

BOOK REVIEWS

Historia de la Lepra en la Argentina. M. I. Quiroga. Press of the Ministry of Education and Justice, Buenos Aires, 1964. pp. 189.

This book, by the former Titular Professor of Dermatology of the Faculty of Medicine in Buenos Aires, and former director of the Antileprosy Campaign in Argentina, consists of 189 pages, including thirteen chapters and an appendix. The titles of the chapters are: (1) Leprosy in America; (2) Leprosy in Argentina; (3) First recognition of a focus of leprosy in the country, by the physician Manuel Rodriguez in 1792; (4) Leprosy in Argentina in the 19th century; (5) Argentine bibliography on leprosy in the 19th century; (6) First official prophylactic measures, set up by the National Conference on Leprosy in 1906; (7) The Law of Prophylaxis of Leprosy,

or Aberastury Law (11.359), passed in 1926 and still in force; (8) Formulation of the Aberastury Law, and its revision; (9) Sanatorium-Colonies for leprosy patients; (10) Hospitals and provincial and municipal facilities for internment of patients, up to the time of establishment of sanatorium-colonies; (11) Evolution of leprosy control from the time of the Dermatovenereologic Section to the establishment of the Dermatologic Campaign, 1927-1933; (12) The present state of the leprosy problem in Argentina; and (13) Private work in Argentine leprology. The Appendix carries the tripartite plan of operation for the project for control of leprosy in Argentina, involving cooperation by the Argentine government, The World Health Organization, and UNICEF, known as the "Convenio Argentina 28."

In a population of 20,775,207 inhabitants,

as of December 31, 1959, 11,026 leprosy patients were registered, with a calculated prevalence rate of 0.53 per 1,000.

This book, which is very well documented, reviews all the forces brought into action by official authorities, and private and personal institutions, such as the Patronato de Leprosos de la Republica Argentina, to bring about the eradication of leprosy in this country. From the account it may be deduced, however, that the endemic remains stationary in this country, in spite of so much vigilance.—E. D. L. JONQUIÈRES

Historia de la Lepra en Cuba. Miguel A. Gonzalez Prendes. Publicaciones del Museo Historico de Las Ciencias Medicas "Carlos J. Finlay," Havana, 1963, pp. 415.

The death of Miguel Angel Gonzalez Prendez, recently noted in these pages (*Internat. J. Leprosy* 34 (1966) 80-81) calls attention to the fact that insufficient note was made of his influential book, *Historia de la Lepra en Cuba*, in the pages of *THE JOURNAL*. This well documented history, dedicated by the author to his sons, carries the history of leprosy in antiquity and an account of its first discovery in America, which bore some relation to the voyages of Columbus and the influx of immigrants to the New World from countries in which leprosy was to some extent endemic. Exhaustive research has failed to establish the presence of leprosy in the Americas before the voyages of Columbus, and there is rather general agreement that the disease first became manifest in the western world after the introduction of Negro slaves from Africa. From then on numerous accounts were published of what indubitably appears to be leprosy in the Caribbean islands and Central and South American mainland.

Gonzalez Prendez has given a careful account of the history of leprosy in each

of the provinces in Cuba, and has related its spread to the movements of the working force in agriculture in the island. The account is fortified by a wealth of general history in Cuba, including the social conditions prevalent in different periods, and the changes in government, and of official efforts in the hospitalization and control of spread of leprosy. As in many other countries, the lot of leprosy patients in the earlier periods of the history was an unhappy one. A gradual improvement under successive administrators and ecclesiastic personnel is lengthily and very well described. Reforms were instituted by numerous leaders in public health. Much pithy biographic detail accompanies these accounts.

In the era of the Republic Carlos J. Finlay, noted for his definitive studies on the transmission of yellow fever, was the first of a series of well trained and competent heads of a modern Department of Health. He introduced new practices with respect to leprosy in several respects, one of which was the requirement of legal notification of cases. A census of cases and new provision for hospitalization followed this action. In the succeeding years private support for the care of leprosy patients aided notably in the campaign against the disease.

In general, the account emphasizes two aspects of the history of leprosy, viz., the part played by different administrations and the individual histories of the different regions of the country, each of which had special problems. The history does not close with any particular year or era, and emphasizes early more than recent history. A bibliography of 299 references is appended. By and large, the volume puts on record in an interesting way a detailed history of leprosy in Cuba, with special stress on the disease as seen in Spanish colonial times.—E. R. LONG