

NOTES FROM THE WORK OF THE RECENT NASHVILLE MEETING

OF DELEGATES TO THE NATIONAL CONFERENCE OF STATE BOARDS OF HEALTH AND SECTION ON STATE MEDICINE OF THE AMERICAN MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

AT the above-named Nashville, Tenn., public health conference, May 19 to 23, eighteen States and the Province of Ontario were represented. An early proposition which was submitted to the Conference for consideration and discussion, was the following:

"By what means can a proper comprehension of the principles and practice of hygiene be most effectually promoted?"

There was a lengthy discussion on this by many of the leading delegates. All agreed to the value of annual reports for historical purposes, but as a medium of communication with the people, the preponderance of opinion was that such reports were of secondary importance. Sanitary tracts on municipal, domiciliary and personal hygiene: circulars on the prevention and restriction of cholera, small-pox, scarlet fever, diphtheria and other communicable diseases; a health bulletin, in which shall appear the mortality and morbidity statistics each month of the towns and counties, and meteorological data, together with short editorials or selected articles upon practical health questions; regularly, judiciously and systematically distributed had been found to be a valuable means of interesting and educating the public. The holding of sanitary conventions in various localities was, by those who had given them trial, also pronounced an excellent mean of developing popular interest upon the subject. The value of the press in this connection was emphasized and the suggestion offered that a serious effort be made to induce the leading dailies of the large centres of population to establish a sanitary editorship which should be charged with the consideration of all questions affecting the public health as is now the commercial editor with commercial matters; the society editor with society matters, etc.

Another subject for consideration was: "What steps should the United States Government take to prevent the introduction of

leprosy into this country?" A committee of three appointed at a previous meeting on the general subject of leprosy, and the prevention of its introduction into America, reported on this.

They held that leprosy is contagious, and declared that the dictum of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Great Britain to the opposite effect was heresy. When this was promulgated all precautions were thrown to the winds, and in forty years the lepers in British India increased from 128,000 to 250,000. The Government of Norway, on the other hand, have added new restrictions to the laws of segregation in force there, and in twenty-three years the number of lepers was reduced from 2,863 to 1,717, and where there were 242 new cases in 1858, there were only 29 in 1889, indicating the possibility of a complete extinction. The doctrine of heredity was discredited.

A review was made of the whole world, showing that leprosy exists in every country, and is steadily increasing in numbers. The condition of Cuba was especially threatening to America. Lepers can be found there at every turn; they are employed in every business, and, no doubt, many of the cigars shipped from there are rolled by leprous hands. Leprosy is cosmopolitan; it spares no age, it respects no race. Not half a dozen physicians in the United States, it was said, would know a case of leprosy in its first stages, and the Government should send men to Havana to study the disease.

The following were the conclusions as set forth in the majority report,—of two of the committee:—"Two courses are open to us. First, the do-nothing policy which has prevailed until nearly the present time. The result of this will be that in fifty years there will be lepers in every hamlet, and leper houses crowded with their mutilated victims in every city; second, the policy of absolute and implacable segregation in the case of those who are already fairly domiciled in