ENGLISH SECTION

Translations of papers submitted by outstanding Pan American Health Authorities on the occasion of the Second Pan American Health Day.

PUBLIC HEALTH IN ARGENTINA

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Cardiovascular diseases are today one of the fundamental public health problems of Argentina. They are responsible for the greatest number of deaths—about 28,000 a year (267 per 100,000) in the cities, and a somewhat smaller number in the rural regions. The economic loss, including medical aid required and potential earning capacity, has been estimated at 100 million pesos annually; 40% of retirement for disability is due to these conditions. The National Department of Health has recommended to the Executive Authorities the following preventive measures: compulsory periodic medical examinations, specialized medical service, and professional orientation.

Since the enactment of the Compulsory Vaccination Law in 1904, smallpox has definitely been banished from the country. The few cases reported have been from frontier regions. In 1940, 1,565,315 doses of smallpox vaccine were distributed gratuitously, and 721,535 inoculations including re-vaccinations, were registered. No cases of smallpox were reported during this year.

Diphtheria vaccination is now obligatory for all children between the ages of 9 months and 12 years. Even before this action was taken, the National Department of Health manufactured diphtheria vaccine, first the three-dose toxoid-antitoxin, and finally a single-dose type, which it distributed free throughout the country for voluntary use. But the results were satisfactory only where local regulations made immunization compulsory. It is expected that equally good results will be obtained throughout the country, following the new national compulsory legislation.

Corn and America.—"Corn has played a great rôle among the native peoples of America. It has been the basis of their diet as wheat was the basis of that of the Old Continent. . . . Its cultivation extended from the distant St. Lawrence valley . . . to south of the island of Chiloé. Juan Ibañez tells us that its propagation was so widespread that it eventually reached China, giving rise to the erroneous conclusion that it was of Asiatic origin. Lanfer assures us that it was not extended to the Asiatic continent until after the discovery of America, and Ricardo Latcham brings forward archaeological testimony to show that corn was found on our continent some 2,000 years before the Conquest. . . . Together with the algarrobo (carob bean), a native, though uncultivated plant, of which the rich pulp and seed contained in the pod were eaten, corn may be said to have been the original food of the peoples of the new continent . . . and to it we ought to consecrate a yearly day of fiesta, and an inter-American monument."—Jorge Bajarano: "Alimentación y nutrición en Colombia," Bogotá, 1941, pp. 12-13.

24