

It is universally admitted that the notification of infectious and contagious diseases has greatly diminished the spread of disease. Why then are Syphilis and Gonorrhœa excluded from the list?

Why have we Royal Commissions on imbecility and lunacy, and Acts of Parliament dealing with these later stages of Syphilis? Why not commence at the beginning of the disease when it is curable?

I am sure that many of you are Suffragettes, and if you will put in the forefront of your programme the reinstating of a modified Contagious Diseases Act on our Statute Book, and the inclusion of venereal diseases among the notifiable diseases, I will become one of your most ardent supporters.

I ask this not in the interests of the vicious, but for the protection of the innocent.

Think of the Gynæcology Wards of our hospitals, of our lunatic asylums, of the homes for imbecile and cripple children, of the incurable hospitals crowded to overflowing with later stages of these fell diseases, and say if our Pharisaic and ostrich-like behaviour is right.

No: it is our duty in the face of this great and increasing national danger to push aside all false modesty and sham prudery, and to deal as openly and fearlessly with these diseases as we now do with tuberculosis.

The medical profession, both Nurses and Doctors, should educate the public and strive to open its eyes to its very pressing danger.

The District Nurse can do much to help:—

(1) She can note the signs of congenital disease and explain to the mother the necessity of the parents seeking immediate and efficient treatment.

(2) She can explain to her patients the nature and dangers of their diseases, and the importance of carefully and persistently carrying out their treatment.

(3) While doing this she must remember that her patient's confidences, whether given in words or discovered during professional examination, must be always held sacred.

(4) We know that most of the dire results of these diseases are due to the patients trying to hide their condition, and consequently not seeking early and efficient treatment.

The District Nurse can point out that if treated early and efficiently, these diseases are easily cured, but if neglected, that they are among the most fatal.

(5) In those cases where her skilled assistance is required she should give it, as in all other cases, willingly and tenderly, not turning

away from her patients as if they were beneath contempt.

(6) But she must remember that she is treating a contagious disease, and if she has any abrasions on her hands, when dressing secondary lesions she must wear gloves or smear her hands with strong calomel ointment.

One of the most strict rules in the Lock Hospital is that "no patient may wear a pin in any part of her dress." This rule was enacted after one of my predecessors became infected by the prick of a pin in his finger. He is one among the many who have been accidentally infected in the discharge of their duty and whose case has terminated fatally.

I do not think that I claim too much when I say that with the treatment now at our disposal, with improved legislation, with intelligent education of the public, and with good nursing, in thirty years' time the cases of venereal disease would be reduced by over 50 per cent., and our institutions depleted of two-thirds of their inmates.

But if we go on as we have been going for the past 20 years, the national physique will be permanently crippled.

A ROYAL COMMISSION DEMANDED.

The following letter which appeared in the *Morning Post* last week was signed by 38 leading medical practitioners:—

SIR,—The increase in medical knowledge during the last sixty years has been extremely rapid, and the control of health problems by the State and municipalities has become one of the most striking features of modern civilisation. The State has compelled local authorities to build asylums for the insane; it has encouraged them to make provision for the segregation of cases in infectious fevers; it has insisted on the notification of many infectious diseases; it has undertaken the inspection of children on a colossal scale; it has introduced an elaborate machinery to ensure the purity of foods, and it is steadily at work laboriously building up a vast system of public health legislation. To-day we are all looking forward to what may be the effects of the campaign against tuberculosis, and the community has cause to congratulate itself on the organised national effort that it is about to make to eliminate the disease.

In all this organised effort there is one noteworthy omission. There has always been a conspiracy of silence as regards venereal diseases. The time, however, has come when it is a national duty to face the facts and to bring them prominently to the notice of the public. When the subject was discussed last year at the Royal Society of Medicine it was stated without contradiction that in London alone there are 40,000

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