

**Medical Matters.****LEPROSY.**

FROM the earliest times, Leprosy has been known and more or less graphically described. It is, however, only within the last half century that the obscurity in which its chief characteristics were involved, have been cleared up; and, just at present, the point which is being most keenly discussed concerns the method of its propagation. There are some careful observers who deny that Leprosy is ever communicated indirectly from the sick to the healthy; while many have, for long, believed that Leprosy is endemic rather than epidemic—that is to say, that it occurs chiefly in certain localities, and is not rapidly communicated from one person to another. The matter is naturally of the greatest importance, because if the latter supposition be correct, it should be possible to stamp out the disease altogether by merely isolating the infected districts. An important pamphlet, which has recently been published, concerning Leprosy in Hawaii, discusses this question very carefully. It is shown that Leprosy has existed in those islands, at any rate, for the last three-quarters of a century, and that attempts to check the ravages of the disease by isolating the patients on the Island of Molokai have not been altogether successful. Incidentally, the important fact is pointed out that there are two distinct tribes living on this island—the Kokuas, who are the wives, husbands, or relations of leper patients who have joined them in their isolation, and the Kamaainas, who are the old inhabitants of the district in which the lepers have been settled. If, then, Leprosy were directly contagious, it might be expected that the constant importation, for the last thirty years, of Kokuas into this district would certainly have been followed by the Kamaainas becoming infected; but this has not occurred except in a very small number of cases. And furthermore the Kokuas, although living with the infected, have not become leprous to the extent which had been expected. It is a well-known fact that long continued communication with lepers is often not followed by infection; and on the other hand that Leprosy is often contracted without the patient having been consciously in contact with a leper. The evidence, therefore, appears to be growing that Leprosy is conveyed

by means of a bacillus which infects certain areas; in other words, that this specific germ requires some congenial soil for its growth and livelihood. If this be proved, it is easy to understand the well-known fact that lepers when transferred from one country to another do not appear to infect their neighbours or relatives. For example, 160 lepers were traced from Norway to the United States where they lived ordinary lives under no restrictions at all, and yet not a single secondary case of Leprosy arose. Then there arises the equally important and interesting question as to the reason why Leprosy has quite disappeared from some countries, as for example it has died out of England; and why it should still persist in other lands, as it does for instance in Hawaii, Norway, South Africa, and elsewhere. It is possible that the explanation of these facts may involve a still further and more striking proof than any which has yet been advanced, that Leprosy is due to an infected soil.

**MEASLES.**

ATTENTION has been recently drawn to the fact that an epidemic of measles in Chelsea has caused some seventy deaths, chiefly amongst children under five years of age. This fact will doubtless startle many who regard the complaint not only as an inevitable ailment of childhood, but also as one which is devoid of any importance or danger. It is not generally understood that measles may really assume a most virulent form, and that when introduced, for example, amongst savage races it may cause as great a mortality as the worst form of smallpox. In this country, children are perhaps, to a large extent, acclimatised to measles, seeing that few of their forefathers probably escaped, in their day, from an attack. And, again, it is, in the majority of cases amongst well-fed and healthy English children, a comparatively trivial affection. Still, at the best, and especially amongst the unhealthy and the neglected, measles is often followed by secondary diseases of the chest, throat, or ears, which are most dangerous. The golden rules in measles, as in any other fever, are to keep the patient warm and quiet; to avoid all chances of chills or cold; and to carefully regulate the excretions. It is when these rules are neglected that measles becomes dangerous and its mortality as large as in the epidemic referred to.

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