

DISEASES IN INDIA.

LORD WILLINGDON'S KEENLY SUSTAINED INTEREST.

LORD Willingdon, despite the many claims upon his time, has acted for some time past on the India Committee of the British Social Hygiene Council and is now Chairman of what is termed the Imperial and International Questions Committee of that body. In this capacity he has this week taken a very prominent part in combating venereal disease throughout the Empire, confining his attention more particularly to Bombay and Madras where, as Administrator, he had fullest knowledge of the evil which is causing untold suffering, not only throughout the Empire but all over the world.

Knowing from close at hand information the appalling ravages which various diseases make among the people of India, he said to a representative of Reuter :

" I welcome the suggestion of becoming Chairman of what was originally the India Committee of the British Social Hygiene Council and which is now developed into the Imperial and International Questions Committee of that body for it has given me an opportunity of keeping up my interest in the well-being of the people of India. From personal experience, I am fully aware of the magnificent work which is being done by the medical advisers of the Indian Government who prevent disease of all sorts. Scourges such as plague, malaria, cholera and hookworm have already been brought under control, and it is not the fault of the medical profession that to-day another disease has not been completely eliminated from the country. Unhappily year by year venereal disease is becoming more prevalent in India, especially in the more commercial rather than industrial centres. I am convinced that two objectives must be borne in mind. The disease must be fought directly wherever it raises its head but after-conditions must be so improved that the danger of individuals contracting it must be reduced."

DANGER OF VENEREAL DISEASE.

" What must be remembered is that the question of venereal disease is one directly affecting the public health and is of equal importance as such terrible scourges as plague, malaria and hookworm. It is perhaps in some ways even more important than these. Despite the work of the British Social Hygiene Council, ignorance still prevails as to the danger incurred. The length of the period of infectivity has led to its becoming widely spread in ignorance and in all innocence, and thus directly affects the quality of the succeeding generation. The aim of the British Social Hygiene Council is now

twofold. It aims as zealously as ever to seek out and destroy the disease wherever it exists. It has achieved the magnificent result that it now is everyone's opinion that this objective should be worked for, but it has taken an important step further as is signalled by its change of title from the National Council for Combating Venereal Disease to indicate to the public that all classes of venereal disease must be attacked by the same type of method as other diseases must be attacked. This year's meeting at Wembley marks a grand stage in advance. It demonstrates all over the world that the British Social Hygiene Council at any rate recognises that venereal disease can only be eliminated if the general standard of public morals is raised. The mistake must not be made to believe that there is to be any relaxation in the specific frontal attack that has been made and is being made by the Council.

The Council, however, is of opinion that the time has now come that it is desirable greatly to broaden the basis of its attack. Syphilis and gonorrhœa need special machinery for their elimination, but I am convinced that means adopted to combat them will have their valuable effect on other scourges such as tuberculosis and so forth. While perfect environment does not mean perfect health, improved environment and improved conditions unquestionably lead to a reduction if not eventually to the elimination of disease. So far as India is concerned we are at present only in the initial stages. We know that a large amount of the infant mortality from which the provinces suffer is due to infection through venereal disease, and I trust that the coming visit of the small commission of experts which we propose to send under the auspices of our Society will be able to help in giving the best advice as to how to grapple with this problem, in order that we may assist in securing more health and better vitality among succeeding generations in India in the future.