

## REPORTS

### **\*Social Problems connected with the Internment of Lepers**

In Brazil, as in other countries the too strict enforcement of the regulations for the internment of lepers produces a considerable amount of hardship and, perhaps, unnecessary suffering among the patients. The enforced isolation sometimes becomes intolerable, and to gain relief from it, a certain number escape from the institutions. In Brazil fifty per cent of such escapes are attributed to the urge of family affections between husbands and wives, and between parents and children. Many, probably most, lepers become reconciled to the separation and recognise the necessity for it.

In one of the Brazilian leper colonies there lives a patient, a distinguished scholar of high scientific attainments, who, because of his disease, had to abandon the practice of his profession. Because of the intractability of his case to treatment he voluntarily entered the colony, that he might not be a danger to the community. His devoted wife, although perfectly healthy, refused to leave him in his misfortune, and the two live happily together in the leper home. The hardest part of their lot has been the separation from their family. As soon as the professor knew the nature of his disease, he sent his four children away to live with relatives. As a precaution they were isolated later for some years in a children's preventive home, and, when proved to be free of disease, were taken charge of by their grand-parents who were to bring them up.

The dread of social ostracism of leper families is very real. One can imagine the feelings of a doctor, when it was found that

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his younger brother of twelve had begun to show positive signs of the disease, and had to be interned in the leper children's home. Not understanding very well the question of leprosy this doctor even went to the length of begging the Medical Director of the establishment to relieve the unfortunate boy from his awful fate by euthenasia. The Director understood the case, and could give good hopes of saving the young patient, and the doctor brother could face the world again.

A beautiful young lady of good family and education, and engaged to be married, became almost hopelessly embittered with life, when she was pronounced leprous. Her religious convictions, however, forbade the thoughts of suicide, which might have been contemplated in such circumstances, and she bravely faced the future, until the time when she learned the good news that science had provided a hopeful remedy for her relief and that she would not have to be isolated.

There was the case of a young lady in whom the disease manifested itself for the first time during her honeymoon and she had to leave her bridegroom just at the time when both were enjoying the happiest days of their life and when there seemed to be opening up before them a future of smiling sunshine and bliss. One can imagine their tragedy of heartbreak at the prospect of having to be permanently separated, but medical science dispelled such fears with a reasonable hope of permanent cure without internment.

The worries of business make strict isolation very irksome to well-to-do people. There is the case of the leper proprietor of a large property which he had been prevented from visiting for twenty years, but which he must now visit, as the sale of the estate required his presence on the spot. Could this infective leper afford to leave his business to be attended to by other people whom he could not trust? Could he be allowed to take the long journey, during which he might be in contact with many healthy people on railways and in hotels, to whom he might convey infection? He did not go.

Careful diagnosis of the disease often helps to relieve the hardships of too strict isolation, as in another such case, that of a leper whose presence in another place was absolutely essential before his rights to an inheritance could be recognised. He was a patient of the purely nerve non-bacilliferous type, and could without danger be allowed to take the journey. He went.

But again the urge may be too insistent, and may prevail. A big coffee planter, who had been interned as an infective leper, asked permission to go to his plantation to arrange for the coffee

harvest and for the sale of his crop. This would entail weeks of more or less close contact with the workers of his plantation. His request was denied. His anxiety for his business prevailed. He made his escape from the leper home, and only returned after having completed all his necessary work on the plantation.

Although such cases are reported from all leper lands, these are given from the Brazilian report as indicating how similar leper conditions are in different countries.

**\*Dichpali Leper Settlement Farm** by E. L. BEVAN.

In the practice of farming, tillage and manuring are the main activities. The truth of this was recognised in the days of the Roman Empire, and it is exemplified in a striking manner to-day in China, where some of the highest crop yields in the world are obtained by means of diligent manual labour. In our work in Dichpali we, too, place emphasis upon these operations, and in a difficult season, such as the one through which we have just passed, we have seen again proof of the soundness of that policy. After tillage and manuring, the weather conditions are probably the main factor controlling crop production. During the past year those conditions have alternately helped and hindered our work. From the time of writing our last report until the break of the Monsoon in June there was no rain of any significance. The soil became baked so hard that on the farm the usual after-harvest cultivation could not be carried out; in the gardens the soil was a little more tractable and it was possible to maintain the land in somewhat better condition. The summer months were unusually hot, and as there were no rainy intervals our wells showed again their inadequacy to provide the necessary water for hot season crops. The South-west Monsoon broke in June and up till the end of September yielded approximately half the normal amount of rain for the period. Following on an eight months' drought this was quite inadequate, and our rice crop had to be grown throughout the season as dry crop as there was no water to flood it; the yield of vegetables for those months was barely half that of the previous year. If the rains had not fallen at unusually suitable times, e.g., for sowing and for weeding, etc., the crops could not have grown as they did, for ours were out of all proportion to the rainfall recorded. To this must be added the fact that tillage and manuring bring their own reward, and our crops did better than those of our neighbours partly because we have paid more attention

to those matters than it is customary to do in the villages. Some of the long-lost rains appeared in October and in one night irrigation tanks and wells were filled. This rain was too late to benefit the rice crop to any extent but it has done good in other ways, and has assured us of water supplies for all kinds of crops during the coming months.

