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EDITORIALS

Editorials are written by members of the Editorial Board, and opinions expressed are those of the writers. Any statement that does not meet with agreement will be of service if it but stimulates discussion, for which provision is made elsewhere.

THE CAIRO CONGRESS

In reporting upon the leprosy congress that was held in Cairo from the 21st to the 27th of March, it can be said at once, without qualification or equivocation, that it was highly successful. In the numbers of persons attending it and of regions represented, it was the largest leprosy meeting that had yet been held. In the amount and nature of the work accomplished it was probably unique, combining in fact the usual kind of meeting and a round-table conference—or rather, a group of them.

Two separate entities collaborated in the preparatory work. The Government of Egypt, through its representations to other Governments, obtained a large response in the way of official delegations, and through its organizing committee arranged the multitudinous details that are involved in the preparation of such an affair. The International Leprosy Association, which in 1935 took the initial steps for a world conference and invited the Egyptian Government to sponsor it, did much to arouse the interest and support of leprosy workers in general. Both entities were in actual fact concerned in the operation of the meeting, with joint representation on a Scientific Committee which met a week before the opening of the Congress and completed the final

plans for the sessions along lines laid down by the local organizing group. It created a Resolutions Committee, which was composed of the officers and councillors of the Association—this being the nearest approach that was had by that organization, as such, to participation in the actual work of the Congress.

A feature that was quite unexpected to most of the members was the name adopted for the gathering, namely, the "First International Congress on Leprosy." The original proposal had been that it should be the First Congress of the International Leprosy Association, but on representation of a certain group of members of that organization it was later agreed that it should be the Fourth International Leprosy Conference, in continuation of those that were held in Berlin, Bergen and Strasbourg. All of the preparatory work done by the Association was on that basis, but it appears that at the same time the local organizing group had worked on the Congress basis, with the expectation that future meetings are to be numbered consecutively from it.

With regard to the number of members who attended, a list compiled immediately afterward contains 167 names. These include certain associate members of the International Association who participated, and also a few other nonmedical persons who represented their Governments officially but who took no active part, but it does not include many ladies who were registered in order that they might participate in the social functions, or certain local officials who joined as a matter of courtesy. Of the total mentioned, no fewer than 107 persons came from abroad. Sixty-five persons, not including the Egyptian members, were accredited as representatives of 39 foreign governments. The group as a whole represented (as regards their field of work, though not in all cases in nationality), 49 countries or territorial entities, from Argentina and the United States in the West to Fiji and Japan in the East.

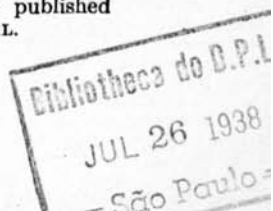
The Congress was opened formally at the Royal Opera House by His Majesty the King of Egypt at a ceremony held on Monday, March 21st, in which representatives of several selected countries took part. The scientific sessions began on the afternoon of the same day, a total of six daily ones being held, each devoted to a certain topic or group of related topics. In addition, a forenoon was given over to a visit to the Abu Zaabal leprosarium, located on the edge of the desert some twenty miles from the city.

In total, 65 papers were actually read, either in full or in summary, some of the latter being in the form of lanternslide demonstrations. This number represented somewhat over forty percent of the total of 154 titles that were submitted, of which total nearly one-half (72) were by authors who did not attend. Because of the limited time for the sessions all papers the authors of which were absent were read only by title, and several others were so read by their authors' choice or because speakers were limited to fifteen minutes in any one session.

With regard to the subjects of the papers, they have been tentatively classified under the following heads: history and distribution of leprosy, 19 titles; epidemiology and control, 41 titles; clinical aspects of the disease, 34 titles; treatment, 25 titles; chemistry, 6 titles; immunology and serology, 14 titles, bacteriology, inoculation and animal leprosy, 15 titles. Undoubtedly, the problems of epidemiology and control took first place in interest as well as in the number and variety of papers. Of the clinical features of the disease, the question of the nature and relationships of tuberculoid leprosy stood first, and in connection with that was the matter of classification of cases and lesions. Stress was also laid on leprosy in children. With regard to treatment, chaulmoogra continues to be the principal medicament used; surprisingly little was said about dye treatment; one or two innovations were reported upon, including the use of oxygen under pressure which its proponents in Brazil consider highly promising. Considerable interest was shown in several other matters, among which may be mentioned specifically the work of Dr. J. Adler, of Jerusalem, who has produced at least temporarily progressive lesions in splenectomized Syrian hamsters. Widely divergent views regarding the cultivation of the leprosy bacillus were presented, and the matter still stands unsettled in the opinion of the majority.¹

The feature of the Congress that was unique was the seriousness with which an attempt was made to arrive at recommendations on fundamental matters along the lines of the round-table conference convened by the Leonard Wood Memorial in Manila in 1931. The resolutions committee, empowered to set up subcommittees to deal with specific topics, was not content to await action of the Congress sessions in referring questions to it, but proceeded at once to set up three subcommittees to deal with the

¹All summaries that are available of the papers read will be published in the current literature section of the next issue of *THE JOURNAL*.



following subjects: (a) classification, (b) treatment, (c) epidemiology and control. Only one other, for bacteriology (cultivation), was added later.

