A study was made of the leprosarium in Zoquipan, the only one existing in Mexico, in order to evaluate its function and accomplishment in the care and prophylaxis of leprosy in Mexico. The opening chapters describe systems of control in the country from 1513, when the disease is supposed to have reached Mexico, up to the present. The account notes three phases: the first, from 1513-1900, limited to care of patients in a leprosarium; the second, from 1900-1960, in which care was based on dispensaries, leprosaria and preventoria, founded by Jesus Gonzalez Urmena; and the third, or present, since 1960, characterized by the use of mobile units, and modern policy of avoiding segregation and of practicing ambulatory treatment. A study was made of the leprosarium founded in 1939 in the State of Mexico, 30 km. distant from the City of Mexico. This study included its history, and a description of its physical state, personnel, functions, population and medical care, as well as a brief psychosocial inquiry. From this study it was concluded that the leprosarium was set up precipitately, and that it has been defective in function. The treatment and care of the 300 still resident patients was considered never to have been adequately guarded, since the isolated patients follow their own wishes in this small community, with the resultant vices frequently observed in secluded persons, including alcoholism, abuse of drugs, and crime. The personnel, including physicians and nurses, is said to be very abundant, but not working well, and the equipment is considered inadequate and inadequate, and the attention given by the authorities to this asylum to be null. The population consists of 300 patients, most of whom are invalids, although some remain who are cured but do not wish to leave the hospital because of the adaptation they have made and interests they have developed. An integrated study of the asylum is recommended with a view to converting it into a center for rehabilitation, and it is concluded that when it becomes possible to rehabilitate the few patients isolated, when there are no longer leprosy invalids, and when cases are discovered before debility sets in, the remaining leprosarium in Mexico fortunately will cease to exist.—A. Sxv.

BOOK REVIEWS


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 159 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 (11.539), 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 Dermatovenerologic 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.”

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 Lepranos 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. Jusquines


The death of Miguel Angel Gonzalez Premoles, 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 Tine 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 Premoles 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 200 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. B. Loss.