

THE VENEREAL DISEASES

A Sociologic Study



The American Social Hygiene Association
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New York City

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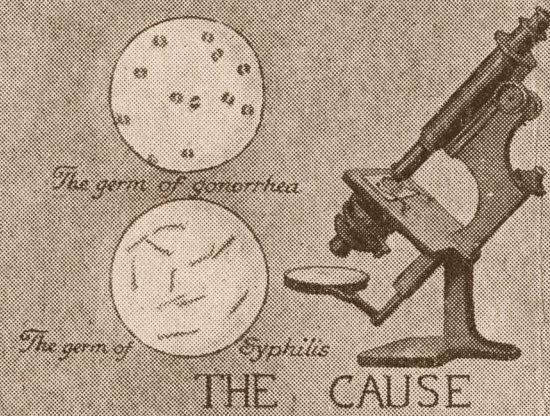
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The Venereal Diseases

A Sociologic Study

THERE are in the United States about 75,000 deaths yearly from preventable diseases. Because an ounce of prevention is worth more than a pound of cure, efforts are being made in various directions to prevent diseases. The problem of preventing the venereal diseases is not a simple matter of sanitation, but involves morals, social relations, economics, and other factors. It is not generally known, except to doctors and those dealing with the sick, that these diseases are more widespread than tuberculosis and that their far-reaching effects cause untold misery, pain, economic waste, and death. Everyone should be acquainted with the important facts, and have a well-rounded view of the subject.

THE VENEREAL DISEASES



Studying the Problem of Eradication.

These diseases are dangerous, communicable, and preventable.

They are largely but not exclusively spread by the practices of prostitution.



THE CARRIERS

They cause untold suffering, misery, and death to men, women, and children.



THE SUFFERERS

CHAPTER I

Studying the Problem of Eradication

THE germs of these diseases are known and may be seen under the microscope. Under many conditions they may be transmitted to a healthy person and cause the disease. The chief opportunity for their transmission is afforded by sexual intercourse between an infected person and an uninfected one. Certain syphilitic sores of the mouth contain thousands of germs which are sometimes carried to another by kissing or through the medium of the common drinking-cup, eating utensils, or pipes.

* * *

Almost all prostitutes acquire one or all of the venereal diseases during their careers. A large percentage are in the infectious stage and are recognized by those who have studied prostitution from the public health standpoint as the most fruitful sources of venereal infection. Thus by the infamous practice of prostitution these diseases may be carried from the woman of the street, by an unscrupulous man to his innocent wife. Clandestine prostitutes are also dangerous carriers of these diseases. Continence in the pre-matrimonial state is the surest safeguard, and it is gratifying to note that the military authorities of the nation have formally declared that "continence is compatible with health and is the best safeguard against venereal infection."

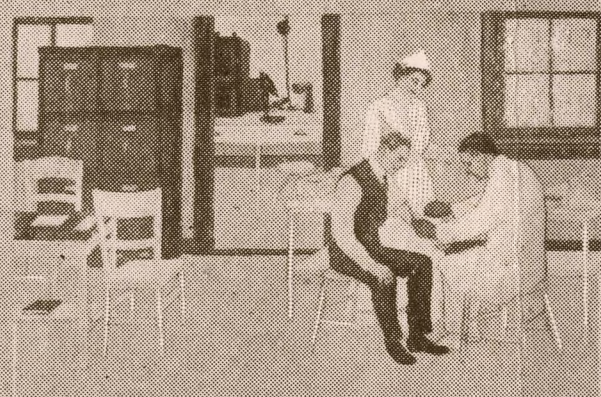
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These diseases are not confined to particular classes. Since they may be transmitted to innocent wives, to the offspring by inheritance, and through accidental contamination, individuals in all grades of society suffer. Syphilis is responsible for a large percentage of insanity in the United States. Much of the blindness in this country is caused by gonococcus infection, and a great many pelvic operations on women are due to the same cause. In the illustration on page 4 are pictured the workingman, the prostitute, the banker, the college student, the grandmother, the mother, the boys and girls, and even the babe in arms, dragging at the immense economic and social weight "Venereal Diseases."

