

## Medical Matters.

### THE RESOLUTIONS OF THE INTERNATIONAL LEPROSY CONFERENCE.

The report of the Delegates of the British Government to the International Scientific Conference on Leprosy, held at Bergen in August—Dr. Arthur Newsholme, Medical Officer of the Local Government Board, and Sir Malcolm Morris—has now been issued as a Parliamentary paper.

The report points out that the resolutions of the Bergen Conference should be taken in conjunction with those passed at the Berlin Conference in 1897, which incorporated the following points: (1) That in all countries in which leprosy occurs *in foci*, or is widely distributed, isolation is the best means of preventing a spread of the disease; (2) that the system of compulsory notification, supervision, and isolation, as carried out in Norway, is to be recommended wherever possible; (3) that the special regulations, suited to the social conditions of each country, must be left to the legally constituted authorities after consultation with the sanitary authorities.

The resolutions of the Bergen Conference, which were practically unanimous, were as follows:—

I. The Second International Scientific Conference on Leprosy confirms in every respect the resolutions adopted by the first International Conference of Berlin, 1897. Leprosy is a disease which is contagious from person to person, whatever may be the method by which this contagion is effected. Every country, in whatever latitude it is situated, is within the range of possible infection by leprosy, and may, therefore, usefully undertake measures to protect itself.

II. In view of the success obtained in Germany, Iceland, Norway, and Sweden, it is desirable that other countries with leprosy should proceed to isolate their lepers.

III. It is desirable that lepers should not be permitted to follow certain occupations which are particularly dangerous in respect to the contagion of leprosy. In every country and in all cases the strict isolation of leprosy beggars and vagrants is necessary.

IV. It is desirable that the healthy children of lepers should be separated from their leprous parents as soon as possible, and that these children should remain under observation.

V. An examination should be made from time to time of those who have lived with lepers by a competent physician.

VI. All theories on the etiology and the mode of propagation of leprosy should be carefully examined to ascertain if they accord with our knowledge of the nature and the biology of the bacillus of leprosy. It is desirable that the question of the transmissibility of leprosy by insects should be elucidated, and that the possibility of the existence of leprous

diseases among animals (rats) should receive early study.

VII. The clinical study of leprosy induces the belief that it is not incurable. We do not at present possess a certain remedy. It is desirable, therefore, to continue the search for a specific remedy.

Appended to the Report is a statement drawn up at a meeting of British and Colonial Delegates held after the Conference, which embodies the line of administrative policy regarded as desirable of adoption throughout the British Empire, as far as circumstances permit, with the object of the prevention of leprosy.

1. Leprosy is spread by direct and indirect contagion from persons suffering from the disease. The possibility that indirect contagion may be effected by fleas, bugs, lice, the itch parasite, etc., has to be borne in mind. Leprosy is most prevalent under conditions of personal and domestic uncleanness and over-crowding, especially where there is close and protracted association between the leprous and non-leprous.

2. Leprosy is not due to the eating of any particular food such as fish.

3. There is no evidence that leprosy is hereditary. The occurrence of several cases in a single family is due to contagion.

4. In leprosy an interval of years may elapse between infection and the first recognised appearance of disease. It is a disease of long duration, though some of its symptoms may be quiescent for a considerable period and then recur.

5. The danger of infection from leprous persons is greater when there is discharge from mucous membranes or from ulcerated surfaces.

6. Compulsory notification of every case of leprosy should be enforced.

7. The most important administrative measure is to separate the leprous from the non-leprous by segregation in settlements or asylums.

8. In settlements home life may be permitted under regulation by the responsible authorities.

9. The preceding recommendations, if carried out, will provide the most efficient means of mitigating the leper's suffering, and of assisting in his recovery, and at the same time will produce a reduction and ultimate extinction of the disease.

The foregoing resolutions and statement are unquestionably the most important pronouncements on the subject of leprosy which have so far been formulated.

### HOOK-WORM DISEASE.

On the appointment of a Commission of eminent medical men to investigate the hook-worm disease which is prevalent in some of the rural districts of the Southern States in America, Mr. John D. Rockefeller has given £200,000 in aid of its work. The disease is somewhat similar to sleeping sickness, and the mortality from it is considerable. The Commission estimate that 2,000,000 persons of all classes are infected with the parasite.

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