

it may be and often is innocently passed from person to person through the media of drinking cups, eating utensils, towels, etc. It has been called the great killer, and aside from heart disease, for much of which it is responsible, it is the cause of more deaths than any other single disease, not excepting cancer, tuberculosis or pneumonia. Owing to its chronic nature, a great many who suffer from it are constantly disabled from any form of work.

We have at present no intimate figures for this disease as applying to Canada. But a recent survey in the United States discloses the following facts: \$34,000,000 is spent yearly in the United States for the care of the syphilitic insane, who comprise ten per cent of the total insane in the country; \$10,000,000 is spent yearly for the syphilitic blind. This does not include the care of 40,000 who die yearly of heart conditions from this disease, or 160,000 who are treated yearly for syphilitic heart disease, or 500,000 new cases who apply for treatment each year. It is considered public enemy number one of American childhood, and affects 60,000 newborn infants yearly. It is the biggest single cause of stillborn children, and also the cause of many infant deaths in the first few weeks of life. One third of the children born yearly with congenital syphilis will develop partial or complete blindness if not treated. One million potential mothers have or have had syphilis, and none can be sure of having a non-syphilitic child. Most of these women are unaware of their condition until the first symptoms appear, namely blindness, a faltering heart, a stumbling gait, the birth of a still child, or the delusions of insanity. It affects twice as many women and children as tuberculosis, thirteen times as many as diphtheria, twenty-eight times as many as typhoid. Doctor Parran, surgeon general of the United States, says:

The most urgent public health problem in this country to-day is syphilis, because: Firstly, so many people have it, and when untreated or improperly treated its results are so tragic to them and costly to the community. Secondly it is contagious, and each person who has it is a menace to his or her associates. In the majority of cases it so cripples the mind and body that death, though hastened, never comes soon enough.

Now, Mr. Speaker, syphilis can be wiped out. For consider these figures. For every hundred thousand of population there are yearly in Sweden 7 new cases, in Denmark, 20; in Great Britain, 47; in Canada, 155, and in the United States of America, 796. New or old cases now under treatment in the United States number 683,000, and for every one such there is at least one other remaining

[Mr. Howden.]

untreated. The United States, if it had adopted preventive conditions comparable to those that pertain in Sweden—fortunately it is now doing so—would have had 2,600 children born with congenital syphilis instead of 60,000. There is at present, or there was until a time ago, a bill before the United States congress which contemplated the expenditure of \$3,000,000 in 1939, \$6,000,000 in 1940, \$12,000,000 in 1941, and \$25,000,000 each year for ten years thereafter for the cure and prevention of syphilis. I understand that this bill has passed congress, but I believe that it has passed in a modified form.

This disease has probably come down to us from prehistoric times, but little was known of it until the latter part of the fifteenth century, when it appeared in epidemic form and was called the "great pox" to distinguish it from that disease to which the name smallpox was and is still applied. It was not until the middle of the nineteenth century that it was clearly distinguished from other forms of venereal disease, the common belief being that they were all manifestations of the same disease and involved a similar process; but in 1838 Ricord established definitely the cause and nature of one other form known as gonorrhoea. In 1903 Metchnikoff succeeded in transferring the disease from human beings to apes, and in 1905 Schaudinn discovered the *Treponema pallidum*, which is now identified as the causal agent of the disease. In 1906 Wasserman devised the method of diagnosis which bears his name, and in 1909 Ehrlich after 605 attempts, finally discovered his specific arsenical preparation which at the time was popularly known as 606.

Having now finally, after a century of fruitless search, found the cause, the means of early and sure diagnosis, and the cure for this very serious ailment, Osler entered upon an active follow-up study, and soon found that vast numbers of people, many ailing and others seemingly free from symptoms, were subjects of this disease. About 1913 it was estimated that twenty per cent of all hospitals in the United Kingdom, and ten patients per cent of all the population were infected with syphilis and that the disease killed 60,000 persons yearly in that land. A check up of the men under arms showed a large percentage of cases, and as these had to be segregated and treated it meant serious inroads into the fighting force and a great deal of trouble besides. In 1916 the Asquith government was called upon to take steps to deal with a serious national menace and the government reacted by offering to pay seventy-