THE VENEREAL DISEASES

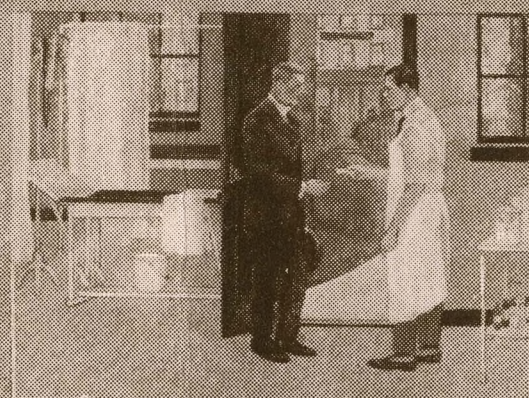
II- *Discovering and Treating Infected Individuals.*

Methods of Diagnosis are Known.



The Health Department

Physicians, Dispensaries, and Hospitals



The Dispensary and Hospital

can collectively provide adequate treatment for all applicants.

The extension of social service follow-up work is feasible.



The Visiting Nurse

CHAPTER II.

Discovering and Treating Infected Individuals

REMARKABLE advances of inestimable value in the control of venereal disease have been made during the past ten years, in early diagnosis and treatment. Health departments, hospitals and dispensaries are awakening to their responsibility and in many ways opportunities are being offered to the unfortunate by enlightened and progressive communities.

Syphilis is an insidious enemy to the human race because the disease may continue long after recognizable symptoms have disappeared and because the real nature of it is often overlooked. Certain remarkable tests have been devised to assist in making the diagnosis. As a matter of public health, every means should be employed to put these tests within reach of all. Facilities should be provided free for the indigent and the discovery and proper treatment of all infected individuals should be encouraged.

* * *

Many hospitals and dispensaries arbitrarily close their doors to patients suffering with venereal diseases. This is a remnant of barbarism. Social justice demands that this class of patients be offered adequate treatment. Three distinct advantages are apparent in this work: First, relief to the immediate sufferer; second, protection of the public by rendering carriers of the disease less liable to transmit it to others; third, by properly educating such patients, knowledge concerning these diseases is disseminated by those who have paid the price of bitter experience for their first-hand information. Contact between doctor and patient should be humane and sympathetic; hospital facilities should be available for cases needing such attention and provision for modern treatment with due regard for privacy should be made.

* * *

Most dispensaries providing treatment for the venereal diseases have found the social worker and the follow-up system invaluable adjuncts. The social worker encourages regular attendance and persistent treatment until a complete cure is effected. She is also useful in discovering those individuals in the families of patients who require treatment. She assists by adjusting difficulties and by sympathetically advising with those dealing with this most important medical-social problem.

THE VENEREAL DISEASES



The Segregated District

III-Limiting the Opportunities of Carriers for Spreading Infection.

Environmental conditions are important factors in the dissemination of these diseases.



The Rear Room of the Saloon



The Disorderly House

A practical program for the repression of prostitution has been worked out to meet these conditions.



The Country Roadhouse

CHAPTER III

Limiting the Opportunities of Carriers for Spreading Infection

AN established and commonly-known segregated district, recognized and condoned by the state or municipality, is a direct invitation to a young man to indulge in the dissipations which lead to the venereal diseases. The country boy "seeing the sights" in company with his city cousin is openly tempted by the glare of lights, the music, and the solicitations of inmates of the district; the assignation house provides a ready means for the clandestine prostitute and her victims; and the practices of vice are openly flaunted in the face of even the immature messenger boy on his round of duties. The segregated district is tolerated because of the fallacious belief that the exercise of the sex functions is a physical necessity. Physiologists have proven the falsity of this notion, therefore the segregated district is *not* a necessity.

