

Book Reviews

A History of the Nigerian Health Services, by RALPH SCHRAM, M.A., M.D., D.P.H., D.I.H.
Ibadan University Press, 1971. 480 pp. Price £4.50 cased; £1.75 limp.

Leprosy workers will find much of interest and instruction in this book. Written by one who has been a lecturer in Ibadan, Makerere, and Zaria, as well as Dundee, and who has had unrivalled opportunities of observing at first hand the developments he reviews, this book provides a wealth of detail on the history of the health services in the most populous country of Africa.

References to leprosy are numerous. Dr Schram refers to the supposition that leprosy was taken from Africa to America during the unhappy days of the slave trade (p. 33). Leprosy figured in the map, published in 1895, of the distribution of tropical diseases in the African continent (p. 157). Less certain is the tradition that the early immigrants into Nigeria, from 2000 B.C. onwards, introduced leprosy from the north. He mentions the different attitudes to the disease prevailing in historical times: the abortive attempts by Yoruba and Ibo to control leprosy; the belief among the Hausa that the disease was hereditary and not contagious, while in the south it was considered to be both hereditary and contagious. Protein-shock therapy was given in 1929-30 at Calabar (p. 161), and chaulmoogra oil in Yaba from 1922 (p. 188).

After World War I, thanks to Toc-H, BELRA, and missionary bodies, a great volume of disinterested help for leprosy sufferers came from the West to Nigeria (p. 189). Itu was founded in 1926 (p. 189), and became a pioneer centre for the whole of West Africa (p. 222): MacDonald achieved fame for his chaulmoogra-oil treatment at Itu, where up to 4500 patients congregated during its heyday.

Several pages of Chapter 16 (pp. 230-238) are devoted to a fascinating description of the development of the leprosy services at Itu, Garkida, Uzuakoli, Ossiomo, Oji River, and Zaria, all of which were founded by missionary bodies. The increasing interest of the government in the leprosy problem is indicated, but the collaboration of missions was still welcomed (p. 303, 311). Medical Field Units were at last coming into their own in the late 1950's, and leprosy benefited from the surveys and treatment programmes initiated in respect of yaws, trypanosomiasis, tuberculosis, malaria and smallpox (p. 325).

After World War II, another surge forward in leprosy control was manifest with the creation of the Nigerian Leprosy Service, with bases in all three Regions, and an expanded Research Unit at Uzuakoli. It was from this Centre that John Lowe, Frank Davey and Stanley Browne conducted their researches and therapeutic trials. Dr Schram describes the scene with an amazing grasp of detail, taking the reader up to and sometimes beyond, the set dead-line of 1960, the year Nigeria achieved its independence.

This is a book to be read and enjoyed. It must become the definitive record of the development of the health services in Nigeria. We are impelled to pay tribute to the pioneers, not least those who founded the leprosy service in that great land. We salute them and their successors, and we thank Dr Schram for introducing us to them and their work.

S. G. Browne

Friends, not Outcasts, by I. K. GILL. New York: Helios Book Publishing Company, Inc. 144 pp. Price \$4.50.

This slim, unpretentious book of 144 pages is autobiographical, descriptive and didactic. It is more—it is a moving human and social document.

Dr Gill is a Pakistani who managed, after years of struggle, to mount the scholastic ladder and eventually to gain a German Ph.D. in Physical Education. He then returned to Karachi to put his knowledge, and his awakened social conscience, at the disposal of leprosy sufferers. His attempts at social rehabilitation are well described, with graphic case-reports.

The author shares with us his fears and frustrations as he strove to help leprosy patients help themselves. With financial loans, many of them have been enabled to achieve independence and a certain dignity, and, encouraged by the author's infectious enthusiasm, some have followed in his steps and are now helping others in their turn at the Marie Adelaide Leprosy Centre in Karachi.

This book provides a necessary and salutary complement to the medical investigations and the leprosy treatment programmes now in vogue.

S. G. Browne