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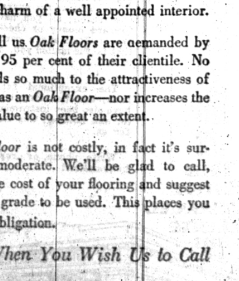
(Signed)

CHARLES PLUMSTEAD,
Village Treasurer.



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CHURCH TRAMP ARTICLES

(Editor's Note: This is one of a series of articles that appeared in the Detroit News-Tribune between the years 1909-1910. They were written by Henry Wood Booth, of Cranbrook, Bloomfield Hills, under the nom-de-plume of "Lais." Although we, perhaps, may not agree with all that "Lais" has written, still we believe them of sufficient value to be of interest to our readers to reproduce them in The Eccentric.)

NOVEMBER 17, 1907.

Lais Attends the National Purity Convention Held at Battle Creek, Michigan. Gives Some Account of It and Comments Thereon Characteristically.

Saturday, Nov. 2, I went to Battle Creek and spent two days at the National Purity convention which was in session there from Oct. 31 to Nov. 6. I arrived on the same train with Mr. Anthony Comstock, and we two went alone in the same carriage to the sanitarium. At the sanitarium I was given a seat at a table reserved for the notables. Mrs. Carrie Nation sat immediately at my left. She usually brought a handful of unopened letters with her, and as she opened them and looked at the contents—she never read one—she would hand out copies of her paper, The Hatchet. As she always insisted on writing her autograph, as she said, on every copy, in the presence of the person it was given to, and had a habit of continually losing her fountain pen, I was kept busy in keeping her supplied with new ones. I was also pleased to be able to render her other little assistances such as would naturally be rendered by any gentleman occupying the position I then did toward a lady of her distinction. Directly opposite me sat Judge Newcomer, of Chicago, and his very charming lady. Close by sat the venerable Dr. Lewis, of Plainfield, N. J.; the Rev. S. B. Shaw, of Chicago; Anthony Comstock, and about 20 others, the personnel changing somewhat at each of the six meals when I was present. I here heard subjects discussed and obtained information that did not come out on the platform of the congress.

I occupied a front seat in the Tabernace at the sessions of Saturday evening, Sunday afternoon and evening, and Monday morning. I went to the Central Church (Independent Congregational church on Sunday morning, and was present at morning prayer before breakfast in the sanitarium, twice. I then concluded we must try raiding the Purity Literature bureau and buying copies of every work on the subject of purity that seemed likely to be helpful to me in presenting it to the readers of The News-Tribune. I also obtained copies of The Shield, "the official organ of the British committee of the International Federation for the Abolition of State Regulaiton of Vice"; The Vigilance Record, "the organ of the National Vigilance association," both of London, Eng.; The Light, "published in the interest of the purity movement," at La Crosse, Wis.; The Purity Advocate, "devoted to the work of personal and social purity," published at Philadelphia, Pa.; The Purity Journal, organ of the National Purity Association of Chicago, published at Morton Park, Ill.; and, last but not least, Carrie Nation's The Hatchet, whose object is "To build up the good, and out the evil"—for all of which I intend to subscribe. I would say further I personally interviewed some of the more important delegates to the convention. I was much disappointed at not meeting my dear old friend, Bishop Fallows, of Chicago, who was to have presided over the great meeting of Sunday evening, but, for some reason, did not put in an appearance. Having thus accomplished the purpose of my visit, and finding The Detroit News very efficiently represented in the person of Miss Sara Moore, who had been present from the first and intended to stay until the last, I returned as I came, on the same train with Mr. Comstock.

The meeting of this convention marks an era in this establishment of a new reform. Twenty-five years ago there was but one purity society in the United States; now they have become so numerous that a national purity federation has been organized, and this convention was a result of it. The president of the federation, M. B. S. Steadwell, editor of The Light, was general organizer and manager of the whole affair. As most of the "presiding chairmen" advertised to conduct the different sessions failed to arrive in time, he was obliged to do their duties—and did them well. The speakers were a heterogeneous lot enough, and ranged from a grave and reverend doctor of divinity in a Roman collar and straight waistcoat to a liberal lady preacher in double gold-rimmed glasses, who defended the purity of Robert Ingersoll; from a dignified grand-duchess-looking lady in a rose-pink tailor-made London gown and a large ivory chain and cross about her neck, down to a "bar smasher" in a little black bonnet without feather or flower, in Oxford-gray coarse wool shawl, and the manners and speech of a Billingsgate fishwife. All sorts of remedies were not only presented but urged; one gentleman, Mr. Eugene Christian, "food expert and author of New York," going so far as to insist that if we would become chaste and continent we must throw away all our cooking apparatus and, I suppose, eat our beefsteak and potatoes raw—he certainly declared that nothing we do eat should be cooked.

