

Report of the Committee for the Prevention of Venereal Diseases : read before, and adopted by, the Society, July 1st, 1867 / edited by Charles R. Drysdale and J. Brendon Curgenvven.

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Harveian Medical Society of London.

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REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE
FOR THE
PREVENTION OF VENEREAL DISEASES,

READ BEFORE, AND ADOPTED BY, THE SOCIETY,

JULY 1st, 1867.

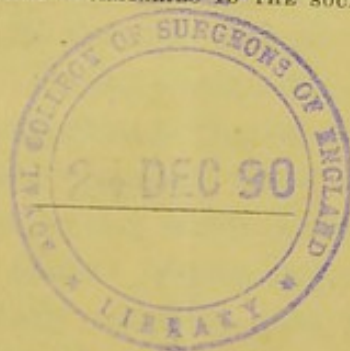
EDITED BY

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AND

J. BRENDON CURGENVEN, Esq.,

HONORARY SECRETARIES TO THE SOCIETY.



LONDON :

T. RICHARDS, 37, GREAT QUEEN STREET.

1867.

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HARVEIAN MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

COMMITTEE FOR THE PREVENTION OF VENEREAL DISEASES,

Appointed February 21st, 1867,

THE MEMBERS OF COMMITTEE BEING:—

Dr. J. E. Pollock (*President*), Mr. Acton, Dr. Bazire, Dr. Beigel, Dr. Broadbent, Dr. Chapman, Mr. Weeden Cooke, Mr. Holmes Coote, Mr. Walter Coulson, Mr. Brendon Curgenvin and Dr. Charles Drysdale (*Hon. Secs.*), Mr. R. W. Dunn, Dr. Tilbury Fox, Mr. G. G. Gascoyen, Mr. Ernest Hart, Mr. Berkeley Hill, Dr. Hjaltelin, Mr. James Lane, Dr. Maudsley, Dr. C. Meredyth, Mr. Victor de Meric, Dr. Semple, Mr. Sedgwick, Dr. Steele, Dr. Stuart, Mr. Teevan, Mr. Henry Thompson, and Dr. Vintras.

OBJECTS.—To investigate the extent of the spread of the contagious diseases commonly called Venereal Diseases among the population of this country; to discuss the best means for preventing that widely extended evil; and to report thereupon to the International Congress to be held this year in Paris.

REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE.

OWING to various reasons, the attention of the public has of late years been drawn to the enormous evils which result to society from the extent of the spread of the so-called venereal diseases among all classes. So severely have the ravages of these complaints affected the British Army, that, in the year 1864, the army statistics showed that, of an average number of 73,000 troops stationed in the kingdom, there was a "loss of service by venereal diseases, in the whole force, of nearly an entire week of that body's time." Again in the year 1862, of 88,600 men of the Royal Navy admitted into hospital, 7000 were so admitted for venereal diseases. To remedy these evils the Parliament of Great Britain passed first an act, entitled the "Contagious Diseases Prevention Act," which came into operation in December 1864; and subsequently a Royal commission

was appointed, which examined a number of medical men and other witnesses, and was styled the "Venereal Diseases Commission." The result of the labours of this commission was the passing of an Act of Parliament, entitled the "Contagious Diseases Act of 1866." The object of this Act being merely the prevention of venereal diseases in the Army and Navy, its operation holds good only for the towns of Portsmouth, Plymouth, Woolwich, Chatham, Sheerness, Aldershot, Windsor, Colchester, Shorncliffe, the Curragh, Cork, and Queenstown, all of which are military or naval stations.

The general features of the "Contagious Diseases Act, 1866," are, that the police of the above-mentioned towns have the power of causing any common prostitutes, carrying on open prostitution in these places, to be taken to a dispensary to be examined as to their state of health, and, if diseased, of enforcing their stay in Government hospitals until cured. Already this law, as will appear, has caused a considerable diminution of disease in the above mentioned localities. The knowledge, too, of the very satisfactory results which have been obtained in the diminution of venereal diseases, in many of the French and foreign towns, tended much to encourage somewhat similar attempts in this country; and thus the question became ripe for discussion.

