

fluenced by the tyranny of custom, and independent of prejudice.'

"The trumpet call to arms had sounded already. America has risen to rally round the white banner. Let us follow her lead. We are awakening. We, too, will get us from our sloth. We are ready to answer to the battle cry. Bitter opposition, a paralysing indifference, will be encountered. We shall be evil spoken of. We shall be misunderstood, for we stand here, nurses and fellow citizens of this vast city called Life, face to face with a fight unparalleled in the history of nations.

"In serried battalions over against us are set the hosts of the ignorant, the prudish, the timid, the vicious, the alcoholic, the feeble-minded. We stand, the leaders of a forlorn hope, in the eyes of our fellow men, doubly disgraced if we fail, for by success alone can we be justified. We *must* succeed. What though each one of us be beaten to her knees in the struggle? We will fight on. What though we faint from the stress of conflict and weary for the loneliness of our toil? We will fight on. What though we fail? We will fight on.

"Form square and stand shoulder to shoulder, nation to nation, fighting for the human race, fighting for our national reputation, fighting for the good name of our century, fighting for the God-given right of health for innocent women and children, fighting not against, but on behalf of, our poor sisters the prostitutes, the sufferers from our culpable neglect and ignorance, fighting dear sister-women as which of us has not fought in our day, for the body and soul of the guilty, because his redemption is possible.

"So let us stand steadfast, unfearing. We dare not fail. Nay, we cannot fail. For the weapons of our warfare are Knowledge, Unity, and Love unbounded; the legend on our banner is Light, and the aim of our strife is Peace. Hail comrades, and God speed to victory."

For a few moments after the speaker ceased the silence noticeable during the reading of the paper continued, and then the intense feeling it aroused found expression in a storm of applause which subsided only to be renewed again and again. It was the tribute of admiration of the nurses of the world to their comrade who so brilliantly, delicately, and courageously had drawn aside the veil with which mock modesty conceals the evil thing in our midst, and revealed it in its putrid enormity.

When at length the applause subsided, Mrs. Bedford Fenwick reminded the Congress that a few days ago they had been asked to believe that the reader of that brilliant paper was not a trained nurse. This Congress was proud to claim her as a colleague and leader it was determined to follow.

THE PRESIDENT OF THE SESSION then called upon Miss L. L. Dock, R.N.

THE NEED OF EDUCATION ON MATTERS OF SOCIAL MORALITY.

MISS DOCK said that the crusade against venereal diseases now being definitely waged by a campaign of public education, and the definite, systematic, candid teaching of the physiology and hygiene of sex was the newest development of preventive medicine and the most hopeful of all its

promises—most hopeful because the evils it was attacking were the most horrible known to humanity.

As its promise was full of hope, its course was full of difficulties beyond the ordinary, by reason of the deeply ingrained false shame, mock modesty, vulgar hypocrisy, and generally intensely pharisaic mental attitude that had been deeply ingrained in human society as the result of many centuries servile acceptance of a double standard of morals, one for men and one for women. From this false shame and hypocrisy had resulted the dense ignorance prevalent as to the physiology of the reproductive organs and their functions, and, in addressing an audience of nurses on this topic she might assume that even they were lamentably ignorant of the real extent of the so-called "social" or venereal disease. She was made certain of this by recalling her own training, and by noting the result of inquiries made at the present time. She remembered very well the entire inadequacy of her own instruction on this subject. Though in the immense hospital of city poor, syphilis and gonorrhoea were familiar terms, and though the pupils learned much about symptomatology, and something of precaution and the avoidance of infection, yet no moral or historical, humanly truthful teaching was heard as to the *reason why* of these horrible diseases, and she regretted to remember that in her own experience as a teacher in training schools she did not realise the importance of doing more than skim the surface of this subject. Outside the hospital social conventions were in full control and inside a sort of professional fatalism dominated, so that, though nurses might talk amongst themselves of tragedies witnessed, they usually seemed to regard them vaguely as fixed conditions of a mysterious universe. But to-day this fatalistic attitude was changing, and the deadly silence was breaking. Lagging last in the rear of all other communicable diseases, venereal diseases had now been dragged out into the open light of publicity. There were evidences that the stir of propaganda was reaching into our training schools, and it was high time it should be so, for against the urgent call for the thousands of intelligent women in the nursing field to become missionaries of prevention on these lines, stands the fact that the great majority of nurses are, as yet, little more informed upon the great social facts of these diseases than are the laity.

Inquiries made of the training schools led to the conclusion that while routine procedures of disinfection were generally taught, information was generally lacking as to the extent, prevalence, relation to conditions of society, and, above all, prevention of venereal disease.

A growing feeling of the need for more thorough teaching was, however, shown in a number of replies. One superintendent of nurses wrote: "Personally, I think it a crime not to teach this subject to nurses." Women physicians seemed to have a special mission to carry this propaganda, and the first pioneer women in medicine did sound this note at the outset of their career, and if search were made it would probably be found that their

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