

any way that will itself serve merely to gratify emotions that are foul and base. In "Over the Teacups" Oliver Wendell Holmes discusses this matter in commenting on certain foul novels and foul pictures which have been held up to admiration because they are realistic; and he says well that "there is no subject, or hardly any, which may not be treated of at the proper time in the proper place by the fitting person for the right kind of listener or reader," but that these same subjects, which should and must be read when treated of by the physiologist or physician, "will outrage every sense of delicacy if put into highly colored paragraphs by some story-teller whose purpose is to startle rather than to instruct."

With this word of warning, I earnestly recommend serious study of the volume named above. I know of no volume that has recently appeared which would better repay that kind of careful study which is to result in action, and which the student intends thus to turn to account. Specific recommendations are made by the Vice Commission, with most of which I more than cordially agree. In particular I cordially commend the attitude of the Commission in its refusal to follow the time-worn practice of treating the woman's offense as infinitely degrading, mischievous, and wicked, and the same act by her partner as venial. All right-thinking men cordially agree, for instance, that laws should be passed putting responsibility for the care and support of the child of an unmarried mother upon the father until the child's majority, without arbitrarily limiting the amount he has to pay. We cordially agree that the ultimate aim should be not the regulation but the suppression of the evil. That the evil will never be wholly suppressed, just as murder, theft, and forgery will never be wholly suppressed, has no bearing on the question. We cordially agree with the Commission's emphatic protest against the fining system now in vogue in the courts as regards the unfortunate women brought before them. The Commission feels that old and hardened offenders should be sent to an industrial farm, with hospital accommodations, on an indeterminate sentence, while first offenders, instead of being fined or imprisoned,

THE CAUSE OF DECENCY

The Vice Commission of Chicago has made a notable contribution to the cause of morality and decency—in other words, it has notably helped the advance in good citizenship—by its study and recommendations submitted under the title of "The Social Evil in Chicago."

This volume is a very valuable contribution not merely to the study but to the remedy of what are, on the whole, the most distressing social conditions in our great cities. Such a book can only be melancholy reading. It is like any special treatise on the morbid anatomy of the mind, heart, or body of man. It is not well that such a treatise should be other than unpleasant to read, and it should be read only as a matter of duty; but to shirk reading it because it is unpleasant is just as foolish and, I may add, just as fundamentally immoral as to shirk reading the details of the struggle against cancer and consumption because these diseases also cannot be discussed from the standpoint of origin, actual condition, and remedy without arousing painful emotions. Too many good people actually rather plume themselves on adopting the attitude of Mr. Podsnap towards whatever is disagreeable, and think that they have done their duty by declining to consider the disagreeable facts. It is cowardice not to face the evil and try to remedy it; although I may add that it is loathsome, under pretense of effacing or destroying the evil, to deal with it in

should be placed on probation under the care of sympathetic and intelligent women officially connected with the department. Finally, we most emphatically agree with the solemn and indignant judgment passed by the Commission on the men who are responsible for the fall of the women. On the economic side of the question, a side of vast importance, the Commission speaks frankly and demands that the working-girl shall be given at least a living wage. The Commission asks and answers the question whether "the manager of one of our big department stores feels justified in paying a high school girl, who has served nearly one year as an inspector of sales, the beggarly wage of \$4 per week? What is the natural result of such an industrial condition? Dishonesty and immorality, not from choice, but necessity—in order *to live*. We can forgive the human frailty which yields to temptation under such conditions, but we cannot forgive the soulless corporation which arrests and prosecutes this girl—a first offender—when she takes some little articles for personal adornment."

It is a mistake of the gravest kind to believe that any moral question can be completely solved along purely economic lines: but it is an equally grave mistake not to recognize that no movement of moral reform can permanently avail unless it has the proper economic foundation. The corporation or individual capitalist paying a starvation wage to an employee, and especially to a woman employee, is guilty of iniquity, and is an enemy of morality, of religion, and of the State. Let us as a people face the fact that there must be a living wage for every employee; and that the employer who does not give it is a bad citizen.

The Commission emphasizes the need of refusing to allow people to marry who are physically, mentally, and morally unfit to take up the responsibilities of family life, and emphasizes the need of further State and Federal legislation to extend what has already been done by the so-called White Slave legislation. But the Commission recognizes that in addition to law there must be a change in the public conscience, and, especially, both a change in the attitude of the public towards the men who are chiefly respon-

sible for the traffic, and a change in the attitude of these men themselves. To them the Commission speaks as follows:

The end of the battle is not yet for those girls who struggle on alone and unprotected with their more pressing financial problems. The greatest menace is before her—the man. See her as he meets her at the door of her place of employment! See her as she returns to her cheap boarding-house! Huddled away among coarse and vulgar male companions, lonesome, underfed, and hungry—hungry not only for food, but for a decent shelter, for a home, for friends, for a sympathetic touch or word; tired from a hard day's toil even to the point of recklessness—starving for honest pleasures and amusements—and with what does she meet? The advances of men without either a spark of bravery or honor, who hunt as their unlawful prey this impoverished girl, this defenseless *child* of poverty, unprotected, unloved, and uncared for as she is plunged into the swirling, seething stream of humanity; the advances of men who are so low that they have lost even a sense of sportsmanship, and who seek as their game an underfed, a tired, and a lonely girl.

In closing this introduction the Commission desires to say one more word to those who support this business of women's souls, whether as barterers of the body, or those who demand the service—the Man. There is only one moral law—it is alike for men and women.

I do not believe that, on the whole, the world has grown worse: I believe it has grown better. The evil set forth by the Commission is very old; while the spirit in which its report is written would not have been understood even as late as a couple of generations ago. But the surest way to stop progress is to lull ourselves into supineness, whether by the cultivation of a flabby optimism, or of that refined shrinking from the sight or knowledge of evil and suffering which may itself be a very unpleasant form of vicious self-indulgence. The more hideous features of the social evil need drastic action. The average murderer is morally considerably better, and the average man guilty merely of manslaughter is infinitely better, than the hideous human brute who makes his living out of ruining young girls; and the law should punish this loathsome creature to the very limit that opinion will sustain. Second only to him in infamy comes the man who tramples the soul of his victim into mire, not to make money, it is true, but to gratify a bestiality which actually takes pride in the misery it causes. Then

come the mass of those whose sin is less, and may be due to any one of a thousand causes; and for these, men and women alike, there is work to be done in warning, in prevention, in redemption. A great deal can be done by law; and when this has been done, there will remain an immense amount which must be done in the field of opinion before it will be possible or desirable to go as far as law must ultimately go.

THEODORE ROOSEVELT.