* * *

Alcohol plays an important role in leading men and women into the practices of immorality. It lessens the power to resist temptation, and promotes opportunity for sexual license. A drink-befuddled person loses his better judgment and grasp on himself, and easily succumbs to the allurements of vice. Prostitution is most successfully carried on when in partnership with strong drink, and legal measures should and can be employed to break up this union of liquor and vice.

* * *

The chief objection raised by enemies of the abolition of the segregated district is the "scatteration" of prostitution. The fact that vice is already scattered is usually ignored. Moreover, the segregated district is merely the headquarters of this vicious business and increases the sum total of prostitution in a city, just as crime is increased when criminals congregate in "nests." The Injunction and Abatement Law is the most effective weapon for dealing with the situation, as it enables the private citizen to furnish evidence to the proper court official on the basis of which a house of prostitution may be eliminated, requiring the owner to be responsible for the uses which may be made of his property.

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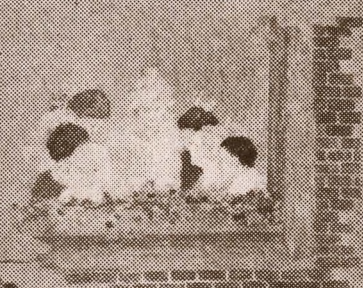
The road house and questionable hotel may also be reached by the same law.

THE VENEREAL DISEASES

Self-control based on knowledge is the chief defense.



IV-Safeguarding Uninfected Individuals.



Sex education and training in personal hygiene begin in the home.



The school can cooperate with parents.



Opportunities for recreation and companionship are community requirements.



The physician can aid in sex hygiene instruction.



The clergyman can interpret religion and ethics in terms of daily conduct.



Training in social conventions and an understanding of the meaning of marriage make for a rational sex life.



CHAPTER IV

Safeguarding Uninfected Individuals

TRAINING of the young should begin in the home. The fable of the stork may temporarily satisfy the normal curiosity of the child when first he inquires as to the origin of life, but it will also serve as the entering wedge for the destruction of that close confidence which should exist between mother and the child. A "chummy" father can do more for his boy than anyone else by cultivating intimate relations with his son and by giving him the knowledge which will fortify him against temptation.

The biology of reproduction furnishes a background for sane and rational ideas about sex and personal hygiene. With a knowledge of the fundamentals of reproduction in plants and lower animals, analogies and differences of human reproduction are easily brought out, a vocabulary is furnished, and the subject of sex is given a clear interpretation. Athletic, mental, and artistic pursuits serve to direct impulses which might otherwise express themselves in harmful practices. While fear of disease and disaster may serve to restrain some men and women from wrongdoing, the constructive forces of education, ambition, and right-living are to be relied on as the best safeguard.

The physician can furnish facts and give authoritative counsel on certain phases of the subject. The clergyman and moral leader can encourage the higher impulses and appeal to the religious and ethical sense. The spiritual meaning of home and family life must be taught and every effort made to redeem the subject of sex from unclean associations and place it on its proper high plane. Women are ceasing to condone the "indiscretions" of young men and are demanding of them the same high moral standard which has been maintained for women. An increasing number of men are recognizing the fairness of the demand and meeting it.

THE VENEREAL DISEASES

V-Protecting those who can not protect themselves



Many States protect infants from gonorrheal blindness by simple treatment



Custodial care reduces venereal diseases through protection of the mentally deficient



Freedom from venereal diseases should be required of those who marry.

Education and public health laws may protect against the occasional infections acquired through various contacts.



CHAPTER V

Protecting Those Who Cannot Protect Themselves

IT is said that a considerable percentage of the blindness in the United States is due to gonococcus infection at birth. By means of a very simple method of treatment, which should be employed by doctors or midwives in each instance, this condition can be prevented. In addition to legislation, there is required the education of the obstetrical attendant as well as of the layman.

* * *

Feeble-mindedness is no bar to the transmission of life. Unfortunates so afflicted lack power to resist the wiles of unscrupulous tempters. Protection of the mentally unfit through custodial care and by other means is an obligation of society and the state.

