

MEDICINE

Doctor Tells of Conditions in Hospital at Addis Ababa

Varied Patients Include Native Abyssinians, Arabs, Hindus, Mohammedans, Europeans and Americans

AN UNUSUAL picture of conditions in a hospital in Addis Ababa as it appeared to a missionary doctor was read by Dr. Louis Faugeres Bishop, Jr., of New York City, at the meeting of the American Society for Tropical Medicine.

The conditions were described in a letter from Dr. Tesla C. Nicola of Zauditu Memorial Hospital of the Seventh Day Adventist Mission. Dr. Bishop had asked Dr. Nicola for information on the prevalence of heart disease.

Dr. Nicola's letter is not the catalogue of tropical diseases which makes up most reports on health conditions in Ethiopia. It is, instead, a one-doctor-to-another description of conditions and difficulties of hospital work in the Ethiopian capital. He writes, in part:

"I am sorry to say that we do not have statistics on the matter you are interested in (heart disease). That is, I cannot refer to individual cases from our records. The reason for this is that we are too new. The hospital has been in operation less than two years, and for several months there were no records kept. I have been here a little over a year myself. While we do keep a record now we do not have the cases classified so that the material is available. We have been too busy with the mass of details in getting a place like this started. It is quite different from a similar proposition in America.

Beds Filled

"However, we are adding to our help and I believe that should the request be repeated at some later date we will be able to serve you better. This is a 50 bed hospital and so far we are averaging about 50 a day. Our patients are as varied as could possibly be the case anywhere. There are the native Abyssinians. These are made up of the Amharas, Gallas, Somalis and other tribes all quite distinct. Our next largest class is the Arab. These have settled in here extensively. Then come the Hindu and the Mohammedan, which are here in large numbers. In addition to these we have a number of Europeans and a few

Americans. The Europeans, so-called, are the Greeks and Armenians.

"The native Abyssinian eats a large amount of meat, usually raw. He also uses an alcoholic drink which is intoxicating. He does not smoke. The Arabs are heavy smokers for the most part but do not drink much here. The Indians are divided, as you probably know. The Hindu does not eat any meat or eggs and for the most part does not smoke or drink any liquor. The Mohammedan uses both or rather all three. I mention these facts as they have been interesting to me (and to us). They are all factors which we have been used to considering as having influence on disease.

Little Heart Disease

"Now as to the specific disease of coronary thrombosis: There are two physicians on the staff here and I have talked with the other man. We do not recall that either of us have seen a case in over a year. We do not have an electrocardiographic machine. However we see very little of any heart disease. That is especially true among the natives. We have seen several thousand natives in the past several months. This does not include those that were simply dressing cases. There has been a case of endocarditis now and then. The few cases of cardio-vascular-renal disease we have had have been in foreigners. At present we have three such in the hospital. One is a Greek man about 38 years old, another an Armenian woman about 65 years old and the third came in last evening and is a Negro man about 55 who came here from Jamaica three or four years ago.

"Our immediate vicinity, as is also true of most of Ethiopia, is not really tropical except in latitude. We are about 8,500 feet altitude. The temperature ranges between 58 and 65 degrees. It never gets hot though at times there is frost. I came here from California and I believe the climate is quite the same except it does not get as hot here as where we were in Los Angeles.

"Postmortem examinations are practi-

cally impossible to get here due to the ignorance of the people. The only one I have been able to do so far was on a woman who died after a blow or kick from another woman and the friends wanted to know what the cause of death was. The woman was not entered as a patient but the body had been brought for a diagnosis. They had the idea that we could view the remains and tell the cause of death. It was only by promising that only a little cut would be made and no charge that it was possible to get this opportunity. This case of course is not in your line but I mention it because it is interesting and it shows the difficulty of getting autopsies."

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BIOLOGY

Worm Eats Small Enemy Merely to Get its Weapons

WARRIORS lacking weapons sometimes raid their enemies primarily for the sake of capturing their arms. Some of the most exciting tales of strife are based on such heroic thievings.

From the world of lesser animal life that struggles in the water, a similar tale was brought to the meeting of the National Academy of Sciences by Prof. W. A. Kepner of the University of Virginia, and his associates, Drs. W. C. Gregory and H. J. Porter.

The hero of this small zoological saga is a worm, known scientifically as *Microstomum*. Its enemy is a creature called *Hydra*, belonging to a still lower order on the evolutionary scale. They live in freshwater ponds and quiet streams.

Hydra possesses hundreds of little daggers, in the form of explosive stinging cells. With these it paralyzes and captures its prey, and also defends itself against enemies.

Microstomum has no such armament. It attacks, kills and eats *Hydra* for the sole purpose, apparently, of getting possession of the latter's stinging cells. *Hydra* cannot defend itself against *Microstomum's* attack, because the worm secretes a substance that protects it from the tiny daggers. Only when it unwittingly approaches *Hydra* is it vulnerable.

Once *Microstomum* has captured and eaten its enemy-victim, the stinging cells go through a most astonishing course. First, the white blood corpuscles of the worm, which move about in its body as freely as though they were tiny independent one-celled animals, take