

fections and their terrible consequence to the health and lives of innocent women and children, of the havoc wrought in the home and family, an awakened public sentiment and an aroused public conscience would no longer tolerate such social infamies. So long as this foul ulcer in the flank of society is covered up and concealed, it will continue to fester and to send its infection through every part of the social body. It must be exposed and laid bare in order to be cured. The medical profession should be deterred by no false sentiment or fastidious nicety from engaging in this work of exposure. The end not only justifies, but dignifies the means.

#### IS PUBLICITY PRACTICAL.

We may now inquire whether publicity is practicable. What are the most available ways and means of enlightening the public?

At first glance the indications do not appear reassuring. There is a complicity of silence on the part of all the educational agencies of human society in relation to everything pertaining to venereal infection. The ordinary channels of communication with the public—the newspaper press, popular literature and other means of general enlightenment—are closed to this knowledge. The mention even of these diseases is interdicted by the best forms of good society.

Social sentiment holds that it is a greater violation of the proprieties of life publicly to mention venereal disease than privately to contract it. But a sentimental objection based on conventional prejudice affords no valid reason for silence on the part of the medical profession. Sentiment has no place in the counsels of preventive medicine—when sentiment is opposed to sanitation it must be disregarded. Now as to ways and means: It is evident that we can not create educational agencies, we must utilize those already existing.

First of all, we must recognize that the public can not be reached to any effective extent so long as we discuss these questions, so vital to the interests of society, behind closed doors; they must be brought into the open, *coram publico*. John Stuart Mill declared that: "the diseases of society can no more be checked or healed than those of the body without publicly speaking of them." Not only must we speak openly, but we must call things by their right names; we must speak plainly but sanely, clearly but cleanly, scientifically but simply. There is no need of sensationalism, the plain unvarnished truth is sufficiently sensational, without embellishment or exaggeration. This plain speaking should be devoid of any quality of offensiveness, it should be tempered by tact, discretion and a sense of the fitness of things.

#### SPECIFIC METHODS OF PUBLICITY.

Time will permit only the briefest reference to specific methods of publicity. Since the newspaper press, the most powerful of all agencies of publicity, is not available, at least for the present, we must have recourse to other agencies of popular enlightenment—pamphlets, tracts, conferences, lectures, etc. Meetings organized by medical societies for the free discussion of these subjects and to which the public is invited constitute a most valuable means of propagandism.

Another valuable agency in this educational campaign would be the establishment of a journal of popular medicine, devoted to the study and prevention of all communicable diseases, especially those spread in the ordinary relations of social life. A knowledge of the source, the means of dissemination, the modes of contagion and the measures to be taken to prevent the spread of these

diseases, should be given in simple language, intelligible to laymen. In such a publication the study and prevention of venereal infection would enter naturally as one of the most important of the group of communicable diseases. Such a journal has already been projected and under auspices which, it is hoped, will insure success.

The brief experience of the American Society of Sanitary and Moral Prophylaxis in this educational work has shown that thousands of serious-minded members of the laity are already thoroughly aroused to the importance of this work. The opportunity seems to be propitious for inaugurating a general campaign of education; the public mind is receptive and ready to assimilate this knowledge. We should take advantage of the current of social reform which is now sweeping the country and which sets so strongly in the direction of publicity in all matters affecting the interests of the public.

66 West Fortieth Street.

### THE DUTY OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION TO THE PUBLIC IN THE MATTER OF VENEREAL DISEASES, AND HOW TO DISCHARGE IT.\*

W. J. HERDMAN, M.D., LL.D.  
ANN ARBOR, MICH.

Ignorance is the condition which alone makes slavery and oppression possible.

This applies to the tyranny of disease quite as much as to the unjust dominion of man over man. Nothing should stand in the way of emancipating mankind from the tyranny of disease and especially of those diseases that are most destructive and wide-reaching in their effects.

Physicians alone know the truth as to the widespread ravages of venereal diseases and on them rests primarily the duty of disseminating that truth so effectually that the way of escape from their dire effects may be made plain; and adequate safeguards for the protection of the innocent may be created.

#### WHERE AND HOW SHOULD THIS TRUTH BE MADE KNOWN?

So self-evident are the three leading propositions that head this paper that they need no discussion. The consensus of medical opinion the world over declares that the time is at hand for adopting such measures as will be most effective in arresting the hideous ravages of syphilis and gonorrhea. In order to accomplish this we must go to the root of the matter and, throwing aside all false barriers of prudishness, mock modesty and misguided sentiment, build up rational and enduring defenses such as a right and sufficient knowledge of the nature of these diseases and the modes of their propagation alone affords. It is most assuredly imperative, if this knowledge is to be placed where it will do the most good, that it be given to those who are in the greatest danger from such diseases, and in time to serve as a preventive.

