

A GREAT SOCIAL EVIL.

Howard's View of the Vicious Life of New York and Other Cities.

The "Fall Mall Gazette's" Exposures and How Far They Apply to the Life of Every Great City—What Legislation Can Do.

[Howard's New York Letter.]

As human nature is pretty much the same in Philadelphia as in New York, in London as in Boston, I imagine you will not be particularly amazed to know that one leading periodical dealer in this city has received over a thousand orders for the four issues of the Fall Mall Gazette containing the infamous disclosures of infamy in English society, with which the civilized world has rung during the past week.

This publication will bring England face to face with a question that is as old as mankind, with which philosophers have struggled for hundreds of years, and that is the question of the best mode of legally controlling a great and common evil and confining its bad physical effects. This, in a country as free as ours, where there are in a city the size of New York not less than 70,000 vagrant children, of whom three-fifths are little girls between the ages of five and fifteen years, subject to no discipline, under the most baleful influences, open to every temptation, knowing nothing of a future, sick of the present and disgusted by the past, means much. You who are happy whose wives have been under suction over whom the gentle influences of affection and love have watched, ought to think a while of these bitter and friendless children of the poor.

There are sad mysteries under the surface of this gay world, lives over which the very shadow of death continually throws itself. The day is short, and the night is long; it will be a moment thought when we turn our heads upon our own that we have eased a few aching hearts and brought peace and new hope to the dark lives of some whom men had forgotten to cast out.

CRIME AND VAGRANCY.

Experience shows that often numbers of these poor children are ill clothed, so destitute that they are ashamed to peep in the door of a church even, still more to attend a school. Those who recognize the authority of a mother are often compelled to leave the streets. From the ranks of these children one low dance-houses are recruited. The more attractive of them are led without much temptation to the higher plains of degrading existence. The life of a rag-picker, a garbisher in the street soon wears off a girl's modesty and prepares her for worse occurrences.

They go from cabin to cabin, who seek out every cellar and in tenement houses, who stand at sickbeds and deathbeds administering consolation and advice, are discouraged by features they encounter on every turn, and they know not what to do. They become accustomed to scenes of misery and houses of morsuring are more natural to them than scenes of feasting. What are we to expect of children born in vagrant pigeon-holes who live in damp dark basements, half starved, wretchedly poor? Our authorities have done something, our industrial schools have done much, but the rock against which they all run, around which they can find no path over which they can't climb, is the soul of the system of laws, and the influence of a license system is plainly toward recognizing this offense as legal or permissible. It removes indirectly one of the safeguards of virtue. Perhaps the reduction ad absurdum in the relation of the State with a criminal class, and of the Church with the law-abiding class, as with the Berlin license laws twenty years ago.

According to these, in their final result, a license was never given to this business any more than to any other, except on the evidence of the person's having been "confirmed" or being a member of the State Church, that is a citizen! This classing, however, the trade with holding, or any other business, as a license, is not only in the least, so far as we have ever heard, to the woman, or save them from moral or mental degradation. On the contrary, the universal law of Providence that man or woman must live by labor, and that any unnatural substitute for it saps and weakens all power to withstand to this class in continental cities as much as to others. What doubt, too, wherever the Germanic races are not degree of legalizing this traffic can utterly do away with the public sentence of scorn against the female participants in it; and the contempt of the virtuous naturally depresses the vicious.

The "able-bodied woman" has a far greater chance of entry into France or Italy than into Germany, England or America. Still, the wise legislator, though regretting the depression which this public sentiment causes to the vicious classes, cannot but value it as a safeguard of virtue, and will be very cautious how he weakens it by legislation. There is, no doubt, force in the position that the non-license of these houses is in some degree a terror to the community, and the cautious and prudent are kept from the offense through fear of possible consequences.

LONDON AND BERLIN.

Bad as London is in this matter—not, however, so much through the effect of licensing as through want of proper street police—we do not believe there is so wide-spread a degradation among poor women in Berlin. New York is superior to any other great city in the Old World in the virtue of its laboring poor. Something of this, of course, is due to our superabundance of labor, but there is no degree of legalizing this traffic which can utterly do away with the public sentence of scorn against the female participants in it; and the contempt of the virtuous naturally depresses the vicious.

