

Newspaper Cuttings

There are many items regarding leprosy appearing in the popular press which may be of interest to our readers. We have therefore opened this section, and shall be glad to receive contributions in the form of short cuttings from newspapers, journals, etc.

New Cure for Leprosy. Many of the South Indian and Ceylon papers report "a new cure for leprosy which Dr. Noble has discovered." This, according to the papers, is colloidal copper. Dr. Noble has been studying the effects of this drug under Dr. Denney at Louisiana, and we are informed that Dr. Denney and Dr. Noble are of the opinion that it is "a more thorough cure for leprosy than Chaulmoogra Oil."

We absolve Dr. Noble from all responsibility for these exaggerated reports, but we consider that the journals concerned are at fault. Think of the multitudes of sufferers from leprosy who must have read or heard of this and other similar fantastic reports. Their hopes are raised only to be dashed to the ground. Surely their sufferings are great enough without this fresh torture.

Philippines. Governor General Frank Murphy's veto of the Philippine Legislature's act to "turn the lepers loose" was upheld in effect today by a report of a commission of Filipinos and Americans, made public after a long study.

The report said that "all measured control of the spread of leprosy must be based on isolation . . . and treatment," but it favored a policy of greater decentralization.

It recommended that the population of the colony on the isolated island of Culion, which is the world's largest leper settlement, be not allowed to exceed the present 7,000, and that the number be reduced as rapidly as possible.

Establishment of more regional treatment stations was urged.

The commission found that of 3,500 lepers released as bacteriologically negative, nearly fifty had relapsed, but that, because of the faulty follow-up system, only ten of these had been resegreated.

Lepers in Abyssinia. Since the beginning of the Abyssinian War many references have been made in the newspapers to the prevalence of leprosy in that country. According to one report "Leprosy is the scourge of Ethiopia—a scourge to which one in three of the population sooner or later succumbs." This is surely an exaggeration! Apparently the Italians "are already organising hospitals for the advanced cases." Catholic missions have worked among the Abyssinian lepers for years, and in 1932 a leprosarium was begun under the patronage of the Emperor, and with the help of the American Mission to Lepers.

Mission to Lepers. In his address, entitled "Enlarging Hope through 60 Years," Mr. Elliott said that during last year, their diamond jubilee, they had cleaned up 1,052 afflicted people, a thing which would have been impossible 16 or 17 years ago, when their only hope was to shelter and not relieve the sufferers. "There is still no cure for leprosy, despite what people say," said the speaker, "but many cases are treatable and much can be done for the children of affected parents."

More than 1,000 years before Christ there was mention of lepers among Sudanese slaves, and there were lepers to-day from the frozen North to Africa, where, in some places, one in five of the inhabitants was affected. Now the Mission was working at 100 stations in 25 different countries. Gradually the nations were awakening to their responsibilities, and, as in the case of India, giving grants towards the lepers' treatment.

Diet versus Infection. Dr. Hutchison suggested that leprosy arose from the eating of badly preserved or decomposed fish, and not for any other reason. People readily seized on this idea, and many hold it still, though, for example, in the case of the Basutas and others, leprosy has spread extensively among a race that eat no fish and never see it. What is very obvious is that leprosy spreads very rapidly among badly nourished races, and clears up in a very great measure with a higher standard of living. Civilisation brought into England great advances in general sanitation, land drainage, agriculture, and diet. Up to the end of the 15th century the common diet of the England we know only as the England of beer and beef, consisted of black rye bread with a little salt meat or fish, and almost no vegetables.

Of late years there has been a tendency to go to the other extreme in respect of leprosy, and declare that it is hardly infectious at all—that "you could no more catch leprosy by sitting next to a leper in a tram than you could catch alcoholism by sitting next to a drunkard"! This snappy saying is too epigrammatic to be true, because, of course, there is no real analogy. It is not true, as anti-contagionists often assert, that husbands do not acquire leprosy from their wives, though it is true that a number escape; or that continued residence in the same house is not dangerous; or that those who attend on lepers do not get the disease. Of 700 cases investigated by Leonard Rogers, 128 were

infected while living as husband and wife, 279 while using the same house, 139 while attending upon lepers, and 136 by close association with a leper. The reason that many husbands or wives escape infection is that there is considerable resistance to the disease developed in all of us by the time we reach 30 years of age, just as there is a resistance developed to tuberculosis, a closely similar disease. On the other hand, the infection of children is remarkably easy, and the young married leper, though he may not infect his wife, may certainly infect some of his children.

