

and in many countries the segregation of those afflicted is not enforced by law.

Dr. Vandyke Carter, the "greatest living authority" on the subject, says:—"From some considerations which have presented themselves to me, I am disposed to infer that should the colonization of India by Englishmen be ever attempted on a large scale there would be a decided risk of the new population becoming tainted with leprosy, and this risk might be converted into a positive infliction, were not means taken to prevent a possible communication of the disease, and therefore strict regulations would have to be enforced."

Again, a correspondent of the *New York World*, who lately visited the malarial swamp region of Louisiana, with its leper colony, descendants of the old Acadians, says that the captain of the sloop told him:—"This is the real *Terre des Léproux*; and, I reckon, has been for a hundred years back. The disease is in families, and is besides catching. I knew an American from Georgia to die from it."

And further. In the annual report, 1888, of the Lazaretto, Tracadie, New Brunswick, Dr. A. C. Smith, Inspecting Physician, draws attention to a case which he found in the adjoining parish of Caraqueet, of a boy, "now 13 years of age, who was, when three years old, attended by a leprous woman, during the healing stages of a severe burn. Leprosy afterwards made its appearance, and he is now in an advanced stage of the disease. His parents, brothers and sisters are free from it."

And the recent case of Father Damien, the devoted Roman Catholic missionary to the lepers of Molokai, one of the Sandwich Islands group, who has now contracted the disease himself, is known to most of us.

These facts I have adduced, because, in considering the question as I now propose to do, in its religious aspect, we must remember what is involved in a consecration to this work; the mental and visual horrors, the physical and the nervous strain, the isolation, the cutting off oneself, as it were, from the beauty and the freshness and the strength, nay, almost from the very hope of life; and lastly, and most to be dreaded, the risk of personal contamination.

These are what the leper missionary must lay upon the altar of Christ, as a sacrifice of a sweet smelling savor—for His sake.

Want of time within the limits of this paper obliges us reluctantly to pass over with only a cursory glance the care of the Church in mediæval and pre-Reformation times for the leper. We would only briefly say that "by the end of the 13th century compassion for the leper, heroically inculcated by St. Francis of Assisi, had extended so widely that there were certainly no less than 130 Lazar-houses in Great Britain; but how many more it is impossible to say."

"North, south, east and west, homes for the

leper were to be met with. In France the immense number of Lazar-houses is almost incredible.

Louis VII, in A.D. 1226, left legacies to no less than 2,000 Lazar-houses in his kingdom. What a contrast to India at the present day with its over a hundred thousand lepers and barely more hospitals for them than could be counted on one's fingers!

In Ireland a similar state of things existed. Leper houses were everywhere to be met with."*

To come down to our own times. After the acquisition of the Cape of Good Hope by the British, the Colonial Government, in 1818, established a temporary asylum for lepers at Hamel-en-Aarde. This, the then governor, Sir Charles Somerset, placed in charge of a Moravian missionary and his wife, whose devoted labors amongst these poor outcasts were so abundantly blessed that at the end of nine years 95 leper converts had been added to the Church by Holy Baptism. Afterwards this asylum was removed to Robbin Island at the entrance to Table Bay, and full provision was made for the comfort, cleanliness, temporal and spiritual well-being of the inmates. Reports tell us of the scholars in the school "turning over the leaves of their Bibles, some without fingers, some without hands;" of "the deeply affecting sight on a Sunday of those who passed to the house of God, here a leper creeping on his knees and the stumps of his arms; there one seated in a wheelbarrow propelled by a less afflicted brother, and many exerting much ingenuity and contrivance to reach the missionary church."

On Ascension Day, 1867, a leper house was opened at Jerusalem, the revered name of the late Bishop Gobat appearing on the committee. Of this work the Bishop writes:—

"Our constant aim is to alleviate their sufferings while they live, but our permanent object is to lead them to the Good Physician that He may heal and save their souls. With this view we have appointed a pious young native, educated in my school, to visit them several times a week, to read and expound the Bible to them, and pray with them."

The work of the Gospel amongst the lepers is exceptionally hopeful, encouraging—nay, at times, startling, in its spiritual triumphs.

We, who chafe and fret over our little bodily ailments, would do well to take to ourselves such a lesson as is conveyed in the story told us by a speaker at the London Missionary Conference, 1888:—

"I stood," he says, "beside a poor, mutilated form. I stood before a man literally falling to pieces before my eyes, and that poor man, in a hoarse, broken whisper, said to me, when I commiserated him upon his terrible suffering, 'No sir; no sir. God is very good to me. For the last nineteen years, since I have trusted to Christ,

*"Vide." Article in Nineteenth Century.