime, and such an action is a crime against the community. The habitual criminal must not be allowed to perpetuate his malevolent habits and propensities. The scrofulous, the consumptive, and the insane, must be prevented from transmitting to a new generation evils which are practically incurable.

Again, the State has interfered with the liberty of individuals in many things, and in this very matter of marriage. Robinson Crusoe may exercise unlimited liberty of the individual because he is the only inhabitant. But society—that is, the living together of many—is impossible without certain restraints on individual practice.

The happiness of the general community is paramount; if, therefore, the individual stands opposed to that, and if his wish and will be injurious to the social whole, then the individual must be taught to yield and give way.

(2) *The hardship of disappointed affections.*—This is a sentimental objection which will touch the feelings of many; but the matter is much too serious to be ruled by sentiment. Society, while recognising that such feelings are laudable, simply cannot afford to let suffering and sorrow be entailed, a sorrow and suffering multiplied by the number that may come into the world tainted and imperfect. Experience of life reveals the fact that in multitudes of cases where two young persons have conceived an attachment, and have been prevented by circumstances from inter-marrying, no very tragical results follow; oftentimes, if they would confess the truth, they are not, in the end, displeased that the union never took place. Be that as it may, the first law of society is self-defence, and society in self-defence must endeavour to prevent the continuation and multiplication of diseased and incapable citizens. If at present an applicant for life insurance is rejected because he fails "to pass the doctor," no man of sense thinks it a *hardship*, however much he may wish the decision had been otherwise.

(3) *Illegal unions might be formed.*—Our first answer to this objection is that at present illegal unions are formed here and there, but without materially affecting one way or other the stamina of the nation. The general health and soundness of the people are determined by the condition of those born in wedlock, who are the overwhelming majority of the population.

Our second answer is that we do not believe any noticeable increase of illegal unions would take place. As things are now, we do not find that when a young couple are by circumstances hindered from marriage they immediately rush off and indemnify themselves by an illegal connection. Nothing of the kind takes place now; nothing of the kind will take place when the new arrangement is some time at work. Just at the first, when the system is quite new and strange, some erratic and excitable persons might yield to the impulse; but this conduct would not occur often enough to affect perceptibly the standard of health and soundness in the community.

(4) *Immorality or the "social evil" might be increased.*—We believe that on reflection this will be seen to be a groundless fear. They who practise that particular vice do so not because they are hindered from marrying. Such hindrance at least is not by any means the whole cause, for the vice is practised by the married as well as by the unmarried. Applicants for marriage licence are generally self-respecting persons, and are not at all likely to avenge their rejection and compensate themselves by plunging into a filthy and degrading immorality.

Be it remembered, also, that our concern here is with the production of a sound and healthy offspring; the "social evil" has little or no effect on this, because it is generally sterile, and adds nothing to the population. The fear, therefore, of increased immorality may be dismissed as not affecting the future of the race.

To the last two objections there is another answer. At the very worst, it is only just at the beginning of the system for the first years that there will be any probability of illegal unions or the "social evil" caused by refusals of licence. After the system has been in operation for a term the public health will be so much improved that few applicants for marriage licence would be rejected; year by year, as the system comes to be better known, not only will few applicants be rejected, but the beneficent working of the system will be recognised, admired, and consented to without a murmur, and the impulse to disobey will die out.

(5.) *There might be fewer marriages and a consequent diminution of the population.*—This objection also applies to the first twenty-five years or so. After the system has been in operation for a term the general soundness of the community will be increased so that license will be seldom refused. But during one generation the effect will certainly be to lessen the number of marriages, the unfit being rejected, and so to lessen the number of births. Our answer is again two-fold. First—Fewer children will be born; but then, those that will be born will live and come to maturity. At present the large death-rate in towns is due, as everyone knows, to the enormous mortality among children. Large families of unsound parents, bred in unhealthy conditions, are decimated by those infantile diseases which seem sent to rid the world of the feeble and unfit. Many are born, but few reared to manhood and womanhood. With a smaller selected parentage fewer children will come into being, but they will live and thrive, and form as effective a population for the duties of citizenship as those that now barely survive infantile diseases, and struggle on against constitutional infirmity. Secondly—Even if the population should be lessened (and it would be only somewhat lessened, and that only for the first years) who will pronounce that a great evil, when the pressure of population on the means of subsistence is so great? There are often a hundred and fifty applicants for a situation yielding a bare living. Every profession or trade is overcrowded; and in some of the Colonies it is becoming as difficult as at home to find remunerative employment. As for women, they are everywhere too many for the situations that are open to them. The strong and capable then will not be lessened in number at all, there will be decidedly fewer weaklings and incapables; but even if the general population should show a slight decrease, there would be enough still for the means of subsistence either at home or abroad.

