Reprinted from

The Masonic Observer

Devoted To The Interests of Masons and Masonry

Vol. 19 | MINNEAPOLIS, MINNESOTA, SATURDAY, DECEMBER 29, 1917 | No. 18

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CONTAGIOUS DISEASES

THE WORLD IN DANGER

The Following Correspondence and Comment Covers a Subject of Tremendous Importance to the World. Read Every Word.

Nov. 24, 1917.

War Dept.,
Washington, D. C.

ATTENTION SURGEON GENERAL.

Dear Sir:

Undoubtedly the medical examinations made of volunteer and drafted men to ascertain their fitness for service in the Army and Navy, disclosed among those rejected many cases of highly contagious diseases, especially venereal ailments.

We will greatly appreciate the courtesy if you will kindly advise us what steps, if any, have been taken in connection with the discovery of such cases to prevent their return to the communities from which they came, and remain there a continuing menace to all with whom they associate.

We have been unable to secure elsewhere, information of any kind on this very important subject, and felt that the thing to do was to go to Headquarters.

Thanking you in advance for the courtesy of a reply and any general knowledge you can furnish us in this connection.

Very truly yours,
MASONIC OBSERVER
(Signed) H. E. Soule,
PUBLISHER.

December 18, 1917.

From: Dr. Franklin Martin, Member of Advisory Commission.

To: Mr. H. E. Soule, The Masonic Observer, Minneapolis, Minn.

Subject: Venereal Disease among rejected men.

Your letter to the Surgeon General of November 24th, has been referred to this office by Major Wm. F. Snow.

This office is much interested in what you say regarding the danger of turning back into civil life men who have been rejected by the Army on account of venereal diseases. It is possible that some branch of the Government may later make special provision for the care of these men.

For the present, we suggest that it would be possible to reach a large proportion of these men by a vigorous attack by the various states on venereal disease as a public health problem. This attack would involve: First, the suppression of prostitution by the police; second, the reporting of venereal diseases by physicians; third, the isolation in private homes and public hospitals of all carriers of disease and compulsory, systematic treatment; and fourth, the establishment of venereal clinics.

I would suggest that you get in touch with Dr. H. M. Bracken, the Secretary of your Board of Health, and with the Social Hygiene Commission recently appointed by your Governor. You may be interested in a plan of educating the public regarding the seriousness of venereal disease which Dr. Bracken has recently adopted.

By direction of Dr. Franklin Martin.

H. H. Moore,
Executive Secretary,
Committee for Civilian Cooperation in Combatting Venereal Diseases.

IF A LEPER IS SUSPECTED IN ANY COMMUNITY, WHAT HAPPENS?

First of all, whoever is under suspicion is promptly quarantined, regardless of his poverty or wealth, his high or low station in life. Then comes thorough medical inspection to determine definitely whether the suspect is actually afflicted. If found a leper, isolation until cured, probably for life. Neither place nor power avails to save the leper from this fate.

WORSE THAN LEPERS boldly walk the streets of every city of our land unchallenged, thousands on thousands of them. They mingle with the heedless throngs in our public places and enter the sacred confines of our homes, unquestioned and unsuspected, a damning menace to our sons and daughters, to you and to me, for not all contamination comes because of sinful association; the innocent are exposed as well as the guilty.

EVERY SACRIFICE OF THE WAR, OF BLOOD OR TREASURE, will be well worth making, if by its lessons the eyes of the world are opened to the evils of venereal diseases which each year, even in times of peace, take a toll of deformed, maimed, blinded, disabled and dead greater than bullets, shell, bayonets and all other instruments of warfare combined have taken in any year since the mighty conflict started, or will take in any year however long it continues.

NATIONAL LAWS should be promptly enacted by our present congress, and STATE LAWS by every state in the Union, compelling those contaminated with venereal disease to report their condition to their local health officers immediately it is known, and making concealment a crime, with heavy penalties inflicted for failure to comply with such regulations.

ALL CASES SHOULD BE ISOLATED whenever even the remotest possibility of contagion exists and, whenever there is reasonable ground to believe that any particular case cannot be so treated as to remove danger to others from the diseased, he should be as thoroughly isolated as though he were indeed a leper of old.

IT MUST BE DONE if the world is to be made clean and fit to live in.

CRUEL, INHUMAN, BRUTAL treatment, you say. A thousand times no. This is the most kind, charitable and merciful plan that can be followed. Think of the old and young ruined for life by reason of our slackness and negligence in dealing with this evil, and of the millions yet to come whose lives will be worse than death itself if we drift along and shirk the responsibility of protecting them in the future, as we have in the past.

