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## STERILIZATION BILL

Question Discussed For Benefit of Public by an Expert.

(George A. Thacher)

In reading the denunciations of the sterilization law to be voted upon Tuesday I am impressed by the probable underlying motive, of which the protestants are, of course, unconscious. I have not heard any calm objections to the measure, though I have heard such heated ones as that the measure would be productive of criminality; that it is all rot; that it is an infamous measure, and that men and women will be railroaded to jail and the asylums by enemies to deprive them of the capacity of leaving descendants.

I don't think very much can be said for the way in which the law is drawn, but certainly no one can say truthfully that the courts will construe it as an instrument of private revenge, even indirectly, for that would make superintendents of asylums and jails as well as the Health Board, mere passive instruments. Public officers have a little care for their reputations, and even disreputable physicians do not take grave responsibilities and act arbitrarily without strong motives—usually mercenary.

The purpose of the law is simply to bar propagation of abnormal, insane and feeble-minded parents, whom the state, under present conditions, has to confine in institutions "after they have committed offenses on innocent persons." It seems to me that some of this overwhelming tenderness for the supposed desire of the abnormal to leave progeny (which probably never exists) might be transferred with profit to their victims, or to the taxpayer who may have some desires of his own about children. The sexually abnormal and weak-minded seek simply personal gratification, for it takes a normal person to be interested in posterity.

Society must deal kindly with the present generation of perverts, but why get into such a fury of sentiment about their increasing their kind? There have been half a dozen "Sadistic" murders in the Willamette Valley within some two years, and the perpetrators have never been caught, and there have doubtless been others where the victims' bodies have been destroyed by fire, for these perverts are the most cunning and clever criminals that live. Why not a little sympathy for the prospective victims in the next generation, for the Sadistic murderer of today, if he begets children, will beget his own kind.

There is another matter in which society professes to be interested, whether hypocritically or not, and that is commercial prostitution, which directly disseminates diseases that tend to destroy posterity as well as the participating individuals. It is safe to say that about one-half of the women in this profession are weak-minded, and their children will be like their mothers, thus providing recruits for the contamination of the business from which vicious men and women make big money. If the supply of feeble-minded women

could be cut off this problem of public health would be half-solved by that cutting off of the material. It's true that the majority of good people can't see any difference between commercial prostitution and irregular relations, but the distinction is very sharp and deep, and some day will be recognized.

Two weeks ago I had two requests to do something about a matron of a disorderly house whose family I know to be mentally degenerate and abnormal. Two young women, one of them engaged to be married, had been inveigled into this woman's place by partially false representations. This woman and her relatives are a problem. A sexualization would not interfere with their sexual life at all—and that is the end of life for them—but it would stop the breed with this generation. Language simply fails to describe what this family does in Portland in disseminating disease and in teaching boys and girls vicious sex habits. The Social Hygiene Society is an academic affair, contrasted with these women, who day after day for years have personally and as a business taught debauchery to the youth of the city. It is unnecessary to say that their descendants are engaged in the same profession, though some of them are too weak mentally to be active.

When I read a few days ago Colonel Wood's statement that this sterilization law was an "engine of tyranny and oppression" and that "it is rot," it brought vividly to mind a scene that I witnessed within a few months in a miserable hovel, practically without furniture, where a feeble-minded mother with her brood of feeble-minded children lived on the earnings of her prostitute daughter. This mother, being feeble-minded, had naturally mated with a disreputable, but she admitted that her second child was the son of herself and her brother. (Cases of this sort are fairly common with the feeble-minded as the police, the District Attorneys and social workers know, though it is not regarded as proper and polite for the public generally to know.) The daughter and breadwinner in this family is pretty and physically vigorous and while not yet 20 years old is a bigamist as well as a professional prostitute. There is a man in McNeil's Island on her account and two others have served terms in the penitentiary at Salem for exploiting her as a source of income.

To see this feeble-minded mother with her three feeble-minded children standing at the door of their hovel to see how much the daughter brought home from her "adventure," as I witnessed it, was a rather striking picture, which I shall not be able to forget. For some reason, talk about pride of posterity in families of that sort does not take hold of me. They can make their mark on society undoubtedly, as this family is doing, but it is a mark of disease, degeneracy and death, as well as expense to the community.

