

Leprosy Work in British Guiana.

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A British Guiana Branch of The British Empire Leprosy Relief Association was formed here in 1926, following upon the visit of the Secretary of the Association, but the Branch has not yet functioned at the time of writing.

In 1925 a new Leprosy Ordinance was framed and handed over to the Law Authorities of the Crown for final drafting, but this has not yet been put before the Legislative Chamber. Leprosy work in the Colony, therefore, resolves itself into the work done at the Mahaica Leper Asylum, where, on an average, 300 patients are segregated.

The grounds of the Settlement extend over some 62 acres, and are surrounded by a zinc fence some eight feet in height, surmounted by rows of iron spikes; the female portion is similarly divided off from the male.

Of the 300 patients roughly two-thirds are males. About one-third are East Indians, the rest being black and mixed races, with a very few Portuguese and Chinese.

During the last two years treatment has been very energetically carried out; a laboratory has been established, and some 40 *Hydnocarpus* trees (grown from seed kindly supplied by The British Empire Leprosy Relief Association) are growing vigorously within the compound. No attempt is made, except in the case of young children, of whom there are 25, to enforce treatment, but so encouraging has been the visible results that patients present themselves voluntarily to such an extent that 222 persons were under treatment during the six months from January to June, 1928; in fact, it is not too much to say that every case susceptible of improvement is now under treatment. The majority of the cases in the asylum are, unfortunately, old anæsthetic cases, deformed and mutilated, uninfected, but unable to fend for themselves in the outside world. Every patient, however, who has been admitted during the last two years has voluntarily submitted to continued treatment. Whereas prior to 1926 there were no cases of voluntary admission, so far as one can ascertain, in 1926 two cases, in 1927 fourteen cases, and in 1928, up to the end of July, sixteen cases voluntarily sought admission to the asylum, while

about 12 uninfected cases of the early anæsthetic type are being treated as out-patients. This is by far the most gratifying feature of the work, and as many early cases are now coming up for treatment the results are correspondingly good. In the last two years it has been possible to discharge 64 patients who have become negative under treatment, while of this number only three have so far relapsed.

These persons are discharged conditionally, and are to be re-examined periodically for some years before final discharge.

Special attention is devoted to the diet, and one endeavours to make it more palatable than was formerly the case and to vary its monotony so far as possible. A farm of over 10 acres is under cultivation by the patients, and they are encouraged to grow vegetables and greens, which are bought from them at roughly one-half of the market rates, for the use of the institution. Patients also work in the tailors', carpenters', shoemakers' and blacksmiths' shops, assist the mason, act as dressers, scrubbers, latrine attendants, etc., in nearly all cases for additional rations of sugar, biscuits, or for tobacco, etc. The women work as laundresses, seamstresses, etc. Some few patients keep shops or employ themselves as hawkers. The rearing of poultry is indulged in very extensively, fowls, ducks, turkeys, pigeons and guinea birds being kept. The poultry and eggs are sold, at about one-half of the market rates, to the store for the use of the patients. Some patients are also engaged as gardeners, and in weeding-gangs about the grounds of the institution, receiving about half the current rates of pay outside. There is a fairly well-equipped school, with four teachers, two of whom are recognised and paid by Government. All children under the age of 14 attend, and the discipline and teaching in general are of quite good character. There is an orchestra of five or six performers, all inmates, under an inmate conductor, which plays for patients' functions and reaches a moderately high standard of performance. An Inmates' Sports Club has been formed, which organises debates, concerts, dances, cricket and football matches, athletic sports, etc., regularly throughout the year, and a prominent citizen has presented a handsome cricket cup, the Walcott Cup, which is played for by teams of patients, one of which has already secured a lien.

By the devoted efforts of the wife of His Excellency the Governor, the Lady Rodwell Hall has been opened and a cinematograph machine installed. The hall has a large stage with wings, on which dramatic performances are staged at intervals by volunteers from outside, and cinema shows from the London Electric Theatre, in Georgetown, are given once a week. With

all these measures a new spirit of cheerfulness and optimism animates the patients, and not the slightest difficulty has been experienced in inducing them to subject themselves to the most painful forms of treatment over prolonged periods. Hardly one avenue of treatment has been left unexplored. Antileprol, the Esters prepared from Hydnocarpus Wightiana oil, the pure oil, Thymol, Sodium morrhuate, Protein Shock Therapy, Solid Carbon Dioxide, Chrysolgan, Muir's Potassium Iodide treatment have all been under trial.

At present most of the patients are under treatment with Sodium Hydnocarpate, given intravenously in a 3 per cent. solution, while a large group is also under treatment by Esters of Hydnocarpus. Local applications of Trichloroacetic Acid and solid Carbon Dioxide are also used as routine in suitable cases.

Research in various problems, local or general, is also being carried out, such questions as the local distribution of the disease being at present under investigation. A post-mortem examination is carried out with great thoroughness in every case, and two new lines of treatment are now under trial. Many small operations are carried out from time to time, nearly all under spinal anæsthesia.

An Electrical Department has been installed, and is used for the treatment of ulcers and to correct commencing deformities due to nerve-involvement. Faradisation and ultra-violet therapy are available, while surgical operations, such as transplantation of tendons, excision of bones, and nerve-grafting, are performed in some cases to remedy deformities of long standing where the disease appears to have been arrested. The result of effective treatment is clearly reflected in the fall of the death-rate from 10·2 in 1925 to 5·7 in 1927.

The patients have been absolutely convinced by actual demonstration that all early cases of leprosy can be cured, and several have been discharged in whom no visible trace of the disease remains.