

Miscellaneous.

THE ANAEMIA OF "HOOK WORM" DISEASE (UNCINARIASIS.)

The commission appointed by the United States Government, February, 1904, for the study and treatment of anemia in Porto Rico, has submitted a report to the governor of that island. This report covers two hundred pages, and is printed both in the Spanish and in the English language.

When the commission began its investigation in Porto Rico, it established a hospital, consisting of tent-wards, first at Bayamon, and later at Utuado, the most anemic districts of the island. Dr. Bailey K. Ashford was put in charge.

"This report (medicine) thoroughly discusses the subject of tropical anemia depending upon uncinariasis. Beginning with the etiology of the disease, we find a thorough description of the life history, incidence, modes of infection, and distribution of the uncinaria worm. Then follows a careful study of the symptomatology of the disease, the life history of the uncinaria in the human host, the course, prognosis and lethality. The sections on prophylaxis and treatment are especially good."

The conclusions of the commission are of interest: The disease known as "anemia" in Porto Rico is only a symptom of some definite pathologic entity or a consequence of some aberration of physiologic processes caused by improper diet, unhygienic surroundings, etc.

The finding of a specific disease which produces anemia, and the disappearance of this symptom under treatment, directed to the disease alone, while the general causes remain unmodified, lead us to believe that the anemia is due, in the great majority of instances, to this specific disease, *i.e.*, uncinariasis or ankylostomiasis.

This disease is caused by the presence of a small worm (uncinaria) in the intestines of the patient. This parasitic worm gains entrance to the subject generally by penetration of the larva through the skin.

The disease is marked by profound anemia and degeneration of vital organs, leading to chronic invalidism, and often results in death. About 90 per cent. of the rural population in all parts of the island are affected. The large number of sufferers must effect the social and economic status of the country.