

but in the disguise of wellwishers, guardians of the moral life, painful but just chasteners of iniquity. Many a sincere but uninformed or unthinking man or woman has shuddered to think that these things must be, and yet feared to protest against them, refused even to know about them lest with one horror removed or explained away, they should confront a worse one. We have lived the nightmare of one who dreams that his awakening will be his death, and dares not open his eyes.

Syphilis and gonorrhœa are not what public misconception makes them. Quietly and dispassionately examined, they can be easily seen to be no more disreputable than other disease enemies of the race. They have likewise no supernal power or commission. They are no more repellent to the senses than many another ailment. There is nothing in their origin which gives us cause to refuse to know about them. In fact, an understanding of them is the more obligatory upon us because they undermine and attack the citadel of life itself. The clothing of mysterious words and allusions, of shame-fast silence, of false disgrace, of painted horror that surrounds them is their cloak of darkness which protects them from the vengeance we would visit on intimate and secret enemies. Like murderers who mingle with the crowd upon the very scene of their crime, syphilis and gonorrhœa stand so near to us that although they have attacked our very germ plasma and our physical immortality, we have not known them for what they are.

The movement for a new conception of these two diseases, which will make the common man a legionary, and will enlist against syphilis and gonorrhœa all the force of an enlightened public sentiment, begins with a choice of words. The armour of the third and fourth great plagues is words. For generations syphilis and gonorrhœa have been called venereal, until the mere use of the term throws a cloak of odium over any subject to which it is attached. People are afraid of it, afraid of being shocked, afraid of being besmirched, of having the loathsome thrust upon them. And all this repulsive connotation, wholly uncalled for as it is, plays into the hand of syphilis and gonorrhœa. Labels that attract lead us to scrutinize the object. Labels that repel, turn away our gaze and foster ignorance. Much of our public attitude toward syphilis and gonorrhœa, our false modesty and mistaken shame, our ultra-sexual point of view, is the product of false labelling. To look at syphilis and gonorrhœa with the verbal veil withdrawn is not to turn to stone before the Medusa gaze, but to be inspired to dash at the monster and demolish it. To withdraw the veil and permit people to face the facts, is the first function of a public health movement against the "diseases of vice."

A dispassionate and calm analysis; good Anglo-Saxon words; the simple dignity of truth-telling; iteration and reiteration, will yet awaken a sleeping public thought to the enemy within our gates.

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