At this juncture it was that the promoters of the "Congrès Médical International de Paris, 1867," proposed the following question to its various members:—*Question 3.* "Est-il possible de proposer aux divers gouvernements quelques mesures efficaces pour restreindre la propagation des maladies vénériennes?" Incited by the foregoing causes, the members of the Harveian Medical Society of London came to the resolution, on the 21st of February, 1867, on a motion proposed by Dr. Charles Drysdale and seconded by Dr. Tilbury Fox, that a Committee should be formed for the following purpose:—"To investigate the extent of the spread of the contagious diseases, commonly called venereal diseases, among the population of this country; to discuss the best means for preventing that widely extended evil, and to report thereon to the international congress to be held this year in Paris." The Committee con-

sisted of members of the society especially interested in the question; and they have invited the co-operation of several distinguished members of the profession, who have devoted their attention to the subject. The following gentlemen have taken part in the deliberations of the Committee—"Dr. Pollock, (the President), Mr. Acton, Dr. Victor Bazire, Dr. Beigel, Dr. Broadbent, Dr. Chapman, Mr. Weeden Cooke, Mr. Holmes Coote, Mr. Walter Coulson, Mr. Curgenvin and Dr. C. Drysdale, Hon. Secs., Mr. R. W. Dunn, Dr. Tilbury Fox, Mr. Gascoyen, Mr. Ernest Hart, Mr. Berkeley Hill, Dr. Hjaltelin, Mr. James Lane, Dr. Maudsley, Dr. Menzies, Dr. Colomiati Meredyth, Mr. Victor de Méric, Dr. Semple, Mr. Sedgwick, Dr. Steele, Dr. Stuart, Mr. Teevan, Mr. Henry Thompson, and Dr. Achille Vintras.

The Committee at their first meeting, in March 13th, determined to send out circulars to all the large hospitals in Great Britain and Ireland, requesting to be informed as to the daily number of venereal cases seen at each hospital; the proportion of these cases to the surgical cases seen; and the number of beds set apart for such cases in each hospital. This was accordingly performed, and the committee have to express their warmest thanks to the various surgeons and other gentlemen of these hospitals, for the important information furnished by them. From these reports it will be seen that the damage inflicted on the general population by contagious venereal diseases is enormous, and it would not, perhaps, be too much to say, that no diseases of a preventable character cause greater evils among society at present in this country than these do. Thus the report from Mr. Coote, surgeon to St. Bartholomew's Hospital, shows an average daily number of 174 venereal cases seen, or about half of the surgical out-patient cases. The report from Guy's Hospital, by Dr. Steele, shows that about 43 per cent. of all the out-patients seen annually are venereal. Mr. Cooper Forster says, that of 295 surgical out-patients seen by him in May 1867, in Guy's Hospital, 174 were venereal and 121 non-venereal. The Royal Free Hospital, London, sees daily 117 cases of venereal disease, or three-eighths of its surgical cases are venereal. At the Hospitals of King's Col-

lege, University College, St. Mary's Hospital, Westminster, the London Hospital, the Middlesex Hospital, and the Metropolitan Free Hospital, the number of venereal cases seen varies from one-third to one-fifth of the out-patient surgical cases daily seen at these hospitals. The London Lock Hospital sees daily 179 male and 39 female out-patients. It has 15 beds for males. It has never more than 30 beds available for the prostitutes of London, the majority of its beds (80 in number) being kept for government cases under the Contagious Diseases Act, 1866. At the *Dreadnought* Seamen's Hospital, London, about 50 cases of venereal disease are seen daily among the sailors of the mercantile marine, who are much infested by venereal diseases. In the Ophthalmic Hospital of Moorfields, one-fifth of the cases of eye disease among the out-patients are reported by Mr. Hutchinson as being caused by syphilis.