This daughter was examined by an alienist and is reported to be lacking in judgment and without will power. She is also very suggestible and as the physician

said, is bound to be the prey of the first person who attempts to use her. By the Binet test she is between 9 and 10 years old mentally and of course must go through life as a child, though physically mature.

Here is the question: It is "rot," as our eloquent fellow-townsmen says, to prevent, by an operation that is not serious and not disabling in any degree for personal enjoyment, such mothers and daughters and sons from propagating the race? Or shall we by high-flown appeals against tyranny and unusual punishment permit these poor creatures, who undoubtedly deserve our care and sympathy, if not our love, to be fruitful and multiply?

That is the question which the voters of Oregon are to decide at the polls on Tuesday. Of course, no law is perfect, and no officers of the law have perfect knowledge and judgement, but the making of law and its enforcement are none the less necessary.

I fancy that this law will be defeated, as it ought to be, if there is not a public sentiment behind it, but really the public ought to know something about the situation even if it is painful and shocking. If the people refuse to accept the verdict of the Legislature about as important a matter as this, then the people must dig in the slums and learn the facts about degeneracy and sexual perversion and what they cost in taxes for insane asylums, jails, homes for the feeble-minded and reformatories. Of course, if it is seriously believed that genius and madness and degeneracy are bound together, then it becomes a question of values and Mrs. Little and Colonel Wood and Dr. White and Judges Munly and Bloomfield are perhaps the best persons to say what the voters should do at the polls.—Oregonian.

## ALARMED AT OUTLOOK

Enos Ellis Votes With Majority Against Sterilization Act.

Editor Graphic:

If you kindly allow me space in your paper, I would like to submit to your readers my reason for the active part I took in the campaign opposing the Sterilization Act passed by the last legislature. Some of my friends have asked me for the reason of my action, and as I believe it right to give a reason for such matters as effect the general public, I will answer by saying that, the reason I opposed the Sterilization Act was that I considered it a pernicious piece of legislation and not in harmony with twentieth century ideas of prison reform. Some people do not stop to consider that such a law savors of barbarism and the time of Nero. Surely, if this is the proper method of dealing with degenerates and moral perverts, God would have so instructed his people in the days of Sodom and Gomorrah. There are reasons why some laws should be passed, and reasons why others should not be passed, or having been passed, should be set aside by the voice of the people. We have a law forbidding murder because people object to being murdered; we have a law forbidding theft, because people object to losing

property without any compensation therefor, and in the same way, we have not a sterilization law because the majority of people object to being sterilized, or object to such treatment for their friends who might happen to go wrong.

I believe there is such a thing as crime against criminals, and that society has no more right to commit a crime against criminals than criminals have to commit crime against society. The literature sent out by the Anti-Sterilization League appealed to my sympathies on behalf of the insane people. I, for one, am ready to champion the cause of the under dog, the man or woman who is down and out, who is behind the bars, who is kicked around by society, by the people who have conceived the idea that only the select few are fit to propagate the race. The proposed Sterilization Act was wrong, and for that reason was nullified by the people despite the endorsement of the W. C. T. U. And all the professed Christians this side of heaven could never make a crime against criminals less than a crime. Vicious laws sometimes work a hardship upon the innocent, as in the case of Daniel, Shadrach, Meshack and Abednego.

I can easily understand why the Eugenists favor sterilization. Such laws will naturally appeal to persons who operate breeding farms for the purpose of breeding human beings along the same lines as we breed cattle and hogs, but how professed followers of Christ can endorse such a measure is beyond my comprehension.

When the woman taken in adultery was brought before Jesus for sentence, he said, "Let him who is without sin cast the first stone." "Whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye even so to them." "With what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again. We cannot afford to do wrong even to criminals, for it is sure to react. Bear in mind that this world will never be reformed by surgical operations for one class and breeding farms for another. I trust I may be forgiven if I step on the editorial toes, as in one of your recent issues you stated that all criminals would vote against the law to sterilize their kind, but that it was to be hoped there were enough supposedly good people to put the measure through. It now appears that the criminals outnumber the supposedly good people to the extent of some four thousand, so permit me to suggest to the good people that they be careful as to the kind of laws they pass as they might be administered by some of the criminals and the good people be the victims.

These are my reasons for taking the stand I did in the matter of the Sterilization Act, and for once in my life I am with the majority.

With good will to all,  
Enos A. Ellis.

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