

circle of women, wives and mothers in imminent danger—danger to themselves, and of becoming through their best and highest instincts a permanent danger to the public health. It is also a primary duty which we owe to ourselves and to our patients. Had there been in the past a more scientific spirit, a more manly courage throughout the ranks of the medical profession—were they present even to-day, it would not fall to our lot to be the prime movers in this fight. I except expressly the women members of that profession, to whom the thanks of all are due for the fight which they have already made and are making against venereal disease, and for which they have been stigmatized—very unscientifically, as “unsexed.” What protection, I ask, has been or is being afforded by the medical profession either to the women and children, or to the nurses of Great Britain and Ireland against the contagion of this highly contagious specific fever? which may be contracted and is contracted by us in the discharge of our professional duties, by those others equally with ourselves in any place of public resort, in trams, in railways, in sanitary conveniences, in the privacy of home life, in the sanctity, save the mark, of the marriage bed. The only adequate protection is knowledge and that knowledge the medical men, with a few honourable exceptions, have perversely, consistently and unscientifically withheld from us, for whom as the junior partner in the firm they were doubly responsible, from their women patients and their women-kind at large to the peril of the public health. Unworthy citizens that they are, they have allowed old-fangled notions to blunt their sense of right and wrong, they have accepted the narrow-minded judgment of an undiscerning laity, in place of the free conclusions of an enlightened science. Self-interest has with them usurped the place of consideration for the public weal. They have sold their birthright. Therefore it falls to us, Nurses, the willing handmaids of Science, to drive home upon the public mind, by individual effort, by combined action, by speech, through literary work, by every means in our power, the dangers and the fallacies of the present attitude towards matters of sex, which lie at the foundation of venereal disease, to bring the light of day to bear upon the simple facts of reproduction and the legitimate use of the sexual organs, to laugh to scorn the exploded notion that the exercise of the sexual function is any more necessary to man than the exercise of the mammary gland is to woman, or that

either gland will atrophy from disuse; to instruct young men and young women in the methods of defence against venereal disease, which are in the first instance clean living, and clean mating, to inculcate always and everywhere the principle of self-control and self-discipline, the steady discipline of young children in the home from early cradle days; to teach naturally the ways of nature to the receptive mind of the growing child—to remove ignorance and dirt, in short, wherever we may find it.

The American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis is doing a great work in this direction, scientifically, outspokenly and fearlessly. They publish inexpensive pamphlets and see that they are distributed. They bring out a quarterly *Journal of Social Diseases*. They keep in touch with the efforts of all States in the Union in the direction of a saner treatment of the subject.

Are we, I ask, prepared to stand idle? Of course we are not. When typhus, the expression and result of insanitary conditions—dirt, to put it shortly—external to the body is concerned, we burn and blush with shame for the foul disease in our midst and for the state of things which that disease reveals and of which it is the result. Shall we be less ashamed where venereal disease the special expression of insanitary conditions—dirt once again, internal to the body, and an intimate part of it is in question? As women, as citizens, as the members of a great and noble profession, we are no longer prepared to stand unscientifically aside and see our race undermined. We take up the gage of battle which others were too indifferent or too cowardly to lift. We pledge ourselves to redeem the health of our nation in the face of opposition and ignorance and the best of men, we will not be satisfied or rest from the fight until the Augean stables have been cleansed and we can present before the searching eye of the God who created us innocent and clean, a clean bill of health in this matter of national disease.

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We are delighted to observe in *The Morning Post* of Tuesday last a letter signed by representative medical practitioners drawing attention to the fact that in the organized effort for public health legislation there has “always been a conspiracy of silence as regards venereal diseases.” The letter appeals for the appointment of a Royal Commission to investigate the facts.

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