IF RAVENING WOLVES SEEK TO TEAR US DOWN, we do not hesitate to kill them. Most men, yes and women, diseased in this manner are utterly selfish and have less conscience than the snarling beasts that spring at our throats to make us their prey; they spare neither innocence nor virtue, and often glory in making others like themselves, so bitter are they against the world because of their own defiled condition.

DELAY MEANS DEATH FOR THOUSANDS, actual death, that for many sufferers seems to come as a mercy from God, or a living death that tempts the afflicted, as Job of old was tempted, to "Curse God and die."

ARE YOU A SLACKER? Too careless or indifferent to do anything to change these conditions until you yourself or your own children, the flesh of your flesh and bone of your bone, have become contaminated for life, and the scales pried loose from before your eyes by awful, personal experience?

THE NEW YEAR IS BEFORE US. Let us, with the help and guidance of God, see to it that now as never before our efforts shall be strong for all that will aid in the uplift of humanity Stand firm in your insistence that both State and Nation shall consider and correct the evils of venereal diseases and that, as steps in the way of progress, the saloon, FATHER OF DISEASE, DEATH, DISGRACE AND INIQUITY, and his lewd, filthy paramour, the house of ill fame, together bringing forth their children of misfortune into a world of sorrow, shall be forever wiped out of existence, that health, happiness and safety shall come to all the world, and eternal condemnation and shame shall be the portion of any who stand in the way of these reforms which must and shall be accomplished.

The following testimony, supplied by the Council of National Defense, is submitted for your thoughtful consideration.

SHALL VENEREAL DISEASE MENACE THE NATION?

The Council of National Defense urges public officers and citizens of the United States to employ every means possible in the repression of prostitution and the control of venereal disease, for the following reasons:

FIRST, because we must prevent such conditions as have developed in Europe since the beginning of the war.

(1) "The number of syphilitics in the army must certainly be several hundreds of thousands * * * Since the war began, a total equivalent of sixty divisions have been temporarily withdrawn from the fighting for venereal diseases." (Vienna report)—Journal of the American Medical Association, March 10, 1917, Vol. 68, No. 10, p. 814.

(2) "During the first eighteen months of war, one of the great powers had more men incapacitated for service by venereal disease contracted in the mobilization camps than in all the fighting on the front."—Social Hygiene, Vol. 3, No. 2 p. 205.

(3) In the war zone of France there has occurred an alarming increase of venereal disease both amongst the soldiers and the civilian population.—The Medical Officer (London) No. 499, March 3, 1917.

(4) "The failure of the * * * * Government to protect their soldiers from these evils (sexual vice and alcoholism) is the gravest error that the Government has committed; for these vices have proved more destructive to the * * * * people since August, 1914, than all the * * * * artillery, rifles, hand grenades, poisonous gases and fire blasts. Those killed by shot and shell transmit no poison to their families and descendants —the victims of alcohol and prostitution do."—From a letter by President Emeritus Charles W. Elliot of Harvard University quoted in The Survey of Sept. 8, 1917.

(5) "Thousands upon thousands are withdrawn from the fighting army for weeks. But they are not only missed as fighters, they also cause expense and great obstruction through their transportation back home and through the necessity of establishing hospitals for thousands who were not wounded by the enemy. They burden the doctors so necessary for the care of the wounded. * * * *

"But the very worst part of the venereal diseases is not the diseased condition immediately following infecting but the ailments frequently developing in later years, when the war is long past and the old infection already forgotten, and the transmission of the disease to the family after the return of the troops to their homes." Prof. Albert Neisser Frankfurter Zeitung, January, 1915.

SECOND, because serious conditions have already developed in the United States Army, due largely to conditions in civil communities.

(1) At one National Guard camp, 502 new cases of venereal disease were reported in one week. Official Bulletin No. 20, 1917, p. 6.

(2) At one national Army cantonment, many cases of venereal disease were detected soon after the men arrived in camp. It was found that most of these cases originated not in the camp or near the camp, but in civil communities from which the men came or through which they passed on the way to camp.

(3) "As soon as the order to mobilize went forth, the vice interests * * * * also began to mobilize their forces."—Social Hygiene, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 206.

(4) "In the case of all the troops on the border, a vastly larger proportion of venereal disease was contracted before reaching the border than was contracted afterwards."—Ibid, p. 220.

THIRD, because the War Department has asked our aid.