There are very few beds for venereal patients in London. Thus, the Lock Hospital, as before said, has not more than 30 beds available for poor women or prostitutes afflicted with even the gravest affections, and according to Mr. James Lane, and Mr. Gascoyen, is constantly compelled to send away applicants, even with large ulcerations of the genitalia, for want of room. Guy's Hospital has 56 beds for venereal patients, 25 for men and 30 for women. St. Thomas's Hospital has sent no report, but used to have, according to Dr. Vintras, 65 beds for venereal patients, of which 25 were for women, before the hospital was removed from its ancient site. The Royal Free Hospital has 26 beds for female cases; and women are daily sent away, suffering from the most contagious forms of disease. The Middlesex Hospital has only 11 beds for female venereal cases. Venereal cases are not admitted into St. George's Hospital as a rule, or into St. Mary's, University College, or many other of the London hospitals. There are not more than half a dozen beds for female venereal cases in the London Hospital, which has no less than 450 beds, and is located in a poor and teeming neighbourhood, much infested by venereal diseases. Thus, St. Bartholomew's Hospital, which has 25 beds for men, and 56 for women with

venereal disease, is much frequented by the poor diseased women from Whitechapel and the East-end, in which locality there is most urgent need of female Lock accommodation.

There are thus, in the whole of London, with a population exceeding 3,000,000, probably not much more than 150 beds in hospitals available for prostitutes, or poor women with contagious venereal diseases. Now, in 1865, there were in London, according to the Police Reports, entitled "Judicial Statistics," close upon 6000 prostitutes well-known to the police, and classed by them with thieves, and other bad characters. This, however, probably does not include more than one-third of those who gain their living by prostitution, and, as a very great proportion of these are diseased, it can well be imagined how inadequate the supply of beds is for this population, all of whom are spreading far and wide the evils of contagious venereal disease.

One important fact has been elicited from the inquiries made by the Committee of the Harveian Medical Society, and that is, that the Workhouses of London do not, except to a very limited extent, take in prostitutes, when suffering from these diseases, but send them off to beg for the shelter of the very inadequate number of beds provided for them in the Lock and other charitable institutions. Thus, the Strand Workhouse, the Whitechapel Workhouse, the City of London Workhouse, the Paddington Workhouse, St. Olave's Workhouse, Lambeth Workhouse, Shoreditch Workhouse, St. Martin's Workhouse, Hackney Workhouse, Bethnal-green Workhouse, St. Luke's Workhouse, St. Giles' Workhouse, and Newington Workhouse, do not seem, collectively, to devote above three dozen beds to the reception of female venereal cases, but send off such applicants to the Lock Hospital (to which they subscribe certain sums annually), to the Royal Free, or St. Bartholomew's, or Guy's Hospital, to struggle for admission with a host of unfortunate applicants, many of whom being rejected, are forced to go on with their trade in order to live.

The effect of syphilitic disease upon the health of children was shown by the report from Dr. Williams, from the London Hospital for Sick Children, Ormond-street. This report shows