The subjects discussed covered the whole career of man from the time of his conception to the time of his reception into the realms of bliss or misery. The following I extract from my notes of the speeches which I heard, and not from the program: 1. The character and physical health of fathers. 2. The effects of prenatal influences on mothers. 3. The care of infants. 4. The bringing up of children—early instruction in the "mysteries of life." 5. Schooling, and the influence of schools on the morals of their pupils—co-education. 6. Influence of pictures, books, amusements, games, dances, food, dress, etc., on the character of children. 7. Courtship and the amount of restraint to be imposed and liberty to be allowed the parties. 8. Marriage: should candidates be obliged to give evidence, and to submit to be physically examined, as to their fitness for matrimony, before being given a license? 9. What relation has the employment of women and girls in offices and factories—coupled with low wages—on the alarming increase of social vice and sexual disease? 10. To what extent is the use of alcohol, tobacco and drugs responsible for the same? 11. What can be done to restrict this awful sin and crime? 12. What is the best means that can be used to rescue girls from a life of sin and shame? 13. To what extent do venereal diseases prevail as a consequence of social impurity? 14. Are the wages of sexual sin always ultimately death?—that is, do the victims of these diseases always die sooner than they otherwise would? Can such diseases be absolutely cured?

As collateral subjects to the above, the following were frequently referred to and discussed: Equal suffrage necessary for securing women's rights; one moral standard, for women and men alike; race suicide; secret vice in the homes and girls; the white slave traffic; regulation of the social evil by segregation, enforced examination, license, etc.; the curfew; how fathers and mothers should instruct their children in sexology—is it necessary that they be so instructed; the corruption of children and youths by matter sent through the mails—how to guard against it; circumcision as a restrainer of desire and a protector against disease; knowledge alone not a sufficient protection against the temptations of the flesh; divorce; prudery and vice; cigarettes; the press and morals; etc., etc.

In approaching this great subject I come very delicately. I noticed at Battle Creek an air generally of the "Daniel come to judgment" sort. A good many of the speakers seemed to have a notion that the social evil is a recent discovery, a new disease just broke out, as it were; when all who read the bible and history know that it is the oldest sin of our race, excepting only murder; the sin which has always been most difficult to deal with, the sin for which the Almighty once destroyed all the inhabitants of the earth excepting eight by water, and the principal sin, I firmly believe, for which he will one day again destroy it by a consuming fire (2 Peter 3:7). Nevertheless, Christians are to "fight against sin, the flesh and the devil until their life's end;" and I for one am in the fight. I purpose, therefore, next week, and for a week or two more perhaps, to take up a few of the above subjects and discuss them—not all of them, nor half of them. There are some wise people among these purity advocates, but there are a few who need to be taught themselves. I am going to do my best to help them. They all mean well; but some of them do not seem to understand that they have embarked in a very peculiar reform, and if they do not handle it very carefully they are sure to do very much more harm than good. If curiosity only is excited in the minds of the young, if their imagination is set a-going without proper regulation, the last end is bound to be worse than the first.

NOVEMBER 24, 1907.

Prostitution—The Evil in Detroit—More Than a Thousand Professional Harlots in the Central Precinct Alone, All Under the "Protection" of the Police. Lais Interviews Police Headquarters On The Subject.

