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Editorial.

THE ERADICATION OF VENEREAL DISEASES.

The problem of the eradication of the venereal diseases from our midst is one of supreme importance, for their prevalence is a menace to the physical, moral, and mental health of the nation.

The question has been approached in the past largely from the moral side, and all honour to those who have striven to deal with it from this point of view. But this is not sufficient. The hygienic standpoint must have greater prominence, the mystery and silence with which the whole question is too often invested must be broken down, and sufferers from any one of the group of venereal diseases must be encouraged to present themselves for treatment, as simply and naturally as those who contract other diseases apply to the medical profession, or to the hospitals, for relief and cure.

And treatment and cure must be accorded without hesitation, without the sufferer being made to feel that he is regarded, and condemned, as a moral delinquent. In the first place because it is contrary to every unwritten law governing the relations of medical practitioners, nurses, and patients that the degree of moral lapse causing an illness, or injury, should be taken into account in according assistance to a sick or injured person. Otherwise many of the broken heads, fractured limbs, cases of delirium tremens, even many cases of pneumonia and other diseases would be quickly disposed of. In the second place, because many persons suffering from what are popularly called "bad diseases" have been infected with such diseases quite innocently, and merit deep sympathy rather than censure; and, thirdly, in the interest of the community, because if the stigma of shame

is put upon every person who presents himself for treatment, the most terrible of known diseases will remain hidden and uncured, and will therefore continue to spread.

In the case of other infectious diseases it is well recognised that their eradication cannot be hoped for until the cause is known, and they are isolated and treated. By this means smallpox and typhus fever have been practically eradicated, tuberculosis is getting under control, diphtheria no longer presents the menace to human life of a quarter of a century ago. The venereal diseases must be dealt with on the same lines before we can hope for their eradication. In this connection it is important to note that while the prevalence of these diseases is widespread, the hospitals for their reception are singularly few. It is true that the infirmaries are open to them, but many such cases are quite unsuited for admission to infirmary wards, and the result is that they remain in their own homes, often untreated, and a source of danger to those with whom they come in contact.

In combatting the venereal diseases it is necessary always to bear in mind the social conditions which may predispose to them, so that preventive work may go hand in hand with treatment; for to strive for the eradication of the underlying causes of a disease, so that it may become extinct, is as necessary as the cure of patients who have contracted it.

Meantime the policy of silence should be broken in regard to teaching nurses the symptoms, proper nursing care, and the precautions to be observed in nursing these contagious diseases. Not to instruct nurses in training concerning these matters is to expose them to needless risk, and the possibility of contracting serious and loathsome diseases.

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