(6.) *Even under the new system diseases would still occur.*—This remark is fair and just; but as we shall see, it is no valid objection. Be it remembered the system of license will not secure the union of the perfectly sound and healthy, for as already stated few such persons exist. Remember, also, that a constitutional taint will often be inherited from great-grandparents, and even from remoter ancestry. Also, there is the constant action of infection from abroad, of malaria, and changes of weather, of sedentary habits and of late hours in modern life, of unsanitary dwellings and unhealthy conditions generally. Under the action of these and many other

unfavourable forces, casual or induced diseases and abnormalisms may occur. With these medical science can battle more effectively than it can at present with the accumulated inherited maladies of many generations.

But now observe how the new system meets this difficulty. When persons cured of casual disease apply for license they will receive it. But if any are manifestly unsound in body or mind, with malformations or physical disabilities which would injure offspring, they will not be licensed, and so the evil will be estopped with their individual lives; it will not be propagated and perpetuated *ad infinitum* as it is now.

(7.) *The health of the people is improving under the present system by improved sanitation, &c.; why make any change?*—Statistics, perhaps, do show a slight improvement in the general health. Hygiene has been studied, and sanitary science has done something for the bettering of dwelling-houses. Health lectures and tracts have been employed to influence the general public; but all lament that so very little good has been effected. The progress is slight and deplorably slow. Meanwhile, unsound children come into the world by thousands, and these develop diseases which improved sanitation cannot cure or even alleviate. What can better sanitary conditions do for a person with tuberculous lungs, or with organic disease of the heart? What can it do for an imbecile or deaf-mute? What for a person who is a congenital drunkard or thief? By all means, let sanitation try to prevent those fevers and zymotic diseases which are found even in rural places, and commit fearful ravages in towns. But if we wait until improved dwelling-houses and hygiene produce a whole population with sound constitutions and healthy physique we shall have to wait a practically infinite time.

(8) *If the health of the people be so very much improved by the new method, then after the third generation there will be nothing left for the licensers to do in the way of prevention.*—The vigilance of the licensers will still be necessary to keep society from relapsing into the old condition of things. Casual diseases will still arise, as we have seen, and need to be estopped. The offspring of illegal unions which have been outside of the operation of the system will occasionally present the old forms of transmittable disease or bad organisation. The union of persons individually sound and healthy, but misadjusted to each other by consanguinity, temperament, or other causes may, according to a well-known law, produce imperfect offspring. The improvement which had cost so much to attain must not be lost, or even imperilled. Therefore, the new system of marriage licence, founded on science and all our best knowledge of human life, must be continued in full force, and administered strictly and faithfully.

(9) *The cost to the State of the new system of licence would be considerable.*—The answer is—the cost will be saved many times over owing to the diminished expenditure on the repression of crime, lunatic asylums, and workhouses. Crime, through judges, jailers, and police, costs the country an enormous sum, and we have seen that the great majority of criminals are persons of bad organisation,

which will be immensely lessened, and in the end wholly eliminated by the new system. The same is true of asylums for the insane, and of workhouses, these being necessitated by imperfect organisation. Both local and imperial taxation will be relieved by the operation of the new system so, that there will result a positive saving to the community on the whole.

(10) *The public mind is not ripe for the change, nor could any Government carry through any such measure.*—The public mind is ripe for any real reform when two things happen: when sufficient information on the point is spread throughout the community, and when the people have sufficiently considered the matter.

As to information, we have lectures and books on social science, but *the subject here treated has never got justice done to it.* Hygienic conferences have been held at various capitals in Europe and America, but none of the speakers, so far as we know, has referred in any effective way to this most important principle—the restriction of marriage to those only who are physically and mentally sound. Information is still needed; nothing, after all, can be done effectively in the way of social reform till the people are fully instructed as to the necessity; they must get their eyes opened to the physical facts, to the certain operation of the cause of so much suffering, and to the certain operation of the remedy here described, namely—the prevention of the propagation of disease. When public knowledge is sufficient the public mind will be ripe.

As for government, it is the curse of government by party that the party in power are always trying to keep in power, the others always trying to turn them out, thus time and energy which should be devoted to social improvements are wasted on party tactics. Nevertheless, whether with party government or in spite of it, great reforms have been accomplished, some of them in the teeth of prejudice and inflicting loss on certain classes. The West Indian slaves were emancipated at a cost of twenty millions sterling; women and children have been relieved of labour in coal mines; the 'Ten Hours' Factory Act was carried against the self-interests of a powerful class. Other reforms might be referred to in confirmation, but it is not necessary. Any government—that is, any administration—finds it difficult to carry a measure of social reform until the force of public opinion is so great that nothing can resist it.

It is maintained here that all our hygienic efforts are touching but a fringe of the great mass of suffering and sorrow, disease, pain, and early death, drunkenness, insanity, and crime. It is maintained that this flood of human misery can be prevented, and easily prevented by a firm, wise, and kind legislation as to marriage licence. When this conviction grows in Parliament as well as outside of it, party government will be obliged to become patriotic government, and come to the help of long-suffering humanity.