The members of the medical profession throughout the civilized world have at length awakened to a sense of their duty as guardians of the physical welfare of mankind in its broader sense, not only in respect to the cure of disease, but also as to the prevention of it.

\* Read in the Section on Hygiene and Sanitary Science of the American Medical Association, at the Fifty-seventh Annual Session, June, 1906.

The futility of attempts to check the ravages of many diseases by confining effort solely to the individual victim of them, the physician has discovered and made so apparent to all that society claims and exercises the right to regulate the conduct of its members in so far as public sanitation and private sanitation may require it. This principle is now so well established that the pathway for its application, in any direction, needs but to be made plain and society will follow it, no matter what the obstacles. Long-established custom, prejudice, sentiment, all will go down before the more fundamental right of self-protection from real and grave danger.

In initiating a propaganda, therefore, against the ravages of venereal diseases the medical profession is but discharging its proper duty and showing itself worthy of its high mission. That mission in this instance is to disclose the pathways of invasion of these formidable enemies of man and to make plain the ravages they commit, leaving it to the parent, the teacher, the pastor and the legislator to devise the proper means for protection and defense.

But in order to carry on the campaign effectually there must be no dissension in the ranks of those who enlist to fight its battles. All should be agreed as to the fundamental truths which they are seeking to establish, otherwise the warfare will be a half-hearted one.

Since it has fallen to the medical profession to take the initiative in enlightening the public regarding the dangers that surround and threaten them from the prevalence of these diseases, the information furnished should be as accurate as possible. All statements from medical sources made with a view of stimulating the public to action should receive critical supervision and go forth stamped with recognized authority.

#### MISCONCEPTIONS AND FALLACIES.

At the very foundation of this proposed structure lie certain quicksands which must be removed before we can build securely.

These consist of certain misconceptions or fallacies which have a strong hold on a large number of minds, both medical and lay, and which until they are removed will exercise a retarding if not a reactionary influence on the best endeavors put forth to create enduring barriers against these evils.

The first of these fallacies is the medical or physiologic one that continence in sexual life is in any way injurious to him or her who practices it.

The second is the social one that permits one standard of recognition for the man and another for the woman who has fallen from virtue.

And the third is a fallacy of method, built on a misconception of the factors entering into the problem, and consists in a prevalent belief that a breach of moral law with its evil effects both moral and physical can be repaired by any system of legal restraint or license directed to the physical effects alone, especially since such legal control must of necessity be both partial and incomplete.

It is scarcely to be expected that much will be accomplished for this new movement by any whose minds are clouded by one or other of these misconceptions.

Such beliefs are not consistent with high ideals of manhood and womanhood; and only those imbued with such ideals can be relied on voluntarily to sacrifice personal comfort and convenience and to initiate a contest against the most formidable forces for evil that man has yet encountered.

#### METHODS OF DISSEMINATING KNOWLEDGE.

It must be a most gratifying and hopeful sign to those who hold dear the honorable traditions of the medical profession and expect for it a larger measure of usefulness to humanity in the future to see its leading members everywhere giving voice, influence and personal effort to check the remote causes of disease, being prompt to enter into association and to adopt the most effective measures to attain this purpose.

The more thorough the organization the sooner will we reap beneficial results, and the present machinery of the American Medical Association affords an excellent vehicle for prompt and efficient action in getting the needed knowledge to the public, of all ranks and conditions of life, in the most effective ways. First, as has been proposed, there should be a standing committee of the American Medical Association as a central nucleus charged with the duty of collecting statistics, gathering and disseminating campaign literature, keeping in affiliation and co-operation with foreign organizations of similar purport, suggesting and aiding in securing needed legislation.

Each state medical society should have its standing committee charged with corresponding duties, and so on to the county societies.

Through these county organizations, or the councilor district organizations representing them, the medical profession the country over with great force and effectiveness can bring the gathered information directly to the knowledge of the people through the medium of public meetings judiciously arranged.

It will soon be discovered by the committees chosen to do this work what persons are the best fitted to present tactfully and effectively to the lay mind the truths that we need to impart. And the leaders in philanthropic movements in each community can be entrusted with the duty of devising the plans for disseminating this knowledge best suited to their local conditions.

Thus a host of capable workers will soon arise in each state, and in every councilor district of the state, who can be called on to lend their aid as circumstances require their services.

There are many suitable channels already at hand for the distribution to the public of the facts they need to know concerning these diseases.

It is the proper function of our state and municipal boards of health and local health officers to disseminate such information, and while there has been a hesitancy on the part of these officials to initiate a campaign of instruction on a subject which respectable people have hitherto dared mention only with bated breath, with the sanction and backing of the medical profession these officers can be counted on to assume the duty.

By this means circulars of information and instruction can be distributed and state laws and municipal ordinances, designed to limit the spread of such diseases and to check their evil effects, can be kept constantly before the public mind so as to insure their enforcement. The medical inspection of schools and of school children, with the precaution it creates against the spread of contagion of these and other diseases and the enlightenment it gives to parents and teachers as to the nature of these diseases among others, is another most effective channel of instruction.

