

## OUR PRIZE COMPETITION.

### EXPRESS AN OPINION FOR OR AGAINST THE USE OF PROPHYLACTIC PACKETS FOR PREVENTION OF VENEREAL DISEASE.

We have pleasure in awarding this prize this week to Miss Ména M. G. Bielby, Cranford, Middlesex.

#### PRIZE PAPER.

I suppose the majority of Englishwomen would, at the first suggestion of using prophylactic packets for the prevention of venereal disease, feel appalled that such an arrangement would provide, so to speak, a licence for prostitution. The social evil has attained proportions too vast to be dealt with by legislation. The figures are staggering. One is compelled to realise that it has been practically condoned for ages as an inevitable factor in the life of towns, not only by men of all classes, but by women also. Otherwise it could not have existed. The burden of responsibility rests chiefly with mothers of families. They bear sons and have the moulding of their minds during their earliest and most plastic years. Yet in how few cases, relatively, are boys taught anything of the powers, dangers, and obligations of the sexual life which a decade or so later will descend on them.

The sexual education of boys, and of girls, proceeds *on wrong lines* in all cases where a right education is not provided by the parents. At adolescence both sexes have usually learnt much of the sexual life, and in a disastrous manner. It is impossible to unlearn this. Arrayed against the lad is not only the whole armoury of professional seducers, but also his own undisciplined instincts. Few wholly resist this temptation. One lapse, and the lad may be physically ruined for his whole life. The punishment seems out of all proportion to the sin.

In balancing the pros and cons of any line of action humanitarians feel compelled to head the arguments for such a line by consideration for the safety of large numbers, especially of the innocent, rather than the advisability of salutary individual experience. The strongest argument against allowing any to incur the risk of this disease is the unavoidable spread of infection to innocent persons. Wives, children, nurses become victims. We are told that even the general public may incur secondary infection by the use of towels, drinking vessels, and many other means. It is clearly the duty of the authorities to protect the population against this terrible danger.

National economy is another ground on which this mode of prevention may be urged. A diseased man is not only a source of infection to others, and of suffering to himself, but he forms a nucleus of calamity and loss to the country, not only in the matter of money, but also in general welfare—loss which, like the rings when a stone is thrown into water, spreads in ever widening circles.

The remedy for the cause of venereal disease lies solely in the education of the individual, and this, to be of any use, should be completed before adolescence is reached. That stage of growth involves much stress and strain, during which the less sexual matters are dwelt on the better for the boy or girl. Only thus can be averted the tradition of brutal, callous selfishness with regard to the indulgence of sexual desire, at the cost of the moral and physical health of thousands of fellow creatures.

I lately discussed this debatable point with a young medical man who during the war was in charge of a dressing station in France. He spoke with hot indignation and pity of the distressing mental and physical condition of lads who had become infected—a condition which could hardly have arisen had they been educated to avoid this form of sin. He told me that no one who had witnessed such anguish could ever again waver as to the need for arranging prophylactic measures.

Until parents realise their duty as to education, in my opinion common justice demands that the innocent should be protected against possible infection, and, if only on the principle of better late than never, the lad should be guarded from the physical results of the ignorance for which, in many cases, he is not to blame.

#### HONOURABLE MENTION.

The following competitors receive honourable mention:—Miss M. Bryan, Miss J. Robinson, Miss P. Thompson, Miss F. James, and Miss Alice M. Burns.

Miss A. M. Burns considers that if a prophylactic remedy exists the "unco guid" are not doing all their duty in withholding it. She is sceptical as to the deterrent influence of the possibility of contracting venereal disease on deliberate evil-doers, and she recalls cases of highly respectable wives who, with a deep sense of desolation and degradation, and with bitter weeping, have confided their sad stories to her. She thinks no stone should be left unturned for the protection of the innocent.

#### QUESTION FOR NEXT WEEK

What is Uræmia? When does it occur? Give the symptoms and general management of this condition.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)