

BOOK REVIEWS

LOWE, JOHN. Lecture Notes on Leprosy. British Empire Leprosy Relief Association, Indian Council, New Delhi, 1938; 56 pp., with 2 text-figs. and 14 plates containing 44 illustrations. In paper, price 8 annas.

This booklet, which deals with the essential features of leprosy succinctly and clearly, is based on lecture notes used for several years in Calcutta. The author gives fair warning that the "statements made tend sometimes to be rather dogmatic" because of the condensation of the matter, but there are refreshingly few to which the present reviewer would take definite exception and very few indeed that are of sufficient importance to mention. It is pointed out that the description is of leprosy as it is seen in India, and that the disease shows considerable differences, clinically and otherwise, in other countries; thus an occasional question that arises is met at the outset.

One of the more noticeable statements that may meet objection is that indirect transmission (by infected articles, etc.) is rare "if not impossible"; that seems somewhat extreme and perhaps injudicious. Lepra reaction in neural leprosy is said to be an allergic phenomenon, but its nature in the lepromatous type is not indicated. Those to whom severe reactions constitute a common and troublesome hospital problem may find too cheerful the attitude that that condition as a whole is of little importance, but here may be one of the times when it should be recalled that conditions in India are being discussed. The meaning of the statement that the "lepromatous type of leprosy is always active" is not clear, in view of the fact that in any large institution one may see many cases in which the disease and its lesions remain quiescent for long periods or are undergoing retrogression. Full adherence to the principle, strongly insisted upon, that leprosy should not be diagnosed except in the presence of one of three cardinal signs (impairment of sensation, thickening of nerves, finding of bacilli) might handicap work with young children, but then that is not work for the beginner. The map showing the distribution of leprosy throughout the world needs some correction, especially as regards North America and Greenland.

On the other hand many features might be selected to go onto the other side of the balance: for examples, the emphasis on the many persons who are infected but never show signs of the disease or only abortive manifestations, the recognition that the idea of an "incubation period" is misleading, the adoption of accepted present-day classification and nomenclature, certain points about the bacteriological examination that are brought out, illustrations of conditions for differential diagnosis, and the avoidance of innovations and of speculative explanations of phenomena that are not understood.

This little book is thoroughly well suited for the purpose of an introduction for physicians who are not familiar with leprosy. It should be of real service to those who are to deal with lepers occasionally as general practitioners, and for those who are to go farther in the subject it will provide a sound foundation on which to build. Clearly printed on good paper, and for so inexpensive a publication freely illustrated, it should be put between firm covers and be in the library of every physician who has anything to do with this disease.

—H. W. W.

FERNANDES, SOLON. *O Doente de Lepra na Sociedade. Segundo monographia dos Arquivos de Sanatorio "Padre Bento."* Departamento de Profilaxia de Lepra do Estado de S. Paulo. Soc. Impressora Paulista, Ltda, S. Paulo, 1938, 87 pp.

The peculiar status of leprosy among diseases, and consequently of the leper among men, is the text of this philosophico-legal document. Compulsory sterilization is dealt with in the first chapter, in which the Brazilian laws regarding contraception and abortion are given, and among other things the disadvantage to both patients and State of the birth of children to leprosy parents is discussed. The second chapter is devoted to the matter of official and extraofficial assistance given to lepers in Brazil, and the problem of the families of lepers, while the third one returns to the more general problem of marriage, divorce and sex in general, among lepers. Of less broad concern is the next question, that of the right of lepers to vote, the author's attitude toward which is indicated by the query as to whether the voter who has fallen victim of leprosy has been rendered incapable of exercising that function. The last chapter deals briefly with the five leproseries of the State of São Paulo, in which on April 30, 1938, there were some 6,800 patients: the Sanatorio Padre Bento, near the city of São Paulo (718 patients) and the "asylum-colonies" of Santo Angelo (2,031 patients), Pirititingui (1,561 patients), Cocaes (1,520 patients) and Aimorés (965 patients). There are one or more pictures of each of these places.

—H. W. W.