

## EDITORIAL

The British Empire Leprosy Relief Association is commemorating this year its 21st Anniversary. To celebrate the occasion, a meeting was held on the 26th of April at the Mansion House under the chairmanship of the Lord Mayor, and addressed by Sir Alfred Beit in the unavoidable absence of the secretary of State for the Colonies.

The Association, which is dependent for its income on public subscriptions, aims at raising a sum of £210,000 so as to make possible the expansion of its work in the post-war period. We give, in this number, a rough sketch of the lines on which we hope to expand.

Compared with other diseases and judging by the usual standards, leprosy is not a major disease except in a few countries. But when in place of morbidity and mortality the mental and physical suffering it causes is taken as the standard, leprosy cannot be passed over as a minor ailment.

One of the chief achievements of B.E.L.R.A. during the last 21 years has been to put leprosy on the medical map. It is now recognised that early cases of the neural type yield to treatment and, although the more serious lepromatous type is still refractory except in a few cases, there are hopeful signs, as we have shown below, that more effective drugs may soon be available.

But although our remedies are still of only limited efficacy, the fact that leprosy can yield to treatment at all has had a most stimulating effect, and during this period more intensive study has been made than ever before. This study has had two outstanding results. We now know far more about the extent and distribution of the disease and its mode of transmission, and its nature and types are much more clearly understood.

If and when more effective treatment is procured, the effect may again be to stimulate much greater interest on the part of the medical profession, which is the main prerequisite for control.

It has often been the rôle of private individuals or societies to pioneer, and for Government to accept responsibility once the way has been shown. In our last number we referred to the active part that the Nigerian Government is now taking in the anti-leprosy campaign. In this number more particulars of this scheme are detailed. This is an age of period planning, and it is hoped that other colonial governments also will formulate plans for leprosy control which can gradually be put into effect when the end of the war sets free the necessary personnel.