

THE PREVENTION OF VENEREAL DISEASES.

Dr. Helen Wilson said that the fear of the venereal diseases was a serious embarrassment to those engaged in rescue work. Fear came from want of knowledge. Precautions should be taken in three directions—by sufferers from these diseases, by the healthy, and by the public authorities. Although venereal cases were not necessarily infectious if precautions were intelligently and conscientiously observed, it was advisable to exclude all sure cases from Rescue Homes; but they might crop up in any Home and have to be kept for a time before they could be transferred. They should then be isolated. But infection was not to be feared, with proper precautions, from known cases of the disease—the chief danger arose from the unknown. Safety lay in scrupulous surgical cleanliness; in the encouragement of refinement in mind and body in the inmates of a Home. It was sometimes suggested that Poor Law Guardians should have the power of detaining persons known to be infectious. The objection was that the knowledge that Guardians had the power of detention would prevent patients applying for treatment. In the best-managed hospitals and wards the number of those who discharged themselves against advice was very small.

Again, notification of venereal diseases was advocated. This was all right in theory, but impracticable. The notification of the disease in the upper classes would be impossible, and if insisted on would drive patients to quacks. Dr. Wilson insisted, in conclusion, that cleanliness or purity does not consist in ignoring dirt and refusing to see it, but rather in activity in combatting it.

Miss Clifford, who was unable to be present, wrote suggesting the establishment of hospitals for venereal diseases in suitable centres by co-operating Poor Law Unions.

The President then vacated the chair, which was taken by Mrs. Alfred Booth.

Amongst those who took part in the discussion were Miss Blanche Lepington, Miss I. M. Baker, Mrs. Raffles Bulley, Mrs. A. J. Webb, Mrs. Schooling, Miss Lucy Deane, Miss Fox, Miss Hargreaves, P.L.G., Miss Verrall, Miss Curtis, Miss Martindale (Church Army), Miss Janes, and Dr. Stacy. The chief points emphasised were the uselessness of compulsory detention of infected women in infirmaries while dissolute men outside still infected healthy women; the unsuitability of laundry work as employment for girls in Rescue Homes owing to the roughness of the work and the temptations to which girls were subjected when they left the Home; that women must demand purity in men, when they do they will get it; the importance of legal powers of detention of the feeble-minded over sixteen years of age, with their segregation in colonies, so that they will not produce more feeble-minded children; the desirability of evening treatment for out-patients at the London Lock Hospital for women as well as for men; and of the appointment of a woman physician. The consideration of a Resolution in this connection was eventually deferred to the Afternoon Session.

AFTERNOON SESSION.

THE NEED FOR BETTER PROVISION FOR RESCUE CASES SUFFERING FROM DISEASE.

At the Afternoon Session, when Dr. Helen Wilson presided, Dr. Alice Corthorn presented the first paper on "The Need for Better Provision for Rescue Cases Suffering from Disease." She emphasised the necessity for the classification of cases in some infirmary wards where venereal cases are received. On the physical side, the disease must be controlled by individual attention, and morally the patients must not be exposed to moral contamination. This was impossible in institutions where hardened prostitutes, young girls in their first trouble, and even little children were to be found in the same ward. Miss Corthorn was not in favour of the establishment of special venereal hospitals by Boards of Guardians, an added objection being that the existence of Guardians themselves was threatened.

Miss Amy Hughes, from her practical experience as Superintendent of a country workhouse infirmary, urged the importance of legislation giving powers of restraint over feeble-minded, degenerate girls, physically and mentally defective, who are led away. She had known a number who took their discharge, went out to a common lodging-house, and in a few months returned half-starved and verminous, to be mothers of more feeble-minded children.

Others who joined in the discussion of this paper were Miss Greig, Mrs. Creighton (who pointed to the necessity of avoiding the assumption that the feeble-minded are only girls), Mrs. E. Nott Bower, P.L.G., Richmond (who spoke of the difficulties of women guardians), and others.

RESOLUTION.

A Resolution respectfully urging the authorities of the London Lock Hospital to provide facilities for evening treatment for women out-patients as well as men, and to consider the advisability of appointing a woman doctor, proposed by Miss Richmond, was then carried, and it was arranged to send it to the President, Lord Kinnaird.

Miss Richmond also desired to memorialise the Committees of Metropolitan Hospitals to re-open their lock wards; but Mrs. Bedford Fenwick pointed out that the question was a very wide one, and she hoped it would be referred to the Rescue and Preventive Committee to report upon; the policy of recent years had been to eliminate infectious and contagious diseases from the general hospitals. She thought the Metropolitan Asylums Board was the authority which should deal with these cases in London. Now that infectious diseases were steadily diminishing, perhaps the Board might open a hospital for the reception of venereal cases.

On the proposition of Mrs. Creighton, seconded by Mrs. Webb, it was then referred to the Rescue and Preventive Committee to consider whether it was desirable to petition Boards of Metropolitan Hospitals to open special wards for venereal cases.

It was further proposed from the chair, seconded by Mrs. Bedford Fenwick, and agreed, that the Committee be asked to consider the advisability of calling a Conference of men and women—doctors,

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