

## THE INTERNATIONAL CONGRESS ON TUBERCULOSIS.

In the last number of THE BRITISH JOURNAL OF NURSING we gave an abstract of the opening of the Anti-Tuberculosis Congress at Rome from the *Giornale d'Italia*.

The following day there was a sitting of the Conference, under the Presidency of Sir Robert Phillip, when Professor Jemma discussed the scientific points in relation to the diagnosis of tuberculosis in infancy. He expounded the fundamental ideas of the Isolation School on the importance of the infantile constitution and of the changes which it had undergone with reference to tubercular infection. There were latent forms of tuberculosis and toxin forms, referring especially to the primary complex and to the trachea-bronchial symptoms, and concluding with an exposition defining the various methods of biological diagnosis.

The paper was much applauded and was followed by several speakers, amongst whom was Professor Bergamini of Parma, who gave a contribution to the diagnosis of the development of trachea-bronchial affection in infants. Professor Mendis (of Rome) dwelt especially on the great importance of the cheerful disposition of infants who afford no indication at first of the early stages, and pointed out the importance of isolating children in sanatoria in special departments, for the purpose of observation. Professor Spolverini raised the question of the importance of family infection, concluding that there does not exist a really spontaneous immunity, but a relative form of immunity against infection. Dr. Barbara (of Genoa) related a long series of observations carried out by himself in the bio-pathological department of that University, under the direction of Professor Pende, which establish the classical belief in the hereditary predisposition towards the disease. Hygiene ought to be careful, and every precaution should be taken to promote a healthy social prophylaxis, not only removing the debilitated from contagion, but also taking the greatest care for the improvement of the general constitution.

The next meeting (the Conjoint one of doctors and nurses) was held in the large hall of the Collegio Romano, under the presidency of Dr. Hamel, a delegate from Germany. The lecturer, Dr. Brand (of England) gave a description of the services rendered at dispensaries with a view to the prevention of tuberculosis, and said that the cases were sent from towns into the country. After the discussion, Dr. Faber (of Denmark) gave statistics on the diffusion of tubercular ailments in rural families and insisted on the necessity of collaboration between doctors and nurses. Sir Robert Phillip urged the necessity of propaganda for the education of the masses in collaboration with the authorities.

Professor Baduel gave a complete statement of the development of the work by the Italian Red Cross for the last ten years against tuberculosis, stating that the greatest support had been given to this work by the National Government.

Another Conference in the large hall of the Collegio Romano was addressed by the Minister of National Economics, Signor Martelli, on the subject of obligatory insurance against tuberculosis in Italy. The Duchess of Aosta and numerous illustrious personages were present at the Conference. Signor Martelli began by showing that the Fascist government, deeply impressed by the weighty problems of national reconstruction, desired to face the question of the defence of our childhood, the problem of anti-tubercular methods, and especially with the law of June, 1927, which, amongst other things, prescribed the obligatory institution in every province of Anti-tubercular Committees, and with the law of October, 1927, which establishes the obligatory insurance against tuberculosis.

This last law, which has only been established for a few months, has given effect to one of the fundamental principles in the direction of the assistance and provision for the labouring community, and constitutes a new departure in the anti-tubercular struggle and effectual means of increasing the means of successfully carrying it on. It has, in fact, been based on the assurance principle which determines a fractional proportion of the burdens, and aims at establishing with the least possible expense, which is estimated at 35 lire per annum for each person. The necessary means for such an effort amounts, it is estimated, to 304 million lire annually. In such a case, the financial problem which is laid open is fully satisfied with a burden which economically is not serious. The speaker continued by observing that, besides the assurance basis of the law, it had been possible to extend protection to a notable number of individuals.

In fact, they have arrived at benefiting not only all the workers already subject to obligatory insurance against sickness and old age, but also all their families, and further about 20 million people, who constitute more than half the population of the kingdom.

In consequence, and this is another aspect of the problem, not only is the financial expenditure for cure already furnished for the anti-tubercular effort, but it will be possible to do something for other categories of the population.

Signor Martelli has added that in the anti-tubercular field it is necessary to constitute a central command, which will give a universal direction, and which will possess all the elements for the actual practice of the principal theoretical means of amelioration, and which will carry out its programme independently of considerations of local control, avoiding thus the possibility of a division in local efforts.

The Fascist Government is resolved on this aspect of the question, laying the burden of the assurance and curative problems on one body (the National Office for Social Assurance), already drawn into the sanatoria field, which can place large sums at the disposition of the responsible authorities to face the expenses of the establishment in carrying on all curative homes.

In this way, the Government has not only rendered possible the ready carrying out of its views, but has avoided the institution of a new organism which would have borne heavily in a great measure on the financial resources of employees in this anti-tubercular effort. This in substance should be devoted to the means of the recovery of the sick in curative establishments and also in the institution of collateral post-sanatoria in the species of labour colonies as that which is found in Porta Furba, and with such an aim. Inasmuch as the poorest classes are strongly opposed by unfortunate prejudices to these methods it aims at forming amongst them a new species of conscientious responsibility. The law of assurance against tuberculosis bearing on the protection of the sick person not only on the basis of a sentimental charity which degrades, but on the basis of right and justice, will determine as has happened in other fields, for example, for those unfortunate people a complete transformation of their ideas which will prove useful towards recovery in curative establishments.

This important conference, which was followed with the greatest interest, was received by the greatest applause, all the audience rising to their feet and acclaiming the Duce.

At the next Conference the Congressists sent a message to the head of the Italian Government expressive of its profound admiration of the great and noble initiative which, through his example, may awaken amongst other nations a fresh emulation in the struggle against tuberculosis.

We are indebted to the kindness of Dr. A. Stark Currie for the above report, translated and abridged from the *Cronaca di Roma*.

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