

PROGRESS AT UZUAKOLI, NIGERIA.

The following extract from a letter to the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association from Dr. T. F. Davey, Medical Superintendent of the Uzuakoli Leper Settlement, will be of interest to our readers.

“ This year has witnessed an extraordinary advance here. With two doctors together for the first time, and a Toc H. man specially working outside the Colony, things have moved by leaps and bounds. At the same time there has been a remarkable awakening among the people who are clamouring for leprosy control. We now have 29 clinics and before the year ends there will be 33. It is not however clinics alone that are demanded, for in many places surveys are requested and good land for segregation purposes is freely offered. It all means that a golden opportunity is before us for striking right to the heart of the leprosy problem in this, one of the largest and most densely populated Provinces in Nigeria. Patients are pouring in to the clinics, we now have between 6,000 and 7,000, and could in point of fact go on increasing the work indefinitely.

“ I am now having to say however ‘ No more ’ when new requests arrive, for even with the best will in the world my present staff is incapable of grasping the opportunity which awaits us, and I shall simply have to refuse any more requests. All the clinics are visited fortnightly, and in some cases monthly, and by dint of care they can be well maintained on that basis. On top of this there is the Uzuakoli Colony, with 70 nurses in training, and all the specialised medical work resulting from the policy of bringing all bad medical cases possible from clinics to the hospital. The clan in which Uzuakoli is situated has caught the infection from other clans and also wants leprosy control, and I am proposing to achieve this by bringing all their lepers (about 500) into the Colony. This will increase the numbers in the Colony by almost 50 per cent, and it will now be necessary to supervise the building of accommodation for this crowd. Strangely enough their coming will scarcely affect our finances, as all building materials both initial and for maintenance are being given free, and the clan undertakes to maintain all lepers concerned, so you see how much they want the work done.

“ Now I want to pay tribute to the work of the men you have given me. Great demands are being made upon them but they are

throwing all their energy into the work, though with only two here at present it is almost as much as they can do simply to maintain the work at Uzuakoli alone. This letter is in the nature of an S.O.S. asking you to let me have the largest possible staff. Even if the present staff cannot be increased, can you arrange matters at other colonies so that I do not have to lose any men for relief purposes?

“ Given the staff, we can simply wipe out leprosy over a large area. At present we are concentrating on about one-fifth of the area of the Province and are trying to introduce full leprosy control everywhere within that area. This means leprosy surveys and the building of model leper villages everywhere in addition to clinics; the people are ready but all depends on there being the staff available to supervise everything.

“ For the duration of the war we shall continue to concentrate on the area already selected, which is about 900 square miles in size, and it is worthy of note that even though we have clinics scattered through the area, every survey we do indicates that about one-third *only* of the total number of lepers actually attend clinics of their own free will, the rest only starting to attend when the threatened publicity of a survey seems imminent. It is now quite obvious that all suggested figures for leprosy incidence in Nigeria are wide of the mark. I am sure that there are almost 100,000 lepers in our Province alone.

“ We can and are tackling this at its root, but until there is a larger staff available, progress will be slow. After the war I am applying to the Government for greatly increased grants solely for supplying more European staff, as I feel that a far greater contribution in this direction is needed from Government. They cannot expect B.E.L.R.A. or anyone else to bear the brunt of the cost.”