The National Purity Congress which has just closed its labors at Battle Creek has aroused public attention to the subject of social impurity throughout the land. Never before has this question been so vividly presented; and the people have come to see that it must be dealt with if the republic is to be saved from licentiousness as gross as that which prevailed in Sodom, or Babylon, or Corinth, or Rome in its very worst days. Prof. H. B. Favill, of Rush Medical college, Chicago, in a paper read before the Chicago Society of Social Hygiene, declared that "the greatest of world problems is the adjustment of sexual life to fundamental morality." Prof. Henderson, of the University of Chicago, and president of that society, in his opening address before the society at its last annual meeting said: "It is time for all those who value the national health and morality to unite in a reasonable, earnest and patient campaign for sexual purity. * * * There is no reason to be ashamed of any natural function, although time, place, company and manner must be carefully regarded in discussion and instruction. There may be impurity with a keen sense of shame, and there may be modesty with plain speech at suitable time and place."

With the above cited thoughts of Profs. Henderson and Favill on my mind, I sat down to get together material for this article. My first thoughts were about our own lovely city of Detroit—"Beautiful Detroit," as we are wont to call it—and so it is; which has a reputation everywhere of being such an unusually "clean city." But, how clean is it? If you would know if filth, consult the scavengers, ray the police and the doctors. So I turned up the "Forty-first Annual Report of the Metropolitan Police Commission to the Common Council," and the "Twenty-fifth Annual Report of the Board of Health." The first-named report supplied no information whatever regarding what is known as social evil, sin or crime. So far as the police report is concerned, one would think that there were not a house of shame or a common woman among the whole of our 500,000 inhabitants. The board of health report was but a very little better, a brief paragraph, of just seven lines, however, opened my eyes. It was headed "Regulations Governing Houses of Prostitution." I determined to probe deeper, and went over to police headquarters and personally interviewed Supt. Downey.

After I had explained the nature of my visit the superintendent said: "Yes, 25 years ago, you remember, when St. Louis undertook to license houses of ill-fame, there was a general feeling of opposition to that system around, and here in Detroit, attention being directed to the subject, it was determined to take the very opposite course. One of the best lawyers in the city, the late Mr. Conely, was superintendent, and under his direction the police undertook to drive out every bad woman and every bad house in the city. But, it was just like merely driving rats out of a cellar—they only infested other places. And here in Detroit the evil has become worse than it was at first. Since that time we have adopted a system which aims to minimize the evil, reduce it to the lowest proportions, and keep it where we can get at it. The present system is a development; it has been evolved out of the conditions and out of the experiences which we have had with it for now a quarter of a century."

On being asked, "What is the present system?" the superintendent proceeded: "In the first place," said he, "anyone may open such a place anywhere, providing the neighbors do not object. We neither oppose nor give permission. In fact, these people have no standing in society or law either. We deal with them on the ground of expediency, not on the ground of law—in accordance with the discretionary power which the police department has in certain cases. When a new place is opened the proprietor reports the fact to us here; and his name, or her name usually, with the location of the house and other particulars, are entered by the proper officer in a book that is kept for that purpose. Then, when every new girl arrives and takes up her residence in such house, the proprietor reports the fact to us, and a description of the girl is entered in another book kept for that purpose. We work with the proprietors and they work with us—it is to their interest to do so. Then, every two weeks, each one of these girls has to undergo a medical examination. The board of health requires every prostitute to furnish, once in two weeks, a physician's certificate showing her to be free from venereal disease. These certificates are collected by police officers detailed for the work. Whenever a prostitute is found ill with a communicable disease she is removed to a hospital and kept under treatment until she is no longer able to transmit disease."