that, in 1866, there were 93 boys and 105 girls affected with syphilis, out of 1007 surgical cases seen, or about one-fifth. In hospitals and dispensaries for the treatment of skin diseases, from one-eighth up to four-fifths of the cases are reported by Dr. Hunt and others to be secondary syphilitic eruptions. There still exists a strong feeling in the mind of the public that venereal diseases, being brought on for the most part by promiscuous intercourse between the sexes, ought not to have the same attention shown to them as any other class of diseases. This feeling has produced the result that, at many dispensaries and hospitals in London and the provincial towns, no venereal cases are admitted. Thus, St. George's, St. Mary's, University College Hospital, London, and others, do not profess to treat such cases. Mr. Jackson reports from South Staffordshire Hospital that there are no beds for such cases. The Portland-town Free Dispensary says it is one of the rules that no venereal patient is to be admitted to the benefits of the charity. Islington Dispensary, likewise, has scarcely any venereal patients. Other dispensaries, again, as the Farringdon Dispensary, London, according to Mr. Dunn, report that as much as one-eighth of the surgical cases are venereal. The report from the Nottingham General Hospital says that "Primary sores and gonorrhœa are seldom seen; a certain class of practitioners and the quacks get hold of them all." In the Hull General Infirmary there are no beds for such cases, as also in the Dumfries General Hospital. The consequence of these regulations of the Committees of the various hospitals, of course, is, that a vast number of cases of venereal disease in all of our large towns remain untreated, and thus contagion is propagated on all sides; and, besides this, patients are thus encouraged to seek the aid of unskilled and uneducated persons, to the great detriment both of their health and their pockets. Besides this, the venereal cases from such districts betake themselves to the more liberal hospitals, as in London, where, according to Mr. Coote, the worst cases of disease and poverty combined come from the Whitechapel District, East, where there is really nothing worth calling accommodation for the large number of diseased prostitutes of that poor and densely-peopled district.

With regard to the accommodation for venereal disease in other towns in Great Britain and Ireland, it seems to be as inadequate in all the large towns, except Dublin, which has a Parliamentary grant, as it is in London. Very few towns have lock hospitals at all; and those which have such, have far too few beds for all patients requiring admission. Liverpool Southern, and other hospitals, send their venereal cases to the Lock Hospital, which has fifty beds, and an average of forty-five inmates of these beds, male and female. The Dublin Lock Hospital only admits female cases, and has, on an average, 86 such cases, and no out-patients. Staffordshire General Infirmary has four male and four female lock beds, frequently empty. Chester Infirmary has, on an average, two female lock patients. In the Royal Infirmary of Edinburgh, according to Dr. Gillespie's report, there are 26 venereal beds; the Edinburgh Lock Hospital is only for females. The Royal Infirmary of Glasgow has no beds for venereal cases; and the Glasgow Lock Hospital has only 45 beds for these cases. Belfast General Hospital has six venereal inmates, and a small ward set apart for females. There is no Lock Hospital in that town.

The Manchester Medical Society has most kindly co-operated with the Harveian Medical Society's Committee, and in a letter from Dr. Morgan, who with Dr. Hardie, Dr. Thorburn, Mr. Lund, and Mr. E. M. Bradley, formed a committee for investigating this question, it is stated that, in the years 1864-65-66, out of an average number of 75,000 patients seen in public practice, the average number of new venereal cases in Manchester and Salford does not fall far short of 3,500 cases annually, out of a population of about 390,000. The Manchester Lock Hospital has an average of 20 in-patients and 56 out-patients daily. The Southern Hospital of Manchester, the Ardwick and Ancoats Dispensary, the Chorlton in Medlock Dispensary, report that from one-third to one-eighth of their surgical patients are venereal cases. The Manchester Workhouse, Bridge-street, sees daily 91 venereal cases or 1 in 8 of its surgical cases, and has 15 beds for male and 46 for female venereal cases. The Rumpsall Workhouse has a daily average

