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PROPHYLAXIS OF THE VENEREAL DISEASES, AND ESPECIALLY SYPHILIS.

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Introduction.

The August number of the *Revista Medico-Quirurgica*, of Buenos Ayres, presents a continuation of the above work, translated from Italian into Spanish. The subject is of momentous importance, and it is very desirable that every member of the medical profession, or in truth every member of society, should be made acquainted with the terrible consequences which have everywhere resulted from the neglect of adequate sanitary measures for the prevention of the spread of one of the most, if not verily *the most* destructive maladies that has ever fallen on the human race. The plague, cholera, smallpox, yellow fever, scarlatina and diphtheria are all fearful diseases, but even when they terminate in death, there their havoc culminates. How different is it with syphilis! Who can tell to how many generations it may be transmitted, or how innumerable may be its innocent inheritors? Few medical practitioners can be ignorant of the distressing morbid complications with which from time to time they are confronted, and against which they have to contend,—the unequivocal, and too often indomitable, constitutional residuaries of the syphilitic virus. Were all medical practitioners who are competent to form a reliable diagnosis, to register with unswerving accuracy the causes of death, it is beyond all doubt that inherited syphilis would stand much higher in our tables of mortality than it has yet

done. Very few practitioners meeting with these cases ever venture to inform the friends of such patients of the real nature of the disease. No sensible person can find fault with their reticence. The peace of families would be destroyed by a different course, and the rational treatment of the disease could not be benefited by unprofessional garrulity. But when physicians are called upon for their decision as to the best means for the prevention of disease, and especially of one so destructive as syphilis, they should exhibit the "courage of their opinions," and give no uncertain sound of their convictions. It is a most unquestionable, and at the same time a most lamentable fact, that the most strenuous opponents of legislative provisions for the prevention, or the lessening, of the diffusion of syphilis, are women,—the very individuals who have the deepest and most immediate interest in the carrying out of preventive measures. Medical practitioners are not blameless in this relation; they might declare their views without descending to individual proofs. Perhaps when our ranks become strengthened by recruits from the other sex, the antagonists of common sense will learn more than they now know.

Translation.

"The city in which sanitary regulations in relation to these diseases are most rigorously enforced, is certainly Brussels, and it is in this city that the smallest proportion of cases of syphilis exists. Dr. Janssens asserted, in the International Congress of Hygiene in 1876, that only one or two cases in the whole year are met with among prostitutes. Professor Thiry, in the meeting of the Society of Public Medicine in December, 1880, stated that the cases met with were almost always those of newly arrived English women; this proves that vigilance over prostitution has a direct and certain influence in diminishing the manifestations of venereal contagion, and especially that of the syphilitic virus, which should command our earnest attention. It is objected, with a show of reason, that the vigilant visitation falls on only 100 women, whilst ten times as many pursue the vocation clandestinely, and escape detection; consequently the benefit derived must be trivial. The opponents therefore say that an advantage which costs so many sacrifices of the liberty and modesty (!) of the poor prostitutes subjected to visitation should be renounced. Surely this sort of argument can convince