These committees, fairly large and representative of diverse experiences and viewpoints, set to work at once and met on all of the five free evenings, usually working late into the night. The committee meetings amounted to roundtable conferences at which the topics were discussed in detail and agreements reached—not always unanimously, of course—regarding recommendations to be made. The reports represent a great deal of hard work, and constitute a real achievement, especially in view of the limited time available and the fact that for the most part the committees did not have as a basis for their work previously-prepared, detailed agenda. The committee on classification had some advantage in that respect. After it had been decided, first, that the present type division should not be changed, and second, that a new subclassification of the neural type should be made (by varieties, not to replace the current subdivision by degrees of advancement but for other purposes), the committee worked largely with proposals that had already been published and consequently was able to present a more finished report than would otherwise have been possible under the circumstances. This point is mentioned particularly because of the purpose of and the place held by an international classification, with its type divisions and subdivisions and the descriptions and definitions that necessarily accompany them. The reports of the other committees cannot be discussed here. As noted below they have already been published, and they will be reprinted in the next issue of the JOURNAL.

The final day of the congress, Sunday, March 27th, was devoted to general meetings. The first such meeting of the International Leprosy Association ever to be held took place in the forenoon. At it the officers and councillors to hold office for the ensuing five-year period were elected. Professor Marchoux, of Paris, takes the office of President, and Drs. Balina of Buenos Aires and Lowe of Calcutta will hold those of chairmen of the Western and Eastern Sections and, *ex officio*, Vice-Presidents of the Association. Dr. Muir continues as General Secretary-Treasurer and Dr. Wade as Editor of the JOURNAL. A new office was created, that of "liason officer," the function of which is to collaborate with the American Leprosy Foundation in the work that it has done for the Association in the past. Dr. Heiser, elected to the General Council, will fill that office. Among

the resolutions adopted were several of appreciation, one ordering the publication of the Editor's report in the JOURNAL, and one approving a plan for the extension of the activities of the American Leprosy Foundation in the international field which had been presented by its president, Mr. Perry Burgess.

The final meeting of the Congress itself was held on Sunday afternoon. The most important action was the acceptance of an invitation of the City of Paris, presented by Dr. Marchoux, that the next congress be held there, the proposed time being 1943. An organizing committee for that meeting was appointed, consisting of the president and vice-presidents of the Association and the secretary and assistant secretary of the present congress, Prof. M. Khalil Bey and Dr. M. A. K. Dalgamouni. The congress adopted, standing, a resolution of regret of the deaths of Drs. Nils Heitmann, Director of Medical Affairs of Norway, and Prof. Federico Lleras Acosta, Chief of the Office of Leprosy Investigation of Columbia, both of whom died while en route to the Congress. Information had previously been received of the death of Prof. W. Kedrowsky, of Moscow, who had planned to attend; an obituary was read by Dr. Reenstierna. Among other actions taken was the granting of authority to the subcommittees on classification, treatment, and epidemiology and control to complete their reports which, after acceptance by the resolutions committee, should be included, as approved, in the findings of the congress.

These reports, as edited by the resolutions committee (with a view mainly to attaining uniformity of presentation), together with the minutes of the general meetings of the congress and the Association, have been published in the March issue of the *Journal of the Egyptian Medical Association*.³ Reprints, to serve as the final bulletin of the congress, were mailed to members some ten days after its close. The full transactions of the congress will appear later in the year.

No report of the congress would be adequate without mention of the social side of it. On the evening of the first day His Majesty the King of Egypt gave a brilliant reception and entertainment in the Abdine Palace. The last day of the congress ended on a high note with a formal dinner attended by nearly three hundred persons. Three afternoons were devoted

³Copies have been mailed to all members of the Congress, and extra copies are available from the Egyptian Medical Association, Kasr el Aini Post Office, Cairo, Egypt, at the price of one shilling, post free.

to visits to the museums and mosques of Cairo, to the pyramids of Giza, and to the Nile Barrage by boats; on these afternoons, and two others, there were tea parties, one of them given in the name of the International Leprosy Association. Aside from the two formal affairs mentioned, the evenings had been left open for committee work. Mention should also be made of the fact that the Congress was signalled in a unique way by the issue of a special postage stamp in three denominations, the design being a most attractive one featuring a *Hydnocarpus* branch.

To summarize the feelings of the congress members, the following is quoted from one of the speeches made at the closing dinner:

When the first plans were made for the meeting which has now ended no one could foresee how well the task would be carried out. Contemplating the great distances that separate the thin scattering of leprosy workers throughout the world, we had no idea that so many interested and interesting persons could be brought together. Nor did we anticipate so much pleasure on other grounds as we have enjoyed at the hands of our hosts. The manner in which this congress was organized and has been carried out is most admirable. The preliminary preparations, the management of the meeting itself and of the social affairs that have leavened the serious work, all bespeak a high degree of foresight, energy and efficiency. I take the liberty of mentioning by name Professor Khalil Bey, the organizer, and Dr. Dalgamouni, the genial but strict secretary, but there are many others to whom our thanks are due for their efforts and cordiality. No better expression of our appreciation of the congress, and of our gratitude to our hosts comes to mind than to say that we cannot see how any future leprosy congress can possibly be more successful or enjoyable than this one has been.