I then asked about the number of houses and the number of inmates of such houses that are known to the police. But, just as I did so, Lieut. Frank Lewis, who has been on the force ever since 1882, came into the room and I was introduced to him. "Now," said Supt. Downey, "Lieut. Lewis has special charge of this work in the central precinct; he knows all about it, better than I do. If you go over with him he will show you the books and give you any other information you may require." So I thanked the superintendent for his courtesies and departed with the lieutenant, who at once went and fetched the books and placed them in my hand. The first was a list of houses of public prostitution which are situated in the central precinct alone and which are under the constant surveillance of the police department. Full particulars, including the proprietor's right name, with the street and house number, are given in every case. The central precinct runs to a point one mile north from the city hall—between Charlotte and Watson streets on Woodward—east to the center of Hastings, and west to the center of Fourth. It does not include the east side of Hastings nor anything east of it, nor the west side of Fourth nor anything west of it. In this portion of the city alone there are 138 recognized houses of prostitution. In another book are entered two separate lists, arranged alphabetically—one list beginning with the real surname, and the other beginning with the "sporting" surname of every girl; with the date when she began that life in Detroit, her age, her present residence and her home. None under 17 are allowed in these houses, and I saw none registered as being over 30; practically all are represented as being somewhere in the twenties. There are representatives of all countries, yet the great majority hail from small Michigan towns and Canada. The returns are all doubtless very nearly correct, because their continuance in the awful business in which they are engaged depends on their faithfully complying with the terms of their truce with the police. If they lie, or otherwise deceive the police as to who and what they are, they are liable to arrest at any moment as disorderly characters. Now, of these girls who behave themselves before folks, and do not go on the streets or public places in search of custom, I counted on the police books 1,088 in this one precinct alone. Lieut. Lewis estimates that outside of it there are at least three times as many more. And, remember, this has to do only with regular inmates of houses. God knows how many thus sin in private, many as mistresses of a certain class of rich men, and how many more, employed or not employed, as the case may be, in the daytime, there are who solicit men in ways that decent people would not think of. And yet many very good people fondly think the world is getting better. Paul said, "Evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse"—and that is just exactly what they are doing right here among us. And, remember, this is but one city, and that the same conditions prevail to a proportionate extent in every city and town of the land and that the farming population is by no means free from sexual sin.

The truth is, the devil has got decent people hoodwinked on this subject. They are afraid to talk about it; they are afraid to write about it. In fact, they are at a loss for allowable terms in which even to refer to it. The bible is recognized as a model of style and a standard by which to know good English, and yet there are numerous words that appear in all English versions of the bible that are tabooed by all editors of even the "wicked" Sunday newspapers. To the pure all things are pure, but to the impure nothing is pure. And no matter how carefully, how delicately, how modestly, how religiously one selects his language, and with what care and tenderness he chooses his words, there are sure to be some readers who will take offense and wish either that he had said it differently or that he had not said anything at all about it. My own opinion about the subject in hand is that it is like a nettle; handle it tenderly, handle it gingerly, touch it softly, and it will sting you, sure; but take hold of it firmly, grasp it vigorously, and it does no harm. We have arrived at a time when the question of social impurity must be discussed and dealt with. It can be let alone no longer. It is growing too fast. Its effects are too disastrous.

The thing that struck me as most objectionable in connection with the police regulation of social vice in this city is the enforced examination of inmates of the recognized houses. Mr. Raymond Robins, formerly superintendent of the municipal lodging house in Chicago, who knows more, probably, about the practical workings of different plans of regulating this nefarious business than any other man in the country, in an address to the Physicians' club of that city, Oct. 30, 1906, said: "Organized prostitution is one of the most fruitful forms of graft." Look at the nice little possibility of graft here. One thousand and eighty girls have to go to some Detroit physician every two weeks—26 times a year—and get from him a certificate, for which they pay of course, perhaps $2, perhaps more, for these girls usually have to pay double prices for everything, and this in addition to fees for regular attendance on the poor creatures, who are nearly always ill in other ways. The chances are that not half the physicians examine every time with thoroughness—just receiving the money and giving the required certificate—the girls regarding the payment as a sort of license fee. Think of it! Think of it, reader—$2,176 every fifteenth day—$56,576 of worse than tainted money every year!

Lieut. Lewis told me that the worst opposition the police have to contend with in dealing with this matter, and the reason why more stringent measures are not inaugurated, is, not only the indifference of the general public and of religious people in particular, but the downright persistent refusal of otherwise respectable doctors, lawyers, merchants and other business men to countenance or consent to the taking of any steps that will curtail their money-spending power. "You know fallen women as well as fallen men are good spenders of money," added he, naively. And then: "Let me give you a case. In the course of my duties I entered a certain house a few days ago and there saw an article of furniture exactly like one I had recently myself bought; the dealer telling me at the time that it was a sample and that there was not another like it in the city. But here was an exact duplicate. I asked madam where she bought it, and she named the very place where I bought mine. But she paid $2 for hers and I got mine for just half that price. Which explains why that particular merchant does "not believe in interfering with the demi monde"—thinks "they are a necessary evil"—"what cannot be cured must be endured," etc.

(con'd next week)

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