

PATHOLOGY AND THERAPY OF LEPROSY.

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Fortunately, the time has passed when leprosy was considered an incurable disease. Owing to the efforts of a few physicians, who were not satisfied to accept the verdict, a marked change has followed in the view taken of this affliction. At first, attention was directed only to the occurrence of spontaneous remissions in the course of leprosy, and the so-called cures were attributed merely to spontaneous improvements. Every physician who has made a study of leprosy knows, however, that these slight periodic remissions, seen for instance, with change of climate or after hospital treatment, are really retrogression. An energetic and successful treatment, on the other hand, results in a rapid and pronounced improvement, which can often be predicted in advance. The true value of the therapeutic methods at our command will never be underrated by him who has actually witnessed the sudden, beneficial effect.

Much has been accomplished for the better understanding of the disease, by its study in foreign countries. Thus, Ehlers and Cahnheim examined the lepers of Creta and found cured cases among them. Of greater importance still are the observations of Tonkin, who encountered many cured lepers in Sudon. He states that the incurability of leprosy has been proclaimed without sufficient investigation.

In the meantime, the reports of improvements and cures of leprosy in civilized countries have so multiplied that they can no longer be overlooked. Remarkable improvement or a cure after the use of chaulmoogra oil has been reported by many reliable authors throughout the world. Many cures have also been reliably reported to follow the use of balsam of Gurjun, mercurial preparations, strychnine, arsenic, salicylic acid preparations, ichthyol, airol, and chinosol.

Most authors agree upon the value of hot baths.

The external treatment introduced by Unna has been used successfully by others.

Even Armauer Hansen agrees that Danielssen has discharged many lepers cured from the Lungegaard Hospital in Bergen. The latter ascribes the cure in part to drugs, such as the salicylate of soda, in part to the good care possible in the hospital. Hansen himself, however, believes that we can do nothing to bring about a cure, and that the disease has healed spontaneously in the cured cases he has seen. This opinion is in marked contrast to the views of such excellent clinicians as Kaposi and Vidal.