of 8 male and 12 female venereal cases, but no special beds. The Salford Workhouse sees daily 9 male and 63 female venereal cases, in which 39 cases of infantile syphilis are included. It has 6 female venereal beds. The Chorlton Union Workhouse has 20 female venereal beds, and sees a daily number of 7 male and 14 female venereal cases. The New Borough Gaol, Manchester, sees daily 10 venereal cases, or 62 per cent. of its surgical cases are so affected. It has no special beds for such cases. The New Bailey has daily 11 male and 3 female venereal cases, or nearly 43 per cent. of its surgical cases arise from these diseases. The Salford Hospital and Dispensary, St. Mary's Hospital, the Clinical and Bridge-street Children's Hospitals, report that from 1 in 10 to 1 in 30 of their patients are venereal cases. The Eye Hospital, Manchester, reports that one in 20 of its cases are venereal. Manchester Royal Infirmary has no beds for venereal cases, and has on an average 23 male and 22 female venereal cases daily. In a letter from Dr. Bradley, that gentleman remarks, "we are fully convinced that the quacks and chemists attend a large proportion of the entire number of venereal cases occurring in Manchester." He adds, "Our Committee feel assured, that the above statistics give the minimum number of cases of venereal disease existing in Manchester; that, in all probability, the evil extends to a much greater degree than can possibly be ascertained by any public inquiry; that it effects a positive injury on the national physique; and that the steps which the Harveian Society are taking are urgently called for, and merit every legislative support." Dr. Bradley states, that 387 venereal cases are seen daily in Manchester in public practice, in the proportion of 1 in 7 of the whole daily patients seen, both medical and surgical.

A committee has also been formed in Southampton for the purpose of co-operating with the Committee of the Harveian Society, and was composed of the following gentlemen:—Dr. Langstaffe, Dr. Bullen, Dr. Scott, Dr. Griffin, and Mr. W. Sims. Dr. Lawrence, President of the Southampton Medical Society, reports that in the district with which he is connected, there are, on an average, 1500 to 2000 cases of venereal disease treated annually.

The importance of the late Government examinations in reducing the amount of venereal disease in the localities which are placed under the operation of the Act is shown by the fact vouched for by Dr. Stuart, of Woolwich, Government Inspecting Officer under the Act, that, although the Act came into operation only in October, 1866, the amount of disease in April, 1867, was only one half of what it had been in Woolwich, and consisted, in a large proportion of cases, entirely of gonorrhœa. The examinations, too, at Woolwich had as yet been confined entirely to women *suspected* of being diseased. In October, 1866, too, the proportion of cases of venereal disease found among the troops quartered at Woolwich was 1·75 per cent., and by April, 1867, the proportion of cases belonging to the troops in the garrison was not much over a half per cent. of their number, or less than a third of what it was. It appears, also, according to Dr. Stuart, that the amount of disease among the civil population of Woolwich is much diminished since the examination of the prostitutes has been enforced. Again, it appears that at Sheerness there have only been 36 admissions for venereal disease into the Garrison Hospital from January 1st to April 22nd, 1867, whilst Aldershot, which in April, 1867, had not yet been put under the operation of the Act, was reported by Mr. Powell in April, 1867, as being in a deplorable condition with respect to venereal disease. There were two venereal female wards in the workhouse with 18 beds adjoining the camp (which contains 10,000 men), and a fever ward had also to be used for the poor diseased women, with an average of only 200 cubic feet for each patient. The consequence of this was the excessive severity of the cases, and an extensive infection of the troops. By this time it is believed that sufficient accommodation has been obtained for the poor diseased women; and that this terrible state of things is much mitigated. In the Herbert Military Hospital, Woolwich, there is a daily average of 84 venereal cases. All venereal cases in the army are treated as in-patients; and, according to Mr. Teevan, this regulation is a bad one, often causing soldiers to have recourse to chemists and other surgeons, instead of going to their own army medical man, because they object to low

diet, and detention in-doors. Mr. James Lane and Mr. Gascoyen report that there is a great diminution in the severity of the government cases sent to the Lock Hospital since the Act of 1866. Dr. Nankivell reports that there are 40 female venereal beds at Chatham for prostitutes, under the Contagious Diseases Act, 1866. The disease is much milder and less frequent in consequence of the operation of that Act.

