

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

SIR WILLIAM OSLER'S EVIDENCE.

At the thirty-eighth meeting of the Royal Commission on Venereal Diseases evidence was given by Sir William Osler, Regius Professor of Medicine in the University of Oxford. Sir William stated that the official statistics of deaths published by the Registrar-General were totally inadequate to represent the actual incidence of venereal diseases; for instance, in 1910 the deaths from syphilis in England and Wales were given as 1,649, but this was a very unsatisfactory and incomplete estimate. It was necessary to take into consideration and add a very large number of deaths appearing under other descriptions. If regard were had to these he thought that it would be safe to say that of the killing diseases syphilis came third or fourth. Sir William laid stress on the importance of early treatment of these diseases, and was of opinion that every general hospital should provide in respect of them out-patients' accommodation and proper accommodation in the wards. It was part of the work of the governors of hospitals to provide for those diseases, and they ought not to be left out; in the past they had been too much neglected by the charitable public. Sir William was in favour of compulsory notification of venereal diseases, and thought there was a possibility that this would result in some concealment, but he thought that this was a risk that might now be taken. On the question of the education of medical students Sir William was strongly opposed to their being dealt with as a special subject added to the curriculum, with special lectures and an additional set of separate examination questions. He considered that if this education could be given in out-patients' clinics and in the wards and by general teachers it was as much as could be expected of the student, looking at the short space of time at his disposal and the great congestion of the curriculum. Sir William thought that it would have an immense effect if the public were instructed by means of lectures regarding venereal diseases. Lectures of this kind, he thought, should not be given by a layman, but by a well-trained medical man, who should be provided with proper diagrams and slides. It would be a very useful thing if the lecture could be widely given to the senior forms of the big public schools, in the Universities, and at large institutions employing many persons. He was not in favour of teaching sex physiology or hygiene to young children.

VALUE OF SALVARSAN.

At the thirty-ninth meeting Dr. J. H. Sequeira, Physician to the Skin Department of the London Hospital, gave evidence. He stated that the statistics of adult cases treated in the London Hospital Skin Clinic during 1913 showed that 13 per cent., both in the case of men and women, were suffering from obvious syphilis of the skin and mucous membranes. In the case of the women the proportion in the primary and secondary stages was smaller than in the case of the men, and this he attributed to the fact that a larger number of women were unaware that they were affected with the disease. He gave a number of instances of innocent syphilis, and said that in his hospital experience he found that a larger number of women were infected during their married life. With regard to the use of salvarsan and neo-salvarsan, he was confident as a result of his experience of a large number of cases that these remedies provided a most powerful means of influencing the disease. He was, however, of the opinion that it was necessary to combine salvarsan and neo-salvarsan treatment with the use of mercury. By prompt treatment the risk of the spread of infection could be enormously diminished. Dr. Sequeira was not in favour of compulsory notification of syphilis, as he thought it would result in many people seeking advice from quacks. On the other hand, he thought there were conditions in which a medical man should be armed with some power to prevent the spread of infection. It should be held to be the duty of a medical man to do all in his power to prevent the spread of infection, and he should be held to be immune from any penalties in the exercise of his duty. Dr. Sequeira insisted strongly on the need for increasing the accommodation available in general hospitals. There should, he said, be no hindrance whatever to any patient receiving treatment, and the fact of his or her suffering from the disease should be the sole indication for admission.