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Social Work in the Light of History, by Stuart A. Queen

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Social Work in the Light of History, by Stuart A. Queen. J. B. Lippincott Co.: Philadelphia. Pp. 327. 1922. Price \$2.00.

This is a little book that fills a real need in the social sciences. There are perhaps those even today who would deny that social workers are engaged in a science and they might even regard such a term as pedantic if applied to the efforts of social workers which are regarded as somewhat heterogeneous in character and intermittent in application. Certain it is that fifty years ago this would have been the almost universal attitude toward social work. At the present time however it seems fair to say that social work has won its place as one of the social sciences although that place may still be somewhat less defined and uncertain than that of the older members. Thus our Universities that have Schools of Business Administration insist that business is a profession; and it may well be that it is in spite of the fact that most of the successful business men of the present time would make no such claim.

Professor Queen gives an admirable and valuable discussion of the historical development of social work showing how such work was carried on in the middle ages in a limited way by the local manor or monastery or

guild as the case might be. It is perhaps erroneous to say that municipalities have not entered the field of social science until recently. It seems they did a good deal of this in the middle ages according to the standards of the time, but they had a different emphasis upon the character of their work; social work was then carried on largely as a form of punishment or correction, not as a matter of compassion or a will to develop and benefit individual human beings. Thus even in the medieval hospitals, such as there were, the view was widely held that the patients had committed some reprehensible offense and the object of the hospital authorities was to beat them or exhort them into the good life before they died, it being assumed that they would die in due course and that nothing much could be done to delay this consummation.

The book is a thorough piece of work. For instance it has a consideration of medieval conditions and also a critical examination of the whole 19th century humanitarian movement together with a discussion of the English Poor Law as a form of governmental regulation rather than an effort at individual aid. There is a careful discussion of social work as a phase of religious zeal together with some consideration of the various idealistic communities that have valiently set forth in different stages of the world's history to effect a more perfect brotherhood of man on earth. There is of course a careful consideration of the child welfare movement and the different measures for settlement work together with a discussion of the modern methods of prevention in the field of disease, delinquency and crime. Professor Queen's entire book brings out very clearly the extraordinary contrast between the very impersonal methods that obtained nearly universally in social work as well as in the other sciences until about a hundred years ago as compared with the emphasis upon individualization that obtains today. Thus the medieval hospital used to punish people who had the smallpox and exhort them to mend their ways before they died. Similarly in the law it has hitherto been emphasized that the crime of larceny must be punished in keeping with the then current theological estimate of the seriousness of this offense, with the result that little account was taken of the individual who may have fallen into the class of those who committed larceny. It seems that the same extraordinary attitude has generally obtained in the field of medicine hitherto. Thus until recently it was the fashion to treat heart disease rather than an individual who was affected with heart disease. So if a man had heart disease he was treated in a certain way even though there were other elements in his physical difficulties that should have been considered in administering to these needs.