The results of the various reports which the Committee have received, have led them to hope that a very great deal might be done towards the prevention of venereal diseases, which are now so serious an evil in this country, and especially in large towns. Paris, a very much less populous city, has upwards of 450 beds for female venereal cases, and 336 for males, whilst London has not much more than 150 female beds at present for women affected with these diseases, and certainly not much over 100 beds for male venereal cases—a provision so inadequate as completely to account for the excessive frequency of these diseases, as seen in the practice of hospital medical officers, and also of private practitioners. Mr. Acton has calculated that there ought to be 1500 beds for males and females in London, devoted to such cases, in order to be in proportion to those so devoted in some of the Continental towns, and the Committee are of opinion that even this is not an exaggerated estimate. The Committee earnestly hope that the hour has at length arrived when the attention of the profession and the public may be aroused to the enormity of the existing evils; and the necessity of doing something towards preventing so preventable a class of diseases as those commonly called venereal diseases. Small-pox has in many communities, been effectually stamped out by means of Government legislative measures; and there is no reason why the same attempt should not be made in this country, to prevent the spread of one of the most grievous plagues to which the human race is a prey, and one which is by no means a scourge to the thoughtless alone, but extends its effects to the most interesting and helpless members of the race, infants and children.

The facts above stated are the results of the investigations of

the Committee, extending over a period of four months. They have been elicited by inquiries addressed to the medical officers of a large number of the hospitals, dispensaries, and workhouses throughout the kingdom. After repeated discussions upon the above-mentioned facts, and having ascertained the enormous amount of preventable disease existing, and the entire inadequacy of the existing means for treating, as well as for checking its extension, the Committee have adopted the following resolutions, by a great majority of its members :—

“That there is a great deficiency of hospital accommodation in London, and other large towns of this country, for patients, especially females, affected with venereal diseases.”

And furthermore (considering that the sanitary regulations in various foreign countries have been of the most signal service in checking the amount and mitigating the severity of these diseases ; and, also, that great advantage has already been derived, in a very brief period, by the operation of somewhat analogous methods in this country, in the military and naval stations, from the operation of the Contagious Diseases Act of 1866), the Committee are of opinion :—

“That regulations similar to those contained in that Act might be carried out by the police, without difficulty, among the civil population, in London and other large towns, the essential features of the system being as follows :—

“That a register of all women known to be acting as prostitutes should be kept by the police. That such women should be required to submit themselves to a periodical examination by a medical officer appointed for that purpose, and that, when found to be suffering from venereal disease, they should be detained in hospital until cured—additional accommodation being provided for that purpose.

“It is desirable that the registration of women above suggested should be kept for the private use of the police authorities only, and should be in no way accessible to the public ; also, that no certificate of health should be given to the women on the occasion of their periodical examinations, and that when discharged from hospital, the certificate of cure should not be given to the women themselves, but be forwarded to the police authorities.

“The object of the Committee in suggesting legislative interference is solely the prevention and cure of venereal disease, and they believe that this desirable end would be, to a great extent, obtained by regulations, such as those above suggested, which would be sanitary in their operation, and which would involve no public recognition of prostitution, and no registration of prostitutes, or of houses used for the purpose of prostitution, that would be available to the public.

“The carrying out of the above system would require the maintenance of a number of beds for persons affected with venereal disease at the public expense, and the Committee, therefore (considering the vast amount of preventable venereal disease existing in London, and other large towns, and also the fact that poor women, when suffering from such diseases, are not admitted into the workhouse infirmaries, but are, in the majority of cases, sent to the Lock Hospital, which is quite inadequate for their reception), are of opinion that provision should be made for the reception of such persons, either in special hospitals, or in special wards set apart for such cases in workhouse hospitals; and they would suggest whether it would not be possible that provision should be made for this purpose, in the new Poor-law arrangements of Mr. Hardy’s Bill.”

In conclusion, the Committee cannot help expressing their earnest hope, that the time has at length arrived when the society of this country shall become alive to the distressing amount of human suffering caused by the prevalence of contagious venereal diseases, and the extreme and pressing necessity of endeavouring efficiently to prevent the frequency, and mitigate the severity of these pests.

