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THE LEPROSY PROBLEM—A STEP TOWARDS SOLUTION.

"THE Leprosy Problem" is an expression which has become relatively common in the press—medical and lay alike—within recent years. Until comparatively recent times, leprosy was not considered a disease worthy of co-ordinated scientific investigation. Valuable pioneer work by Hansen, Loof and Danielssen in Scandanavia, by Unna in Germany, by Clegg, Duval and their associates in America and by Rogers and Row in India laid the foundation but the superstructure, in the shape of a world-wide campaign against the disease, was completely wanting. Now all this has been changed: the intensive work of American investigators (backed up by the weight of American public opinion), bids fair to stamp the disease out of the New World while the ever-increasing activities of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association augur well for the progress of the campaign in those areas of the Old World within the radius of the commonwealth of nations constituting the British Empire.

With the advancement in knowledge, old ideas are rapidly going by the board and in particular the old policy of segregation is being subjected to drastic modifications. So far as India is concerned, a policy of absolute segregation is financially impracticable, even were it justified on medical grounds. The 1921 census gives the total number of lepers in this country as slightly over 1,00,000. Conservative estimates based on recent investigations indicate that there must be at least four to five times that number.

A careful study of the problem in all its aspects has fully demonstrated that the most effective line of attack so far as India is concerned is that of combined propaganda, treatment, and survey. Centres designed primarily for the treatment of early cases are opened by small bands of specially trained workers, operating in different highly endemic areas. At the same time propaganda is carried on among the inhabitants of the district particularly with regard to the necessity for treatment in the earliest stages of the disease, and thirdly, careful enquiry is made into the factor or factors responsible for the disease in any given district. Small preliminary surveys of this nature have already brought to light many facts of considerable importance, not the least of which is the unreliability of the official census figures as an indication of the actual incidence of leprosy in this country.

It is obvious that a scheme of this nature, applied as an All-India measure, cannot be finan-

ced solely from the relatively limited funds allocated to the Indian Council of the British Empire Leprosy Relief Association and that outside assistance is necessary. It is in this connexion that Provincial Governments have, in our opinion, a clear duty to perform.

Certain provinces, recognising the undoubted merits of this new line of attack, have already taken steps to initiate schemes of combined propaganda treatment and survey in their respective areas. These provinces are the exception, however, rather than the rule. In the province of Bengal, for example, in which the incidence of leprosy is a problem of considerable gravity the plans have been on the table for some time but the necessary financial support is lacking. We are advised that a period of 5 years would suffice for a survey of, and the establishment of treatment centres in, the 15 or 20 districts of Bengal in which the incidence of the disease is greatest; moreover it is estimated that the cost would certainly not exceed the relatively trivial sum of Rs. 12,000 per annum.

The ever-increasing facilities for inter-communication and the consequent commingling of the population are undoubtedly leading to a spread of leprosy, and nothing is to be gained by a few spasmodic and isolated attempts at an anti-leprosy campaign. Is it too much to hope that this small but necessary provision will be found in the next year's provincial budgets, so that those provinces and states that have not yet come into line will be able to do so in the immediate future?

CORRIGENDUM.

Aug. Number page 451. "Vaso-motor disturbance after Injection." By "U. Travatham," read "V. Iravatham."

SPECIAL ARTICLE.

A NOTE ON WEIL'S DISEASE, OR LEPTOSPIROSIS ICTEROHÆMORRHAGICA.*

By D. A. TURKHUD, M.B., C.M. (Edin.).

"Iffley," Kodaikanal, S. I.

ON the 21st April, this year (1928), Dr. Beals of Wai, who had just come up to Kodaikanal, wrote to me that she had heard that some children at this hill-station had suffered from fever followed by jaundice, that she had come to know altogether of nine such cases, and that at the time of writing, she had staying in her own house, a little girl who had only just got over an attack of fever and jaundice. I quote from her letter:—"Now the question arises as to the cause of such an epidemic. The four cases I have seen have all been mild. However,

* Read at the Missionary Medical Conference held at Kodaikanal in May 1928.