

## Indian Medical Gazette.

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### THE NEED OF A SCIENTIFIC LIBRARY FOR INDIA.

DURING the past dozen years from time to time complaint has been heard of the need of a library of scientific books and periodicals for India. At present we cannot be said to have any such thing as a good modern scientific library in India. What indeed have we in the way of medical libraries? We only know of the useful collection of books in the office of the Director-General in Simla. This consists of a large number of old volumes, of many bound sets of medical periodicals, and a good collection of modern books on the various branches of medical science, but these cannot be of use to the worker in India, they are necessary as works of reference for the Director-General himself. Doubtless the Pasteur Institute has by now a fair collection of modern periodicals and books on bacteriology. In Calcutta there is a Medical College Library for the use of the staff and the students, good as far as it goes, and there is a fair collection of old and new books in the office of the Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals, which books are available for use of Civil Surgeons in Bengal.

The Asiatic Society of Bengal has a fine collection of scientific books and especially periodicals, but the proportion of medical periodicals is very small and naturally so, as this great Society, though largely supported by medical officers, is in no sense a medical or even only a scientific society.

We have no exact information as to the resources of Madras and Bombay or Lahore, no doubt all the Medical Colleges have useful libraries for the use of their staff and students.

Something more than this is badly needed in India. A Central Medical Library containing all books of reference, periodicals relating to the medical sciences is what we need. Such a library should be centrally situated, it should consist of two parts, a library of reference and a circulating library. It should be in charge of a paid librarian, who should know sufficient of French and German to hunt out references, and if need be translate passages for workers requiring references.

The circulating library should possess several copies of all the best modern books on medicine, surgery and allied sciences, these should be available for medical officers all over India. An annual fee should be charged for the use of the library of small amount, and a deposit should be exacted against the value of books lent. There should be strict rules for the return and proper packing of books lent, and a limited period put as to the number of days or weeks a book lent out should be kept by the reader.

A nucleus of such a library would be obtained by the transfer of many books from some of the small libraries abovementioned.

Let us glance for a moment at the establishment of the library at Manila. This library commenced with a nucleus of only fifty books in July 1902, by May 1905 it contained 17,350 volumes. This consists of 250 periodicals in all branches of science, of the latest editions of scientific books published in Europe and America, copies of reports, etc. At first the library was to be for reference only, but owing to a growing demand at the beginning of 1904, arrangements were completed by which all persons employed in the various departments of Government might take out "borrowers' cards" subject to the provision of certain rules. A catalogue has just been published by Miss Mary Polk, the Librarian, and the library is now in a position of great usefulness, and the worker in Manila no longer feels the isolation and want of books of references which so greatly hinders the worker in the tropics.

We invite the opinions of our readers on this question of the need of a library for medical men in India. It seems to us the natural and indeed inevitable complement of the establishment of the research laboratories in India.

### Current Topics.

#### THE BURMA SANITARY REPORT.

THIS Report was sent in to Government eight days late, a fact over which the Burma Secretariat make moan in the first 13 lines of the Government Resolution. The Report has been written by Colonel R. Macrae, who for some six months held the appointment of Inspector-General of Civil Hospitals and Sanitary Commissioner in Burma; as in that Province the two appointments are still combined. The control of the vital statistics of Burma has