

BIDDING THE SICKNESS CEASE.

The report of the Rockefeller Foundation dealing with the progress of the work which it is doing throughout the world in combating such diseases as malaria and hookworm covers up in business language a story of unselfish devotion. In most of the disease-ridden parts of the world are to be found representatives of the International Health Board, patiently and tactfully going about the difficult task of inculcating the elementary principles of hygiene in the minds of people who have always looked on disease as an affliction for which there is no remedy but to placate the evil spirits by magic. Aside from the natural unwillingness of native tribes to put more faith in the white man's magic than in their own, the representatives of the Rockefeller Foundation have had to overcome the hostility of the tribal medicine men and chieftains, and in some cases have even had to allay the suspicions of European Governments in whose colonial possessions health work has been undertaken.

For these reasons fighting hookworm in the tropics has been even harder than here in the United States. To the credit of the doctors in charge of the work it must be said that the progress has been highly satisfactory. After stilling the prejudices of local officials the health workers have been faced with the need of breaking through the apathy and disbelief of the natives suffering from the disease. In some cases this has been done by giving lectures with lantern slides, and, after converting the village headmen, using them as mouthpieces to further the instruction. The difficulty of making these talks clear, however, has sometimes prevented the successful spreading of the good tidings that a cure was at hand for all who suffered. The best proof, of course, was the physical condition of men who had taken the treatment and shortly afterward began to put on weight and regain their vitality. These rapidly convinced the doubters that the white men had "good medicine." The real trouble lay in convincing the natives that there was a direct relation between unsanitary drainage and hookworm. The problem was the comparatively simple one of showing how the worms passed out of the human body, re-entered through the bare feet and gradually worked their way into the intestines. When one of the doctors found that, as a rule, it was possible to take up a handful of dirt from the ground in front of almost any native house and by wetting it show the tiny grubs alive and wriggling, it did not take long to convince the people that it was necessary to do everything to rid the earth of these creatures. Once the idea was understood it passed with great rapidity by word of mouth, and the changes which the Foundation's doctors recommended in the village sanitary arrangements were soon effected.

The Rockefeller Foundation's annual report, dealing in large figures and rendering an accounting, is always an impressive document. Some time the story will be told of the adventures of the men who did the work that the report summarizes, and of their hardships and their splendid devotion. This is a chapter in American altruism with which our own public, as well as the world in general, is as yet too little familiar.