(1) "Our responsibility in this matter is not open to question. We cannot allow these young men * * * * to be surrounded by a vicious and demoralizing environment, nor can we leave anything undone which will protect them from unhealthy influences and crude forms of temptation." —Secretary of War Baker in his letter of May 26, 1917, to Governors of all states.

(2) "We are not going to be able to obtain the conditions necessary to the health and vitality of our soldiers, without the full co-operation of the local authorities in the cities and towns near which our camps are located or through which our soldiers will be passing in transit to other points."—Ibid.

FOURTH, because venereal diseases result in the infection of innocent women and children.

(1) "No disease has such a murderous influence upon the offspring as syphilis; no disease has such a destructive influence upon the health and procreative function in women as gonorrhea * * * Inherited syphilis constitutes a powerful factor in the degeneration of the race." Prince A. Morrow, M. D.; Social Diseases and Marriage, Chap. 1.

(2) "All previous war experience shows an increase of venereal disease * * * * When peace comes there is the danger of grave and widespread dissemination of these diseases. It is for that, that we must be prepared and there is no time to be lost."—Report of National Conference for Combatting Venereal Diseases (London). Social Hygiene, Vol. 3, No. 2, p. 235.

(3) "The cases of infection among the workers below twenty years of age have doubled but the age of the infected boys has fallen too, for even fifteen-year-old youngsters required medical attention." Dr. Moritz Oppenheim, Wiener Medizinische Wochenschrift.

FIFTH, because prostitution, especially commercialized prostitution, is unnecessary.

(1) "Sexual intercourse is not necessary to preserve health and manly vigor."—Moss: Manual of Military Training, Section 1466, p. 522.

(2) "There is no evidence that abstinence is inconsistent with the highest physical, mental and moral efficiency."—From statement signed by:

Walter B. Cannon, M. D., Professor of Physiology, Harvard University.

William H. Howell, M. D., Professor of Physiology, John Hopkins University.

William M. Polk, President of New York Academy of Medicine, and 355 other foremost medical authorities in the United States. —M. U. Exner, M. D.: The Physician's Answer. (Association Press, New York) pp. 14, 24-51.

SIXTH, because the "restricted district" and other attempts to regulate prostitution, have proved ineffective.

(1) The "restricted district" in Europe did not restrict prostitution.—Flexner: Prostitution in Europe. pp. 175-6.

(2) The "restricted district" in the United States has not proved successful.—See Reports of Chicago, Minneapolis, Syracuse, Philadelphia Vice Commissions and many others.

(3) Prostitution as conducted in a "restricted district" is a commercialized business whose promotors try to make all the money possible by increasing its volume.

(4) Medical examinations of prostitutes do not protect the patrons of prostitutes, because a prostitute may be free from disease at a given hour, receive a diseased man, and be able an hour later to transmit the germs of disease to a man not previously infected.

(5) There is absolutely no evidence to show that a restricted district prevents attacks upon the innocent.

SEVENTH, because repression is the only feasible method.

(1) "The only practical policy which presents itself in relation to this problem is a policy of absolute repression, and I am confident that in taking this course the War Department has placed itself in line with the best thought and practice which modern police experience has developed."—Secretary of War Baker in his letter of August 14, 1917, to Mayors and Sheriffs.

(2) "This policy involves, of course, constant vigilance on the part of the police, not only in eliminating regular houses of prostitution, but in checking the more or less clandestine class that walk the streets, and is apt to frequent lodging houses and hotels."—Ibid.

(3) "There must be constant repression of this curse on human society is the conclusion of this Commission after months of exhaustive study and investigation." —Report of the Chicago Vice Commission, p. 25.

(4) "Seventeen vice commissions, after complete surveys * * * * have agreed upon abolition of segregated vice and constant repression of vice."—Miner: The Slavery of Prostitution, p. 158.

EIGHTH, because it will be better to handle the situation locally and thus make military interference unnecessary.

(1) Commandants of camps may, if necessary, station a guard around immoral resorts to prevent soldiers from patronizing them.

(2) One Commandant issued orders forbidding all use of intoxicating liquor and all patronizing of immoral resorts. Every woman who got off a train was watched until her business was known. If necessary she was put out of the vicinity.—Social Hygiene, Vol. 3, No. 1, p. 155, also Association Men (New York) April, 1917, p. 379.

(3) "If places of bad repute spring up outside the 5-mile limit, but fairly accessible to the camp, I shall not hesitate to insist upon their elimination."—Secretary of War Baker in his letter of August 14, 1917, to Mayors and Sheriffs.

(Published by Committee for Civilian Co-operation in Combatting Venereal Diseases, Council of National Defense, Washington, D. C.)