

and never in a normal condition of health. The gentle, lovely old lady, who seven times saw her maternal hopes destined to disappointment—who seven times over suffered the unnatural and premature unlocking of her womb, who at length bore a child or two to live—and to thrive? Alas, no. Could she have guessed at the cause, as we do—yes and know it—that gentle woman would have destroyed her own life rather than bring upon her living offspring the sorrows that her dead ones were spared. The sweet and noble daughter of that mother, unwitting of the truth, telling simply and innocently of the long course of mercury she is undergoing, but in later years half-guessing, agonizing over her child and crying “I ought never to have married—I ought never to have brought a child into the world for *this*.” The tiny new-born infants, fretful, wizened, whom one dared not kiss or handle more than absolute humanity compelled. The timid, shrinking woman who has touched you on the arm and cries imploringly: “You said you were our friend—and the doctor won’t tell me what is the matter—and oh, I have such ulcers in the parts, and please won’t you tell me?—for I think it is my husband’s fault.” Yes, and it is too, as is made abundantly clear later on. That handsome mother, prematurely white, with her forehead eaten clear away, wholly ignorant of the cause—that other woman doomed to live on, though eyes and nose and ears are gone, her face swathed in bandages, cut off from human communication. That poor, half-witted soul, herself a victim of lust—“How could I help it when he shut and locked the door,” who yearly resorts to the workhouse to bring into the world another victim and who ends at an early age as a permanent patient in the Infirmary. That other woman married alas, covered with what were euphemistically called boils and treated with Iodide of Potassium by mouth, and mercury inunctions. What a procession! One behind the other they drag their painful way through life—no Lock Hospital patients, but women leading the life of Society as it is termed, or of working women, women whom I met in the ordinary course of life, most of whom had no doubt already transmitted to their offspring venereal disease, who were quite possibly infecting others in all innocence by contact. May God have mercy upon them, for men had had none.

These women—these children are not mere matters of sentiment. They are matters of scientific fact, centres of disease, *foci* of infection, national dangers. And, what are we

doing to prevent it? One cannot but smile, though bitterly at times, as one sees the multitude, both professional and lay, hastening and over-hastening to lay the spectre of Tuberculosis, the White Plague, attacking it right, left and centre—whilst affecting to ignore, and in effect ignoring, even when they are perfectly and guiltily conscious of it, the Black Plague. Here, in Ireland, we have a so-called National Health Association, devoted to the putting down of Tuberculosis—an excellent object for the Association to have in view. But if it were in fact a National and Health Association, it would be concerning itself equally with the Black Plague—a far worse evil—looked at only in the light of the fact that the Black Plague is hereditary and the White Plague is not.

Our legislators are so evidently, so innocently, so transparently desirous that we should be clean—outside—that one cannot but be touched by their benevolent intentions. In these most happy days of the 20th century, our houses are cleansed by law, and disinfected by law, our dairies and milkshops are cleansed by law, our cowsheds and yards are cleansed by law, our children’s heads are cleansed by law—the verminous persons amongst us are cleansed by law—our midwives are disinfected by law—our sewers and rivers are cleansed by law—we ourselves, those of us who work are doctored in thousands by law, at a penny every three and a half days—so truly scientific is the law. The law in these matters at present—or should I rather say the legislators? remind me of Madame X the beauty specialist, whose sole care is to expensively touch up and renovate those parts of us which are presented to the public view, at a very expensive rate—ignoring the while the honest fact that “Beauty is a corollary of Health” the inner health of the body is the great, natural source of its external beauty. Clean houses, clean cows, clean skins, clean children—on the outside. But what about clean lives?

“I hate Science” is the *dictum* of one of our legislators. Just so long as we cannot succeed in altering that point of view, we shall fail in our fight for a healthy race.

The first step in that fight is publicity. The present day secretiveness on the subject of venereal disease is unworthy of the conditions of our 20th century knowledge. As women and as nurses we are doubly bound in the first instance to learn all that can be learnt on the subject ourselves, and in the second place to make that knowledge public, not only amongst men, a large proportion of whom are guiltily cognizant of it already, but amongst our own

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