

It will thus be seen that, apart from time spent in travelling, the Committee have met on seventy-seven days and have heard seventy-four witnesses in person.

The Committee would like to express their thanks to the witnesses, many of whom had gone to considerable trouble to collect information and prepare their evidence. Thanks are also due to the British Medical Association for their willing co-operation and assistance; to the large number of members of the medical profession throughout the Dominion who responded to the Committee's request for information; to Dr. J. H. L. Cumpston, Federal Director-General of Health, Melbourne, for much Australian information on the subject, particularly in relation to Commonwealth quarantine provisions; to Dr. Everitt Atkinson, Commissioner of Public Health, Perth, West Australia, for a most lucid and informative report on the working of the legislation in force in that State; and to many other persons who by means of correspondence and literature have placed at the Committee's disposal a large amount of information which has been of material assistance in considering various aspects of the problems involved.

The Committee desire to acknowledge their indebtedness to their secretary, Mr. C. J. Drake, whose wide knowledge of public-health matters has been of material assistance in their investigations and who has discharged his duties with marked zeal and ability.

SECTION 2.—VENEREAL DISEASES AND THEIR EFFECTS.

One result of the Committee's investigations has been to show that the public in general are very ignorant regarding the nature of venereal diseases, and their lamentable effects not only upon the individuals infected, but upon the health and well-being of the community as a whole. This ignorance of the nature of the problem and of the grave issues involved naturally stands in the way of the evil being grappled with effectually. Furthermore, the policy of reticence which has prevailed in the past, while it has led to the omission of proper instruction of the young, either by their parents or as part of our system of education, has not prevented the dissemination of an incomplete or perverted knowledge of the facts relating to sex, which, being derived as a rule from tainted sources of information, has been productive of a great deal of evil.

In these circumstances the Committee feel it their duty, before making known their recommendations, to state in as plain terms as possible the medical aspects of the problem they have had to consider.

There are three forms of venereal diseases—namely, syphilis, gonorrhœa, and chancroid—and of these the first two are the common and most serious diseases. That sporadic syphilis existed in antiquity and even in prehistoric times is probable, but there is no doubt that the disease was a malignant European pandemic in the closing years of the fifteenth century. The first reference to its origin is in a work written about the year 1510, wherein it is described as a new affection in Barcelona, unheard of until brought from Hayti by the sailors of Columbus in 1493. The army of Charles VIII carried the scourge through Italy, and soon Europe was aflame. "Its enormous prevalence in modern times," says Dr. Creighton, "dates, without doubt, from the European libertinism of the latter part of the fifteenth century." Gonorrhœa also has its origin in the shades of antiquity, but that it became common in Europe about 1520 is a fact based on the highest authority.

Syphilization follows civilization, and syphilis is an important factor in the extermination of aboriginal races. Syphilis was introduced into Uganda when that country was opened to trade with the coast, and Colonel Lambkin reported that "In some districts 90 per cent. suffer from it. . . . Owing to the presence of syphilis the entire population stands a good chance of being exterminated in a very few years, or left a degenerate race fit for nothing." The earliest known account of the introduction of syphilis into the Maori race is in an old Maori song composed in the far North. The Maori population in a village on the shores of Tom Bowline's Bay was employed in a whaling-station on the Three Kings Islands, and there they became infected and carried the disease to the mainland. Venereal disease is not common now among the Maoris, but it made great ravages in the early days of colonization, to which may be attributed much of the sterility and repeated miscarriages in the transitional period of Maori history.

Through the ages great confusion existed as to the origin and nature of venereal disease, but in 1905 a micro-organism, the *Spirochæta pallidum*, was demonstrated as the infective agent in syphilis, and the gonococcus as the infecting organism of gonorrhœa had been discovered in 1879. As regards modes of infection, syphilis is contracted usually by sexual congress; occasionally the mode of infection is accidental and innocent, and congenital transmission is not uncommon. Gonorrhœa is contracted by sexual congress as a rule, but occasionally from innocent contact with discharges, as in lavatories.

Syphilis, therefore, is a markedly contagious and inoculable disease. It gains entrance, and usually in three weeks (although this period may be much shorter) a slight sore appears at the site of infection. It may be so slight as to pass unnoticed. This is the primary stage of syphilis. Later, often after two months, the secondary stage begins, and if not properly treated may last for two years. The patient is not too ill usually to attend to his avocation, and has severe headache, skin rashes, loss of hair, inflammation of the eyes, or other varied symptoms. The tertiary stage may be early or delayed, and its effects are serious. Masses of cells of low vitality, known as "gummata," with a tendency to break down or ulcerate, may form in almost any part of the body, and the damage that occurs is considerable indeed. Various diseases result which the lay mind would not associate with syphilis, but it would be difficult to overestimate the resultant diseases that may occur in any organ of the body:—

This racks the joints; this fires the veins;
That every labouring sinew strains;
Those in the deeper vitals rage.