

ROYAL COMMISSION ON VENEREAL DISEASES.

DR. BRIAN O'BRIEN.

At the twenty-first meeting, evidence was given by Dr. Brian O'Brien, Medical Inspector of the Local Government Board for Ireland. Dr. O'Brien said that for the purposes of his evidence he had visited all the larger towns in Ireland and many of the smaller ones, as well as a certain number of rural districts, and that the impression made upon him was that there was a decline of venereal disease in the country districts and small towns. It was his opinion that venereal disease, syphilis especially, is almost non-existent in the rural portions of Ireland, and uncommon in the smaller towns. There was special prevalence in Dublin and among the causes contributing to this prevalence he mentioned poverty, bad housing, and the fact that Dublin is the refuge of people from the greater part of Ireland who are doing no good for themselves. There was also some prevalence of the diseases in Belfast, but to a much less extent than in Dublin. The treatment of the diseases in Ireland at the present time was, he thought, very inadequate. His two main recommendations were that means should be provided for improved diagnosis and that institutional treatment should be subsidised. There would be advantage, he thought, in providing Out-Patient Departments of general hospitals which would be open in the evening, and a considerable number of men might thus be attracted to be treated promptly and efficiently. He was, however, inclined to doubt whether a very large proportion of the women would present themselves for treatment. Dr. O'Brien was opposed to the notification of venereal disease; he did not think that the medical profession would be willing to notify, and if they did, fewer people would go to them for treatment.

MR. D'ARCY POWER.

At the twenty-second meeting of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases evidence was given by Mr. D'Arcy Power, Surgeon and Lecturer on Surgery at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, and one of the representatives before the Commission of the Royal College of Surgeons and the Royal Society of Medicine.

Mr. D'Arcy Power said that from the surgeon's point of view he looked upon gonorrhoea as the more serious disease for the individual, and syphilis for the race. In general surgery the effects of gonorrhoea were far-reaching, and it was an error to teach that it was a local and curable disease.

Syphilis seemed to Mr. Power to be even more dangerous to the State than to the individual. The expectation of life was materially shortened for a person who had been infected with syphilis, the immediate danger extended to the second generation and the vitality of the stock seemed diminished for several generations. Syphilis gave

surgery a large amount of work. It predisposed Mr. Power thought to cancer and tubercle. The particular danger of the disease lay in the fact that the subsequent effects bore no necessary relation to the severity of the initial lesions.

Mr. Power thought that a diminution in the incidence of syphilis would best be brought about by better instruction of the medical student and that each general hospital ought to establish a special department under the control of the senior medical officer. The department should be chiefly an out-patient clinic, and should be held in the afternoon or in the evening. A few beds might be provided, but the essence of successful treatment in syphilis was early diagnosis and prolonged attendance. The department should be thoroughly equipped with a sufficient staff of pathologists and with the necessary remedies. The expense would no doubt be considerable, but Mr. Power thought that the State would be more than repaid. He believed that the establishment and use of such departments would gradually educate the public to appreciate the danger and thereby diminish the risk.

Mr. Power did not think that any organised attempt to educate the public with regard to venereal diseases was desirable; he would rather trust to the gradual growth of education through the medical profession. Mr. Power was not in favour of notification of venereal diseases—at any rate, not for the present.

"SISTER J. PLANT, M.A."

When the woman who signed herself in the visitors' book at a private hotel in Rochester, as "Sister J. Plant, M.A." was charged with larceny at the Rochester Police Court on March 10th, she appeared in the full out-door uniform of a trained nurse. She was described on the Court agenda, as "Leslie Plant" as that name was found on a lady's visiting card in her possession when arrested.

An important point in the case is that when asked in Court by Mr. G. Robinson, the Magistrate's Clerk, "Are you a certificated nurse?" the prisoner replied, "I am." "Where at?" "I refuse to answer."

The hotel proprietor who prosecuted deposed that on the 9th February he saw his wife's gold watch and chain in his bedroom between eight and half past eight. Later in the day it was missing, and, on February 18th, he missed two bags of coppers from his private sitting room. As the prisoner left the hotel on February 22nd, and did not return, her luggage was searched to see if any information could be gained of her friends and whereabouts. A hat with his daughter's name inside and a clinical thermometer, which belonged to the witness, and had been missed during the prisoner's stay there, were found in her luggage. She returned to the hotel

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