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CURIOS, USEFUL AND SCIENTIFIC.

Drinking water from wells near where people live is often contaminated with cholera, although apparently pure. An accident in a Melbourne foundry has led to the discovery that plumping iron castings into a mixture of treacle and water softens and becomes pliable to such a degree that it can be punched, bored and tapped as readily as wrought iron.

A Japanese inventor has discovered a means of making paper from seaweed. It is thick in texture, and from its transparency can be substituted for glass in windows, and when colored makes an excellent imitation of stained glass.

Dr. Henry Thompson, the eminent English physician, declares that there is no foundation whatever for the common notion that a man's mind, especially that of a physician, is a judge or an executioner. Influenced by this aspect of his duty, the medical man almost universally advocates licenses to evil doers, based on medical examination, and a strict legal control of the participants in this offense.

THE MEDICAL MAN'S VIEWS.

He is not to be blamed, wherever he thought that his sins had brought upon him his disease he would have very little occupation, and mankind would receive very little alleviation from the medical art. Nor is he even called upon to refuse to cure a patient who he knows will immediately begin again his evil courses. The physician is not a judge or an executioner. Influenced by this aspect of his duty, the medical man almost universally advocates licenses to evil doers, based on medical examination, and a strict legal control of the participants in this offense.

On the other hand, those who deal with the moral aspects of the case, and who know the class of sinners ruined, lost, and profoundly dreading of anything which the young should appear to legalize, or approve, or even recognize it. The worst evil is to the woman, and the worst element in that is moral rather than physical. The man has the tremendous responsibility on his soul of doing his part in bringing the pliable human being into the low depths of misery and moral degradation. He has also the moral responsibility which the Divine law of purity places on each individual, and the further burden of possibly causing disease hereafter to the innocent and virtuous. But the woman who pursues this as a business has sold out her soul to this world either of mental or moral health.

The class, as a class, are the most desperate and unfortunate which reformatory agencies ever touch. Now, any friend of the well-being of society, knowing the strength of men's passions and utter misery and degradation of these victims of them, will dread any public measure of legislation which will tend to widen the gulf between them for the sake of or to make this offense looked upon as permissible, or which will add to the number of these wretched women by diminishing the public and legal condemnation of their living lives.

THE EFFECT OF LICENSES.

Among the large class of poor and ignorant girls in a large city who are always just

on the line between virtue and vice, who can say how many more would be plunged into this abyss of misery by an apparent legal approval or recognition of this offense?—

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WASHINGTON LETTER.

Our Illustrated Weekly Letter From the National Capital.

Professor Frederick Widdows, the Bell-ringer of the Metropolitan Methodist Church—An Interesting Interview on Bells—A Chime Keyboard, Etc.

WASHINGTON, July 17.—Professor Frederick Widdows, the carillonneur of the New Orleans Exposition, and the finest chime ringer in the United States, has returned from the Crescent City to his home in this city, where he has been located for a decade or more. He has been in charge of the Metropolitan Methodist Church, over which Parson Newman was made to preside during the term of President Grant. During the Professor's absence at New Orleans the Metropolitan chime, the only one in the city, has been silent. Professor Widdows has been in charge of this chime ever since it was erected through the efforts of Mrs. Newman, who, by her own exertions, raised the \$7,500 necessary to purchase this chime and have it placed in the tower of the Metropolitan Church, a very large and costly structure erected by the Methodists of the country for the benefit of the Capital city.

"Yes," said the Professor to your correspondent, "I am glad to be back to Washington, though I was sorry to leave my bells behind me. They are the finest chime of bells I have ever seen, without exception."

FOREIGN LAWS.

The advocates of the license system would say, however, that such a hospital would not meet the evil, that law only can

separate the sickly from the healthy, and the only law which could accomplish this would be a strict system of license. The friend of public order, however, would urge that a wise legislator can not consider physician-being alone, but he must also consider the more important of laws, and the simple duties of humanity would be performed.

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