
“TYPE” VERSUS “VARIETY”

Leprosy is unique among infectious diseases in the way in which the cases fall into one or another of two distinct groups or “types,”

evidently as a result of well-defined differences in resistance to the infecting organism rather than because of the sites of infection or variations of bacterial strains (tropism or virulence). In other diseases there are, of course, differences in form such as bubonic and pneumonic plague, due to differences of primary location. Syphilis conventionally is divided into groups according to the stage, and sometimes groupings are also based on the organ chiefly affected. Varieties of tuberculosis are recognized, but even in this disease there is no separation into types at all analogous to that in leprosy.

The picture of leprosy as a whole is diffused somewhat by the fact that cases of the neural type may, if the resistance that determines that type breaks down, develop lesions characteristic of the cutaneous type; while quite regularly cases primarily of the latter type, if they survive long enough, sooner or later develop manifestations characteristic of the neural group; but this is universally recognized and causes no essential confusion. It is somewhat different when sub-groups of either type are given special designations, as it is often convenient or necessary to do.

Before the middle of the last century the classification (if it may be called that) of leprosy was chaotic. One of the main contributions of the Norwegian pioneers, Danielssen and Boeck, was the differentiation of the basic groups which—whether with or without the agreement of etymologists—have long been called “types.” As long ago as 1886 Leloir,¹ recognizing three forms of the disease (tubercular, anesthetic, and mixed or complete), pointed out:

On voit que... je rejette complètement la *forme maculeuse* de quelques auteurs. Je montrerais en effet... que les formes maculeuses, bulleuses, lazarinées, ulcéreuses, psoriasiques, atrophiques, mutilantes, etc., etc., décrites par certains médecins n'existent pas en tant que formes. Ce ne sont que des *variétés éruptives*, ou des *phases* dans l'évolution de trois formes précédentes. J'insiste et j'insisterai encore sur la différence qu'il y a entre *forme* et *variété*, entre *forme* et *phase*; car c'est pour n'avoir pas suffisamment tenu compte de cette différence que tant d'auteurs nous ont donné de la lèpre des descriptions si confuses et si inexactes.

This distinction between “form” (or “type”) and “variety” is brought to attention here with the suggestion that, if writers on leprosy will bear it in mind, it may obviate unnecessary confusion

¹LELOIR, H. *Traité Pratique et Théorique de la Lèpre*. Paris, 1886, p. 10.

at this time when the classification of the disease and the differentiation of special varieties of it are being discussed.

FROM THE JOURNAL OFFICE

RENEWALS

Renewal of memberships in the INTERNATIONAL LEPROSY ASSOCIATION, and of non-membership subscriptions to this JOURNAL, will be due shortly. Because of the distances involved, in most cases it requires three months or more for notices of renewal of membership to reach the JOURNAL office. Hence, if the recipients of this issue will renew at once they will be assured that their names will be included in the 1936 list at the time of publication of the first issue of the next volume.

Heretofore it has been the practice to send the first number of a new volume to the entire mailing list as it stood at the end of the preceding year. For reasons of economy it will be necessary hereafter to discontinue this practice. The JOURNAL can be mailed only to Association members and other subscribers of whose renewals this office has been informed. It is therefore suggested that the slip which is to be found inside the front cover of this copy be filled out and returned with the usual remittance.