Leprosy in Egypt. Dr. Mustafa Kamel said in an interview that, though no definite figures were available, there were at least 10,000 lepers in Egypt of whom a fairly large proportion were advanced cases.

The Egyptian Government had just begun to control the disease and with that object had started five clinics. So far about 3,000 lepers had volunteered to receive treatment in these clinics. As a large proportion of lepers in rural tracts would not be able to attend the clinics, an itinerant motor clinic van was introduced. This van visited the various villages.

An up-to-date leper colony was being constructed by the Egyptian Government. The scheme, it was expected, would be completed in five years. Some portions of the colony and the hospital attached to it had been completed. Dr. Mustafa Kamal is the Medical Officer of that colony.

A Systematic Campaign. Mrs. Todd said she hoped the re-drafting of the constitution of the Indian Council of B.E.L.R.A. would be completed by the end of this month and that before long Madras would have a branch of the Indian Council. Co-ordination of effort was a great thing in leprosy relief, she observed, and she hoped that all the branches of the Indian Council would co-ordinate their efforts and carry on a systematic campaign against the disease.

In this Presidency there were various Leprosy Relief Councils, but they were not inter-connected. She said that efforts should be made to bring them together.

The opening of hospitals and clinics, according to Mrs. Todd, would not solve the problem. They would only render relief to those who sought relief, and leave those who did not seek relief severely alone. Much of the work, namely, of prevention has to be done in the villages.

She hoped that every village would have a leper home, where advanced cases would be separated. These unfortunate men and women should be told of the importance of such methods and they should of their own accord go into those homes.

Another important thing was that cases of infection should be carefully watched, and they should be persuaded to go to the clinics for treatment. Even after treatment such cases should be watched for some time to see that they did not relapse into the disease.

A regular organisation in villages looking to sanitation, and teaching villagers to lead clean lives, was essential.

Since much of the prejudice which stood in the way of anti-leprosy work came from Indians, those prejudices, she said, would have to be removed by Indians themselves.

Leprosy in Madras. There were at least twenty thousand known lepers in the city and probably an equal number of unknown lepers. When a strong public opinion was created among the people against this disease, the establishment of segregation camps might become practicable. Further, without a strong public opinion, it would be futile to introduce legislation for compulsory segregation. Legislation in advance of public opinion had always proved a failure. The Sarda Act was an instance in point.

All leprosy workers are of opinion that the susceptibility to the disease decreases after childhood, that a latent disease in childhood will flare up at a later age when the general resistance is lowered by a physiological strain in the teens or by other diseases, and that if the disease is rendered completely inactive in childhood, there is very little likelihood of its breaking out at a latter age. Statistics show that the incidence of leprosy among the students in the Madras City will be about 0.5 per cent. Therefore, in order that the incidence among adults, say after a decade, may be reduced it is very necessary that a careful eye is kept on every child who has exposed itself to infection or who has signs of the disease. In the Madras City, out of a population of 647,000 according to the 1931 census, about 210,000 are below the age of 15, of whom at least 100,000 are students. All the students in the elementary, secondary and high schools should be examined every year for signs of leprosy, and those having signs of the disease and those who are living with infective parents or relatives, should be observed for a period of at least five years, active cases being treated. If this is done, the incidence of leprosy will in course of time be greatly reduced.

The St. Francis Leper Guild. The object of this Guild is to give grants to Roman Catholic Leprosy workers, especially in Africa. Recently a meeting of the Guild was held at the Mansion House, presided over by the Lord Mayor, and addressed by Dr. Hinslev, Archbishop of Westminster, on his recent tour in Africa, and by Sir Leonard Rogers.

British Empire Leprosy Relief Association Exhibiton. An educative exhibition is being shown by the Organising Secretary of B.E.L.R.A. at some eighteen different centres during the season.

The main feature of the exhibition is an Eastern hospital with an out-patients' department where lepers are being treated. By means of full-sized models visitors are shown the early and progressive signs of the disease, ending up with a case showing the tragedy of long-delayed treatment. By means of illuminated models and tableaux the history of leprosy throughout the ages is depicted.

Another series of illuminated models illustrates "Landmarks of the Past," showing churches, lazar houses, and other buildings in this country which have survived to tell the tale of the high incidence of leprosy here for many centuries, notably in the thirteenth, when England, with a population estimated at some two millions had 200 leper houses. It is pointed out that the "leper squint" is to be seen in many old parish churches throughout the land.

A cinema film entitled "A Stain on our Empire's Flag," with spoken descriptions, is shown four times daily, and a Livingstone film is given twice daily. Lantern views are projected on a smaller screen.