#### *Conclusion.*

Under the present social system marriage is permitted to persons quite unfit, physically or mentally, to produce sound and healthy offspring; say, rather, quite sure to produce offspring that are sickly

and unsound. What is the consequence? Let any good man and wise man think of it.

Think first of the millions of persons who come into being with a rickety, unseaworthy constitution. Their whole life, as Alexander Pope, the poet, said of his, "is one long disease." They are never well; they never know a day's pleasurable health; they have no animal spirits; they cannot *enjoy*; they drag out an existence which is a burden, perhaps, for many years, till kind death comes, the only and welcome release.

Why should this be so? It is sometimes called, very objectionably and thoughtlessly, "the will of Providence." The will of Providence, so far as we can discern it, is the health and happiness of every sentient creature. The normal, the ideal is the perfect balance and smooth working of every organ, that is to say, health, with its consequence, "animal gladness." Much of the present misery, therefore, is the effect, pure and simple, of human error, ignorance and sin; an error which society allows to be propagated and perpetuated, and multiplied by unrestricted marriage unions.

Think, again, of the many thousands who are born saddled and handicapped with some malignant distemper, some painful and horrible disease which baffles all medical skill, and is in truth incurable. Add to these people's sufferings the suffering endured by relatives. Try to sum up the unspeakable total of wretchedness known only to their immediate relatives and to their doctor; the ulcers and the running sores, the fits and spasms, the mental misery and insanity, the drunkenness or the criminal impulse which the man hates himself for yielding to;—add up all this, and much more than we have space to detail, and ask: Is there any reason in nature why this mass of sorrow and suffering should continue? Is there any necessity why on God's earth such a dark shadow should for ever rest?

If it is in the power of man to prevent it, does not every humane instinct demand that it be prevented? If we pause a little and reflect, we see that it is in man's power to prevent it to such a great extent that the face of human society would be blessedly changed. It is in our own power to effect this happy change by the exercise of self-denial and self-restraint; and without some self-denial and self-restraint virtue is impossible, nay, society itself is impossible. The greatest happiness of the greatest number is not only a principle of social science, it may become a demand of virtue and humanity. And, as we showed before, no persons in the community will be more benefited by the restraint and restriction than those very persons who will be denied marriage licence on account of un-sound constitution. Many a home is now blighted by disease and early deaths of members where nothing of the kind need have taken place.

In this reform science will be taking up its highest place as procuring the highest boon to man. For it is not by telegraphs and railways that science does its best work; it is not by increasing the wealth of the people, but by improving their health and happiness that knowledge will show its divine excellence and power. Science,

social and physical, will stand at the entrance-gate of life to prevent the coming into it of such multitudes as now come predestined to misery, and to be cause of misery to others.

Gradually, every twenty-five years or so, a purer blood will flow in human veins; a sounder and saner organisation will produce physical comfort and mental balance; families will be born robust and joyous; beauty of face and form will give a charm to society and all social intercourse; the musical voice and the artistic eye will be much more general than now; gaols, asylums, and workhouses will be much depleted; public virtue and private morals will be so enhanced as to gladden the heart of the religious and philanthropic.

As already indicated, casual diseases and sufferings, sins and sorrows, may still occur; they are incident to human life on this planet. But the greatest and most desolating maladies will be *eliminated*; maladies which we have too long endeavoured, and endeavoured vainly, to *cure*—they will be eliminated greatly, perhaps wholly, from human life.

What a contrast! Now the sigh of the weary goes up to heaven. The suicide, unable to bear the ills of life, wildly flings it away; the sickly go about with a secret burden that no sympathy can lighten. The inherited taint or tendency comes out now in this shape, now in that; the congenital drunkard reels; the maniac raves; the burglar toils in the hulks; the murderer swings on the gallows—all, or most of them, preventable sorrows, preventable if only people understood, if they would only think, if only reason and common sense ruled us instead of mere blind impulse and custom. So true it is, as Professor Huxley says, quoting from the Bible, "The people perish for lack of knowledge."

From this nightmare let us rouse and shake ourselves free. If a man should sleep now like one of the legendary sleepers of Ephesus, and wake some time hence in the regenerated society, here so imperfectly sketched; if he should see all around him men and women and children of fine physique, the bloom of beauty on every cheek, the joy of health in every home, and should ask: What is the meaning of all this? some bystander will inform him,—It is all the result of a simple reform which the State, backed up by public opinion, carried out many years ago. The diseased and deformed, the unsound and unhealthy, the drunkard and the criminal, were constrained to live and die single; only the soundest and strongest were allowed to marry and leave offspring; and lo! now you see around you on every hand the happy results.

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