

Medical Matters.

LEPROSY IN AMERICA.



THAT leprosy exists within the limits of the actual United States is known to many people, but that it exists to a large extent and is endemic in a number of States is known to but few. Such, however, is the present condition of affairs, and as the disease is contagious, and one of the most dreaded of diseases known to science, it is a state of affairs not pleasant to contemplate nor one to be allowed to take its course without preventive action. The surest and best method to prevent the spread of the disease would, of course, be the complete and absolute isolation of all sufferers, and the making this isolation compulsory without regard to the previous estate or position in society of the leper. While hardship would doubtless ensue, the good to the many would justify such drastic action. It is said, however, that for certain reasons it would be all but impossible to get Congress to pass such a law. It has been found, on the other hand, that leprosy patients are not averse to voluntary isolation, as experiments in Norway have abundantly proved, and in order to take advantage of this condition of the leper's mind, Dr. Albert S. Ashmead, of New York, and Father L. W. Mulhaney, of Ohio, have drafted a national leper law for the suppression and prevention of leprosy in the United States. This bill, after calling attention to the evident spread of leprosy in every country where isolation is not practised, provides for a square mile to be set aside for a National Leper Home, either in Yellowstone Park or in some other dry climate antagonistic to the life of the leper bacillus. Buildings are provided for in the bill for use of the patients, and provision is made only for voluntary submission to the care of the Government. The bill also makes provision, among other things, to prevent lepers from entering the United States in future. Dr. Ashmead, formerly chief medical adviser to the Government of Japan, and who has made a life-long study of leprosy, when interviewed, said:—I think the disease of leprosy is unquestionably spreading in the United States, and that 5,000 is a conservative estimate of the number of persons suffering from the disease in this country. In certain States,

such as Louisiana, it is endemic, and in that State has been known to exist since 1765. When you take into consideration that it is estimated by the authorities that only one-third of the actual number of lepers are discovered, you can gather how many sufferers from this dread disease there actually are. It is a terrible disease, and no effort should be spared in stamping it out. Leprosy takes a long time to develop, and there are cases on record where 40 years have elapsed before the disease manifested itself, and instances of where from 15 to 18 years have passed by before the disease betrayed itself, are frequently met with. As it is a bacillar disease, it may be communicated by physical contact. This renders it extremely dangerous to a community for a leper to be at large, while its insidious character and the length of time it takes to develop makes it exceedingly difficult of discovery until it reaches an advanced stage.

THE KIDNEYS AND EXERCISE.

Our American contemporaries have recently devoted a considerable amount of attention to the results of violent exercise upon the kidneys. The question of the possibility of a functional albuminuria has been discussed, and the difficulties of excluding the presence of genuine renal disease in such cases pointed out. But there would appear to be a transient albuminuria due to over-exertion or violent exercise, and this subject has been discussed in a recent paper concerning the effects of over-exertion on the heart. Thirteen cross-country runners were examined, after a twenty-five mile race, and in each albuminuria was found. Before the race, the urine had been perfectly healthy. It is worthy of note, too, that in about one-half of the cases, hyaline and granular casts were present. Now, is it possible that, when such violent exertions are repeatedly undertaken, structural changes may ensue in the kidneys? No definite answer can be given to this question, but, as regards those who are already the victims of renal disease, there is neither doubt nor question that such changes may very seriously affect the patient's condition. The sum and substance of the matter is, therefore, that those suffering from chronic renal disease should be especially cautioned against over-exertion, especially when it is remembered that the function of the kidneys is to remove from the system the waste products caused by muscular exertion.

[previous page](#)

[next page](#)