The city physician and sanitary inspector, when well chosen, are in a position to aid greatly in the work by

bringing such sources of contagion to the knowledge of those whose duty it is to enforce the law and ordinances designed to suppress them.

Members of boards of education, superintendents, principals and teachers of schools, both public and private, should all be well informed as to the nature of these diseases and the dangers which attend them and their interest and co-operation secured in efforts to check their ravages.

Effective work can be done through church organizations, young peoples' Christian endeavor societies and mothers' meetings.

The young men's and young women's Christian associations are admirable channels for the spread of such knowledge, and the possibilities which the Salvation Army has for reaching these sources of evil directly and effectively must not be overlooked.

In manufacturing, commercial and industrial cities where large numbers of men and women are employed, both young and middle-aged, the interest of employers can usually be enlisted to afford an opportunity for such instruction to be given when it is not possible for these people to be reached through other channels.

In all of this work the physician who knows the facts and can speak from experience must take the lead, and it is in work such as this that the woman physician, of the right sort, will find a sphere of activity and great service peculiarly her own, for separate instruction to the sexes, both young and old, will need to be given plainly, but tactfully, and by those who have seen at close range the dangers they portray and whose word carries conviction because spoken with authority. Broad, disinterested benevolence, such as rightly represents and adds dignity to a liberal profession, should characterize the persons chosen for this work. It is not for the self-seeker nor the unsympathetic, but for those who know what it means to labor for the unperishable riches, and of these workers the medical profession has an abundant share.

In the brief sketch here given I have but presented in outline the plan of campaign already adopted in the state of Michigan. The State Medical Society of that state created, a year ago, a standing committee charged with the duty of bringing to the knowledge of the public the facts that need to be generally known, and referring to the origin, spread and dangers of venereal diseases. This committee was authorized to enlarge its number to twenty, many of whom are chosen from the laity. One most successful meeting has already been held in Detroit, at which it was fully demonstrated that the most influential citizens are quick to respond and follow the lead of the physicians in this work. From this committee of twenty, subcommittees on publication, education and legal enactment have been organized and are at work. On these committees are physicians, lawyers, ministers of several denominations, business men and women devoted to philanthropic and charitable undertakings. There is no question but that which we have demonstrated, through the work of this organization in Michigan, serves but to indicate the general temper throughout America on this most important matter, and it needs no prophet to foresee how fruitful of good results such a systematic and thorough plan of enlightenment against this grave evil will soon be able to accomplish.

## THE DUTY OF THE STATE TOWARD VENEREAL DISEASES.\*

HENRY D. HOLTON, A.M., M.D.  
BRATTLEBORO, VT.

In discussing the duty of the state in relation to both syphilis and gonorrhea, we must recognize that, under the present status of public opinion, the state can accomplish very little, either by the enactment of new laws or by giving additional authority to boards of health; that before we seek aid from the state there must be created a public sentiment which will sustain action by authority, but there must also be a strong demand for state interference.

This can only be brought about by an educational movement, which shall begin in the home and continue in the high and preparatory schools and college.

The parents should explain how the race is perpetuated, the sacredness and responsibility of the relations of parents and children, the great moral and physical dangers that attend on the abuse of those functions, and that continence is not incompatible with health. The teacher or physician should enlarge on these lines and point out the diseases that result from impure intercourse; that all clandestine embraces are dangerous, as the individual, male or female, who enters into such relations, be it clandestine or otherwise, will sooner or later become infected; and either of the diseases thus acquired are of the most serious character, of long duration, often followed by the most disastrous results, ending in death or chronic invalidism, and many times by deformity. It is quite possible that the profession should first be educated along the line of duty. Physicians are familiar with the loathsome and disastrous nature of venereal disease; of the danger of its communication to innocent persons; in fact, of the great menace it is to our civilization. Yet in the past we fear that it has been regarded too lightly by some; others have turned away such cases with disgust. In both cases, the great duty of attempting to stay its destruction and progress has not been recognized or at least acted on.

In countries across the sea statistics have been gathered, showing the prevalence, how provided for, and the means used to prevent its spread. In a certain way, these are of value to us, yet the difference of our form of government and social conditions is such as seriously to impair their usefulness when we attempt to draw deductions or to formulate regulations for their control.

The information necessary to carry on successfully the work of prevention should be the first work of any organization that has in view the control of these diseases.

Without going into details it will be recalled that in a joint meeting of this section and that on cutaneous medicine, in 1904, a committee reported on this subject, recommending the sending to every physician a request for certain statistical information, which it was hoped might be useful in the further consideration of this subject.

These communications received the approval of the state and provincial boards of health, and they are here inserted:

\* Read in the Section on Hygiene and Sanitary Science of the American Medical Association, at the Fifty-seventh Annual Session, June, 1906.