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Editorial.

THE BLACK AND THE WHITE PLAGUES.

In another column will be found an article from the pen of Miss L. L. Dock, in which she refers to the systematic efforts now being made to combat tuberculosis, described as the "white plague," and to the necessity for fighting on similar lines the disease usually described by the term "specific" and referred to by the writer as the "black plague."

No more important article has been published in these columns for some time and we honour the courage with which Miss Dock has dealt with a subject on which, from a false modesty, silence is too often maintained.

No one knows better than doctors and nurses the evils which result to the innocent and ignorant from contamination by the black plague, not only in the case of those who contract it in the first instance, whether viciously or innocently, but also in that of generations unborn. The health of thousands and tens of thousands is undermined by it, the national physique is deteriorated, and the infected, by reason of their impaired stamina, readily fall victims to other diseases, so that, indeed, if we would stamp out the white plague we shall do wisely to attack the black plague also, for it is undeniable that the former disease plays special havoc with those whose constitutions are undermined, and whose powers of resistance are impaired by the congenital debility which they have received as a heritage from their forefathers.

The reason that this terrible disease is on the increase is to a great extent attri-

butable to the secrecy which surrounds it. And here both doctors and nurses have a special responsibility. Many persons scarcely know of the existence of this appalling danger still less of the evils it brings in its train. But this cannot be said of the medical and nursing professions, who, in hospital wards and elsewhere, see plainly the wreckage wrought and the suffering entailed; and they at least realise the supreme importance of warning the young of the pitfalls which surround them. It is cruel kindness which keeps them in ignorance. Ignorance, it must be most emphatically insisted, is not innocence.

The greatest protection to the pure-minded is a knowledge of the dangers which must be avoided, and both doctors and nurses will do less than their duty if, as opportunity offers they do not urge upon parents and guardians the cruelty of sending out into the world, without warning, those for whose welfare they are responsible. For the rest Miss Dock is wise when she insists that, as in the case of the white plague, a knowledge of the personal danger involved by contact with it has resulted in a care as to precautions which no amount of moral teaching would engender, so in the case of the black plague; a fear of physical disaster will be a most potent and thus valuable influence in effecting its decrease. Therefore, with courage and commonsense let this vital question be approached, let the community be influenced through its religious faith, by moral suasion, or by that strongest of influences with many, the instinct of self-protection, so that the black plague, as well as the white, may no longer be a national reproach.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)