

grants in 1954. "As the Minister of Health has stated more than once the needs of these hospitals are numerous and pressing. Most of their buildings are old, inconvenient and overcrowded, too little money is available for repairs and renewals and practically all of them are short of nursing staff. A grant from the King's Fund often helps to remedy some outstanding defect and tends to overcome to some extent the feeling of isolation that so many of these hospitals have experienced in the past. Though a considerable proportion of the patients must inevitably remain for long periods in a mental hospital, the number of voluntary, uncertified patients is rapidly increasing. The most modern forms of therapy are made available in these hospitals and good results are obtained. One of the most important functions of a mental hospital is to provide such facilities as will enable patients to mix freely with one another and see and entertain their visitors in pleasant surroundings. Grants from the Fund have been made frequently to improve recreation halls and to establish some form of social centre within the hospital with which may be associated a canteen, a shop and a library. Such arrangements are of great value both to patients suffering from the more chronic forms of mental disease as well as to those in the early or more treatable stages. To help in these ways the Management Committee ask that a sum of £50,000 should be provided for the coming year for these and other special purposes."

Referring to a grant of some £12,000 made to the South West Middlesex Hospital Management Committee for the modernisation of one floor of the unit for the chronic sick in the West Middlesex Hospital, Sir Ernest said the Hospital was a very large and rather old former local authority institution, serving a large and populous area. The wards for the chronic sick were narrow and not designed to meet the needs of modern geriatric treatment though, in spite of this, much excellent medical and nursing care had been provided for the patients. The Fund had made available the services of an experienced architect who, in association with the staff of the hospital, had prepared plans for altering the general arrangement of the ward, improving the sanitary annexes and providing much needed day room accommodation. It was hoped that, when the alterations were completed they would be a visible demonstration of what could be done to improve not only the appearance but also the working efficiency of an old ward of this type.

SIR ARCHIBALD GRAY, Chairman of the Distribution Committee, reported that grants made by the Committee in 1953 had totalled £120,000. This year the Committee had allocated £35,000 to voluntary hospitals and £73,000 to hospitals within the National Health Service. It was of interest to note that during the past three years gifts made to the voluntary hospitals outside the state service had gone up by £17,000, but legacies had fallen by £35,000. The Committee had felt that some of the voluntary hospitals should receive substantial maintenance grants—in particular, the Royal Hospital for Incurables, Putney, and the British Home for Incurables, Streatham, both of which, owing to special circumstances were likely to be in difficulties about meeting their expenditure. Dealing with capital grants, Sir Archibald stated that about £30,000 had been given for various amenities for nurses and staff, £17,000 had been allocated, on the recommendation of the Hospital Catering and Diet Committee, for kitchen improvements, and over £2,500 had been spent on improving gardens for the hospitals.

SIR HENRY TIDY, Chairman of the Convalescent Homes Committee, presented the Report of the Committee and the list of grants totalling £30,000 which had been allocated on the same principle as last year.

LORD HORDER, in moving a vote of thanks to the Duke of Gloucester for presiding, paid a tribute to the work being done by the School of Hospital Catering at St. Pancras Hospital which had been established in September, 1951. He had

been much impressed by an informal visit paid recently when he had attended two demonstrations, theoretical and practical. From the point of view of one who for many years had been interested in food in hospitals this piece of work undertaken by the King's Fund could be regarded as highly satisfactory.

"Hansen's Disease" is Replacing Leprosy of the Bible.

"Dawn of a New Day" for Victims of Hansen's Disease.

By DR. W. SCHWEISHEIMER.

IN medical handbooks of recent publication, Leprosy or Hansen's Disease, is described as a "mildly contagious infectious disease."

With enormous contrast with medical conceptions of past decades and centuries when "Leprosy" was the term for an infectious disease of highest contagious hazards.

"Unclean - Unclean!"

Leprosy was well known in antiquity, and it has been described in the Bible (Leviticus 13 and 14). Stigma and fear have surrounded it through the centuries. Both in antiquity and during the Middle Ages the term "leprosy" was used for all types of skin diseases, both contagious and non-contagious.

Leprosy is caused by a specific bacillus, *Bacillus leprae* of Hansen, also called *mycobacterium leprae*. The short and rod-like organism had been discovered in 1874 by the Norwegian physician Armauer Hansen. It seems closely related to the tubercle bacillus. Bacilli are found in enormous numbers in the lesions, especially of the tubercular form of the disease.

Leprosy was the first chronic infectious disease to be controlled in Europe where it possibly had been brought from the East by the Crusaders. In France in 1313 Philip the Fair ordered that all the lepers (a historical name which is loathed by the victims of Hansen's disease and should not be used) should be burned.

This radical measure was not carried out. Instead the monasteries of Saint Lazarus were set aside for the victims of the disease. In medieval Europe 20,000 hospitals were in use for them, for "Christ's poor." The Knights of St. Lazarus specialized in their care, and there was a sisterhood of St. Lazarus for work amongst women.

The lepers at that time wore masks to hide their deformities. In their hands they carried a bell or rattle to warn the healthy from their path. When anyone approached them, they were bound to call: "Unclean! Unclean!" They were not permitted to touch any merchandise they wanted to buy at the market. Sometimes milder manners were used. In the city of Nuremberg their monotonous fate was brightened with an annual banquet.

Hansen's disease is characterized by the development of nodules or more diffuse growths of granulation tissues in the skin and mucous membranes, or in the nerves.

The kind of transmission is still a mystery. It supposedly is produced by contact, especially if association with infected persons has been long and close. In recent years it has been stated definitely that Hansen's disease is one of the less communicable diseases, contrary to the old prejudice.

In the long history of Norwegian experiences no contagion to doctors, nurses or attendants has occurred. In over half a century of treating and caring for patients at the National Leprosarium at Carville, La., not one doctor or nurse has contracted the disease. No scientist in over 145 recorded cases has been able to infect himself or other human volunteers by attempted inoculation of the Hansen bacillus.

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