

detention of lepers until death." These poor people are, in fact, condemned to perpetual banishment for life, and separated from home, husband, children and relations. As a proof that the prevention of danger to others is an insincere plea on behalf of the maintenance of the Colony, Mr. Hutchinson told that, at the time of the Governmental inquiry before alluded to, there were in the women's leper colony 14 healthy children. The Commission enquired whether this were not wrong, and Dr. Impey replied that there was no appreciable danger. Moreover, one child was paralysed, and if he took it away from the mother, he would have a demon left on his hands, and if he took away the thirteen other children, he would have thirteen demons, and, so far, not a single case of contagion had occurred. It will be also recognized that, as there is a healthy population on the island, and these people mix freely with the lepers, who also receive visitors from the mainland, the segregation is not complete, but merely make believe. If once the public appreciate this, they will recognize that there is need for a serious investigation of the question of this isolation, because, if it is not essential in the interests of public health, its injustice and cruelty will be evident. The value of the co-operation of the public on such subjects as the prevention of the spread of tuberculosis, and hydrophobia, and in practising vaccination, is well known, and they may also render valuable assistance with regard to leprosy. Leprosy has, of course, a dreadful reputation, worse than it deserves, for its effects may often be much mitigated. It is well to remember that a leper is very often not ill at all. There are bad cases, but there are also mild cases and chronic cases. Leprosy is a most difficult disease to diagnose in the early stages. It is confined to no particular locality, but appears all over the world, principally on islands, and near the coast line. It has been prevalent since Old Testament days, and is chiefly a disease of poverty. It most frequently occurs amongst people used to curing salt fish and consuming it uncooked. In this connection, it is noteworthy that in England the disease, which used to be prevalent, has now disappeared. It has disappeared also in inland Europe, but exists as a rim round Europe. It is commonest in Spain and Roman Catholic countries, and is not known amongst the adherents of the Greek church.

Before the advent of the Dutch in South Africa it was unknown, but when they settled there they imported slaves from Madagascar, who were employed in curing fish, and, subsequently, some Hottentots, as well as three Dutchmen, developed leprosy. Then for 50 years there were

no further cases, but as civilization increased and facilities were made for traffic and consequently for carrying salt fish further inland, other cases occurred in the Colony.

It is noticeable that South Africa may roughly be divided by a straight line; to the west of this are the Hottentot races, to the east the Bantus, Zulus and Kaffirs. Amongst the Zulus, who do not touch salt fish, leprosy is unknown. We are well acquainted with the fact that food may be the medium by which disease is conveyed in the spread of the bacillus of tuberculosis by uncooked meat and milk, and it is suggested that the bacillus of leprosy is to be found in unhealthy fish, and that, by consuming this uncooked, the disease is contracted. The rational method for the eradication of leprosy would appear to be by improving the diet of the country, and by eliminating uncooked fish from the menu. It must be remembered that in Europe, segregation has never been enforced, but that leprosy has practically disappeared with improved conditions. In South Africa, segregation has been insisted upon with brutal efficiency, and leprosy still occurs.

It follows that, if the disease is not contagious, the leper settlements on Robben Island are cruel institutions. These poor people, convicted of no crime, are condemned to life-long imprisonment. When the Cape Commission on the subject was held, the evidence of the sufferers went to prove that they did not complain of the treatment they received, what they did say was "we want to go home," and experience teaches that, once isolated on Robben Island, they die rapidly, not of disease, but of broken hearts.

One of the aims of the Polyclinic is to investigate such subjects, and to furnish Governments with information with regard to them. It has a Standing Committee for this purpose, and its aims are imperial and international. It therefore appeals to the public for financial support, in order that it may be able to prosecute these researches, assist in the elimination of disease, and so help to "make the chalice of the world run o'er with gladness."

Another object of the College is to give advice to patients who are above the class frequenting hospitals and who yet are not able to pay the ordinary consultation fees. These patients are frequently sent up to the College by their own medical men, who are subsequently communicated with. If hospital treatment is considered advisable, the patient is put in the way of obtaining this.

There is no doubt that this College meets a want which has long been felt, and we wish it all success.

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