* * *

The distressing occurrence, repeated over and over again, of a healthy young girl marrying and being doomed to inevitable invalidism, has stimulated the demand for measures looking toward the protection of those entering matrimony. Plans are being tried out whereby the state may be assured of freedom from disease of each of the contracting parties, without subjecting them to disagreeable questioning or examination.

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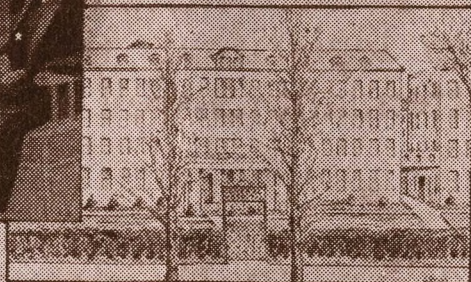
Legislation directed against the exchange of personal and toilet articles has not been aimed exclusively at tuberculosis; the venereal diseases are also combated by such measures. The illustration suggests some of the many recorded instances of extra-genital infections: The exchange of pipes, the drinking cup, the unclean hands and instruments of the barber and of the waiter, the close contact inevitable in cheap lodging houses, and such opportunities as that indicated by the harmonica which the man with syphilitic sores in his mouth returns to the boy. Fortunately these extra-genital infections (sometimes called "innocent" or "accidental" infections) are not frequent either in syphilis or gonorrhea, but they should be guarded against.

THE VENEREAL DISEASES

VI-Controlling those who will not or cannot cooperate



The Police Court



The Hospital

Treatment for known carriers should be provided independently of punishment.



The Lodging House



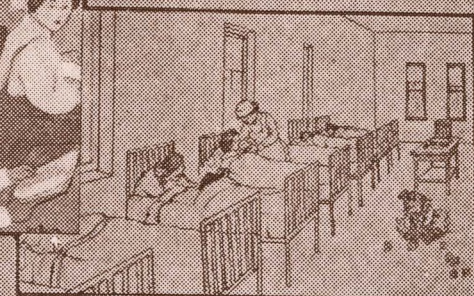
The County Farm

Treatment and control of the careless and indifferent is necessary in reducing these diseases.

Venereal disease infections among children require treatment for their welfare and the protection of others



The School Room



The Children's Ward

CHAPTER VI

Controlling Those Who Will Not or Cannot Coöperate

THERE is still another group of individuals often forgotten in considering this problem, namely, those who will not, or cannot coöperate with society in limiting the spread of these diseases to others. As a public health measure, the community owes it to its members not only to provide facilities for the care and control of these individuals, but also to see to it that they are properly used. Some laws on venereal diseases not only provide for treatment and diagnosis, but hold all parties concerned responsible for thorough treatment until cured. These laws are no more drastic than public health measures for quarantine and isolation for diseases better understood by the public.

The procedure in many police courts in dealing with the infected "woman of the street" by means of fines is of no avail and indeed often becomes farcical. Increased efforts at plying her trade in order to pay the fines are the natural result. Imprisonment in the work-house is no better. The solution seems to lie in some method of institutional care, such as a reformatory, farm, or school where opportunities for leaving the old life and starting anew are offered. Every infected disorderly woman can at least be treated until rendered non-infectious, without making such treatment a part of the penalty.

* * *

The man who is "down and out" has little regard for his neighbor, and is indifferent or careless concerning his obligations to society. The cheap lodging house or the low-grade restaurant, patronized by these men, and institutions where they may congregate in large numbers are likely to become the means of spreading infections including the venereal diseases. It would seem that the county or municipal farm, with proper surveillance of the inmates, could more effectively deal with this problem. This, like many other aspects of the social hygiene problem, reverts back to the large social-economic questions of the day.

* * *

It has been found that a considerable number of little children have become innocently infected and have unwittingly spread venereal disease to others; this is especially true of gonorrhoea among young girls. These little sufferers require great care in the treatment, isolation and instruction in personal habits.