*Development.* The past year has seen considerable development on the farm and in the gardens. Two new dry fields have been made near the farmstead and have carried crops this year. The new farm well has been constructed and a persian wheel fitted. This well proved of great help in irrigating the rice fields during the shortage of rain from June to September. On the completion of the well the road boundary along the Nirmal Road was closed, partly by extending the old wall and partly by the erection of a barbed wire fence. In the main garden a good deal of rock has been removed by digging and blasting, and a new water cistern for irrigation has been built. In the boys' garden the bullock water lift has been reconstructed. A drinking trough was built at the farm, and both there and in the main garden water cisterns for the compost pits have been provided. These improvements will enable us to carry out our work more easily and efficiently; the combination of bullock water lifts with suitable cisterns and iron pipes for water. A temporary well for the fruit orchard was dug. The provision of this well was long overdue; for lack of it the orchard had never been cultivated efficiently. A well being provided we have pruned the trees, cultivated the ground, and filled in the gaps caused by trees drying up, and we hope to have better crops of fruit than has been possible up till now.

*Tillage and Manuring.* Of our tillage work it is not necessary to write. Diligent use throughout the year of plough and crowbar, of hand hoe and bullock hoe, each in its appropriate season, is our aim, and as far as weather conditions permit we are tilling in one way and another all the year round. It is in this work that the patients are able to help both themselves and ourselves—in renewing their own physical well-being and in keeping the soil soft and mellow.

Of manuring we may repeat what we said last year, namely, that whatever we do it is inadequate to supply our needs. The three compost factories at the farm, the main garden, and the boys' garden, have been working all the year round, the patients gathering huge quantities of weeds, grass, leaves, and all kinds of vegetable rubbish both within and without the institution grounds. Diminished supplies of dung (due to the absence of the dairyherd) caused a reduction in quality and quantity of the compost made at the farm. To rectify the deficiency we hired during the summer herds both of cattle, and of sheep and goats, which were tethered on the fields for several weeks. We continued our use of leguminous crops for fodder and for fertilising the soil. Sunnhemp showed again its unsuitability for our soil, and we propose to try Dhaincha for a green manure crop next year provided that we can procure sufficient supplies of seed. The cold season black pulse crop also gave only a small yield owing to the lack of rain in October. Owing to adverse weather and soil conditions our legume-fertilising scheme has not been very successful this past year, but we believe still that it is a right method to adopt, and we shall continue our work next year.

*Crops.* As yet no figures showing the yield of our crops have appeared in this Annual Report. There are several reasons for that intentional omission, one of them being that the report is prepared at a time when the present year's crops have not been threshed and weighed, whilst those of the previous year have passed out of mind for they have been disposed of during the intervening months. We make very few cash sales of produce, hence the yield and return of crops does not figure so largely with us as it does in the case of a *ryot*. We aim at growing what we require for food and fodder in the Institution—all the fruit, vegetables, rice and

millet being handed over to the hospital for distribution to the patients, whilst the straw, grass, pulse crops, etc., are utilised for feeding the cattle. The following figures (which are not quite complete) will serve to give some idea of the present yield of our chief crops for the year 1938 (June) to 1939 (May).

FOOD CROPS.	Fruit and Vegetables.	79,084 lbs.	(35 tons)
	Paddy.	24,810 lbs.	(11 tons)
	Millet—Nil on account of excessive rain.		
FODDER CROPS.	Paddy Straw	66 cart loads.	
	Millet Straw	5 cart loads.	
	Guinea Grass (green)	11,807 lbs.	(5 tons)
	Green Millet	23,137 lbs.	(10 tons)
	Field Beans (green)	10,312 lbs.	(4½ tons)
	Black Pulse (grain)	1,054 lbs.	
COMMERCIAL CROPS.	Sugar Cane. Sold to Factory	1,480 maunds.	(72 tons)
	Sold or used as seeds	541 maunds.	

The farm land produces only one crop per year except for a small area of leguminous catch crops which provide fodder and a little grain, these catch crops being sown after the rice crop has been harvested. With the provision of the new well we hope to increase considerably this area of catch crops and so secure a larger return from the land. In the gardens whilst it would be possible to raise two or even three crops per year deficiency of water and excessive heat render it impracticable to grow much besides indigenous greens during the greater part of the summer. There is an almost unlimited demand for such crops, but at present we are unable to supply more than a small portion of what is required for the patients.

As an experimental measure we filled two disused lime kilns with green jungle grass in order to see whether it will make satisfactory silage or not. Should it prove successful we could develop the work so as to procure a regular supply of silage from the waste grasses that grow alongside the roads, etc., in the compound, and which at present yield only rough grazing.

*Education.* An instruction course for school teachers was held in April when nineteen teachers were enrolled; they spent four days attending lectures and demonstrations in elementary horticulture. In January a party of *ryots* from several different villages spent a day seeing and hearing matters that were mostly new to them, and yet all of them possible of adoption by themselves. Throughout the year individual cultivators have been to see our work; some of them who live near by are adopting our methods in their own fields, with profit to themselves. We try to demonstrate how usage commonly found in the villages may be improved, growing the ordinary crops as illustrations of our methods. A teachers' class for the farm and garden supervisors has been held weekly as far as possible, and a new departure in the form of an elementary class for a group of older boys (patients) has been started. Should this new class prove worth while it could be extended to include a larger number of interested patients.

Though it is not fitting for us to commend our own work we close this year and pass on to the coming year with renewed confidence in our methods, for we have seen them succeed in what has been a difficult year for cultivators. Whilst it is true that we have not had full crops yet we have had better crops than we thought would be possible.