

and nursing mothers, and of children who have not attained the age of five years, . . . to the medical inspection and treatment of children and young persons, . . . all the powers of the Privy Council and of the Lord President of the Council under the Midwives' Acts, 1902 and 1918, . . . and such powers of supervising the administration of Part I of the Children Act, 1908 (which relates to infant life protection) as have heretofore been exercised by the Secretary of State."

Is there a man or woman in these realms to-day who has greater cause for satisfaction with the work he has accomplished than Dr. Addison in piloting the Ministry of Health Act on to the Statute Book, and obtaining the power to raise the standard of health and happiness throughout the kingdom.

### FIGHTING VENEREAL DISEASES.

The Lord Sydenham of Coombe, G.C.S.I. presided at the fourth Annual General Meeting of the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases in the Fellows Hall of the Royal Botanic Society of London on Monday, June 23rd. It was a disappointment that Dr. Addison, President of the Local Government Board, was, at the last moment, unable to attend and address the meeting, but Lord Sydenham, from the chair, gave a most encouraging *résumé* of the year's work, which is given in detail in an interesting and comprehensive annual report. They were, he said, not combating an ordinary ailment, but a special group of diseases which had to be considered not only from the physiological and medical standpoints, but also from the social and psychological aspects.

It did little good to go forward unless you had the enlightened general assent of all classes. You had to carry people with you. The setting up of the new Ministry of Health was an important step in advance. The new Department could do much, as the Local Government Board had already done, to help forward the work of the Society. Already, with the assistance of the Local Government Board, 148 free clinics had been opened, and further facilities would be provided. Before the war there was a steady gradual decline in the curve of incidence of venereal diseases. At the time of the South African war this had risen sharply, and the magnitude of the present war was certain to lead to a great

increase of infection. The prevalence of venereal diseases had greatly increased, and they had reached some sections of the community which had previously been untouched.

An important field was that of legislation; it was a subject which must be controversial, but he would be surprised if enlightened public opinion did not demand legislation here as elsewhere.

The Act of 1871 had been practically a dead letter, but now several quacks, one specially notorious, had been brought to book. Lord Sydenham invited the members to keep their eyes open for advertisements offering treatment by quack doctors, and to communicate with the Council when they found them.

In the Dominions and America there were heavy penalties for knowingly spreading venereal diseases, and a form of notification without names was almost universal.

As to prophylaxis, there was no law or regulation in America. In regard to early treatment, American opinion was divided, but in military camps it had been found very effective, and, owing to the measures taken, the incidence of disease had been reduced 50 per cent.

The task was always growing in difficulty and perplexity. The sense of responsibility could be quickened by an educational campaign, and still more so if, by legislation, we were able to brand knowing communication of venereal diseases as the crime it was known to be.

It would be a grand thing if all the English-speaking peoples stood together, as they had done in the war, in the fight against venereal diseases. The co-operation of both men and women was needed for the assistance of the medical profession, not forgetting the practice of the virtues inculcated in the catechism of temperance, soberness and chastity.

Colonel Bond, in describing the work of the Leicester Branch, said that in organising it it was recognised as essential that they should secure the goodwill of the City Council. Then they had conferences with public bodies, and addressed any societies which they could get to hold a meeting, and so had built up public opinion, which previously had been non-existent. Lectures were also given to school teachers, because they hoped thus to build up a body of trained people. Stress was also laid on the distribution of literature, and a poster campaign was inaugurated for putting up posters in dining rooms and public lavatories.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)