

- (2.) Lack of education of the young in the facts pertaining to sex. Especially the Committee would call attention to the unfounded belief of many that continence in young men is injurious to health.
- (3.) Bad housing and general conditions of living. When members of both sexes are crowded together in restricted accommodation in which often insufficient conveniences are supplied, it is easy to conceive of a relaxation of the proprieties of life which might lead to acts of immorality.

In this connection the Committee desire to call attention to the excellent work done by the Y.W.C.A. and other bodies in the provision of hostels in which girls are provided with board and lodging at very reasonable cost. The Committee were surprised to learn that full advantage was not taken of these provisions, and that the accommodation at these hostels was not fully occupied. It would appear that many girls resent the very slight amount of supervision and restraint exercised over them, precisely as they do parental control.

- (4.) The presence in the community of individuals, especially girls, who are to some degree mentally defective or morally imbecile. The Committee were given several individual instances in which such girls had acted as foci of infection; they are easily approached, and facile victims for men. In spite of a degree of mental or moral defect they may be physically attractive.
- (5.) Economic conditions which delay marriage may reasonably be regarded as a factor in conducing to an increased frequency of extra-marital sexual relationship. Graph A in the appendix shows clearly that the age of marriage in both sexes has, with slight fluctuations, steadily increased from 1900 to 1921.
- (6.) Alcohol tends to the dissemination and persistence of venereal disease: it increases sexual desire, lessens control, causes the individual to be less careful as regards cleanliness, &c., after exposure to infection, and militates against effective treatment. It is to be pointed out, however, that the lower control possessed by some individuals may be the actual predisposing cause both of laxity in sexual matters and of the excessive ingestion of alcohol. There appears no doubt that alcohol is an important factor in the prevalence of venereal disease, although probably not so potent as represented by some witnesses.
- (7.) Accidental infections are undoubtedly rare. They may arise from contact with W.C. seats, dirty towels, and eating and drinking utensils in public places.
- (8.) Other factors of minor importance which were mentioned in evidence were the modern dress of women, which was stated to be in certain cases sexually suggestive, and certain modern forms of dancing. There appears some grounds to suppose that dances conducted under undesirable conditions contribute to sexual immorality, but the Committee see no reason to condemn dancing generally because the coincident conditions under which it has been or is conducted in some cases have contributed to impropriety. The cinema was stated by some witnesses to have an immoral tendency both in the nature of the pictures presented and in the conditions under which they are viewed by the audience. The Committee suggest that a stricter censorship might with advantage be exercised, and should include the posters advertising the films.

It has been stated that venereal disease has increased in New Zealand with the return of the Expeditionary Force from overseas. Ample evidence, however, was given to the Committee that there has been no increase of the disease due to returned soldiers. These men were treated prior to their discharge until non-infective.

PART III.—BEST MEANS OF COMBATING AND PREVENTING VENEREAL DISEASE.

SECTION I.—EDUCATION AND MORAL CONTROL.

There is no question that the most effective way of avoiding venereal disease is to refrain from promiscuous sexual intercourse. The problem which the Committee have been asked to consider has very important medical aspects, but, while these must not be neglected, it is essential to the health and wellbeing of the nation that the enemy should be attacked with every moral and spiritual weapon :—

Self reverence, self-knowledge, self-control,—
These three alone lead life to sovereign power.

The absence of proper training and instruction of the young is undoubtedly responsible for a great deal of the evil which has been shown to exist. Children are led into bad habits through ignorance, and young men and young women grow up with utterly false ideals of life, and in many cases fall into deplorable laxity of conduct.

There is an impression among many young men that chastity is either impossible or at least is inconsistent with physical health. There is the highest medical authority for stating that this notion is absolutely wrong, while there is no difference of opinion whatever as to the serious risks of contracting diseases of a very loathsome character incurred by those who do not restrain their passions. Apart from this aspect of the question, it must be obvious to every thinking person that looseness of conduct between the sexes such as is shown to exist in New Zealand is destructive to the high ideals of family life associated with the finest types of British manhood and womanhood, and if not checked must lead to the decadence of the nation.

A sounder state of public opinion needs to be cultivated. The moral stigma at present attached to sufferers from venereal disease should rest upon all who sacrifice to their own selfish passions the