

LEPROSY AND CLIMATE IN CHINA

To the EDITOR:

I have read with great interest Dr. Clarence A. Mills' article in the third issue of *THE JOURNAL* for 1936, but as regards China I cannot agree with the conclusions at which he arrives. Dr. Mills is correct in saying that our data in China have hardly reached the level of statistics, but we have a great deal of additional information since I wrote the paper to which he refers.

The more I study the distribution of the disease in this country the more dissatisfied I am with attributing any important influence to climatic causes. Furthermore, the statements made in Dr. Mills' article as regards distribution are incorrect in the light of further knowledge. While there are many gaps still to be filled in, the following facts are, I believe, indisputable.

1. Leprosy is very prevalent in the low-lying delta of the West River in Canton province. This area lies just within the tropics and is hot and steamy in the summer.

2. Leprosy is quite as prevalent in the uplands of Yunnan, where much of the country is at a level of 4,000 feet above the sea, and where the climate is salubrious.

3. There is a heavy infection in northern Kiangsu, stretching on into the eastern part of the province of Shantung. Parts of this area are the most heavily infected regions in China. The climate is hot and dry for much of the year, and the soil is very sandy.

4. The leprosy area of Shantung is confined to the center and especially the eastern side of the province; it apparently does not cross to the north or the west of the Yellow River.

5. The provinces of Hopei, Shansi, Honan and Western Shantung appear to be free from leprosy except for one small area in central Honan.

6. The northwest province of Kansu, consisting of uplands with dry loess soil, is apparently infected throughout. This needs further confirmation, but such information as is available points to this.

7. The great rice-growing plain of Szechwan is apparently free from the disease, but as one travels into the high mountains of the Tibetan border it becomes very prevalent. I have myself seen many cases at altitudes of over 5,000 feet, and in the northwest part of this region there is a valley in the high mountains among the perpetual snows which is known as the "Leper Valley."

8. Leprosy is prevalent in Eastern Tibet.

It appears to me, and I think it will strike most of your readers, that this list covers almost every variety of climate.