

PERISCOPE.

AMOUNT OF OPIUM REQUIRED FOR LEGITIMATE MEDICAL PURPOSES.

IN view of the existing abuse of narcotics, and the efforts which are being made to control that abuse, the estimates of the Opium Commission of the Health Committee of the League of Nations, as to the amount of opium required for legitimate medical purposes are not without interest. On the basis of estimates submitted by countries with a highly developed system of medical aid, a figure of 600 mg. of raw opium per head of population per annum, was originally adopted, but was criticised as being too high, and further investigations suggest that a figure of 400 or 450 mg. may be adequate as a maximum. This, however, can only hold good for countries possessing highly organised medical institutions, and cannot be a criterion for world-wide requirements. No data exist on which to base any accurate estimate of the amounts of the various opium derivatives included in the figure.

The amount of cocain required is estimated at 7 mg. per head annually, and, cocain being more especially used in hospitals, the information collected regarding it is a degree more certain than is the case with regard to opiates.

In a memorandum submitted by Professor Knaffl-Lenz, the reporter to the Committee, it is more than hinted that the therapeutic advantages of heroin do not compensate for the danger involved by its highly toxic character—a danger which is enhanced by the fact that heroin can be taken in pinches like cocain. Heroinomania appears to be increasing: of the addicts at Sing Sing Prison, New York, 75 per cent. are heroinomaniacs. Propaganda against cocain and morphine addiction by means of lectures, conferences, and films might be dangerous by exciting an unhealthy curiosity among the masses. The detailed statistical investigation of Professor Knaffl-Lenz on the consumption of narcotics in Europe is appended to the Report.

League of Nations (Health Committee),
Minutes of Third Session, C. 588, M202, 1924, II.

CONGENITAL STENOSIS OF THE PYLORUS.

The serious gastric condition which occurs in young infants, known as congenital hyperplasia of the pylorus, when pyloric obstruction is complete or nearly complete, demands surgical intervention, and the sooner this is done the lower will be the mortality.

Infants may have mild, moderate, or severe symptoms of stenosis, and the evidence of trouble may be periodic, with remissions, or