

Royal British Nurses' Association.

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THE ASSOCIATION OF TRAINED NURSES IN PUBLIC HEALTH WORK.

LECTURE ON VENEREAL DISEASE.

By DR. SLOAN CHESSER.

Miss Wise occupied the chair at the lecture on Venereal Disease, which was delivered under the auspices of the above Association, at the R.B.N.A. Club, on Saturday, 11th ult.

Dr. Sloan Chesser stated that the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease was formed before the war, and the result of its investigations showed that a very large percentage of blindness and of abdominal operations on women were due to gonorrhoea, and also that large numbers of patients in hospitals and asylums were there from the effects of syphilis. A great proportion of loco motor ataxia could be traced to this source and all cases of a general paralysis of the insane. Now, there were new educational propaganda, and the speaker said that quite recently she had lectured to two hundred girls and women aided by films, showing the process of reproduction in plant life and human life. She had since been advised that, though the film was excellent and helpful, even that did not go far enough for real enlightenment. There were, she stated, 800,000 new cases of venereal disease every year.

Often she was asked rather absurd questions as to the reason of contracting the disease, *e.g.*, could it arise from want of cleanliness? This was clearly impossible, since it was due to a specific organism, as were scarlet fever, diphtheria, &c. By far the most frequent cause of the disease was sexual intercourse, although innocent cases of syphilis have been known to be contracted by kissing and by the use of infected drinking vessels. In like manner, girl children have been infected with gonorrhoea by coming in contact with infected clothing.

Dr. Sloan Chesser proceeded to specify some of the disastrous after-effects on women who have contracted gonorrhoea, very probably from no fault of their own. Persons who had suffered from venereal disease should not marry unless they had been certified free from the disease by a *competent specialist*.

The speaker then briefly dealt with the various stages of syphilis, and incidentally remarked that

she had herself examined many thousands of people who suffered from venereal disease.

After touching upon congenital syphilis, the lecturer discussed the methods of prevention of venereal disease, of which she considered the instruction of the young on sex matters to be of the first importance. Direct, simple teaching of quite young children she held to be the best method. She traced the psychological and physiological instincts bearing upon this important subject from the earliest stages of infant life. The baby was at first intensely self-centred; next came the mother-phase and then, if a boy, the father-phase; next came the child at school with its devotion to its chums; and so on, till the first calf love of the boy for the girl.

Dr. Chesser spoke with indignant protest against the lie that prostitution was a necessary evil. Was it fair or reasonable to suppose that one class of citizen should be sacrificed in order that another class might be protected?

After a lecture given recently to a large number of girls, she was asked if it were true what their boys told them, that the sexual act was necessary to their health. She replied, "It's a lie."

One of the best ways to combat this evil, continued the doctor, has been provided by the Scout and Girl Guide movements, where boys and girls "played at being good." But the greatest preventive of all would be the provision of decent houses for the people.

At the close of the lecture, there was a very interesting discussion, and then Miss Wise thanked Dr. Sloan Chesser for what had proved one of the most interesting lectures ever given under the auspices of the Association of Trained Nurses in Public Health Work.

LECTURES.

The lectures of Professor McGregor Morris and Mr. Herbert Paterson, although among the most interesting and enjoyable of any we have had, cannot receive justice in a report as they both consisted, to a very great extent, of practical demonstrations.

The Professor arrived during the morning and was for hours engaged in setting up all sorts of electrical apparatus, for his lecture on "Thunder and Lightning," and in connecting it to the installation at the Club; the lecture was also

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)