

on the war path, and we cannot tell where next we may find them. Investigation of pellagra can hardly fail also to shed a light on diseases concerning the origin of which much remains to be made known."

The Colonial Office is contributing towards the expenses of the investigations.

#### RAILWAY TRAVELLING AND INFECTIOUS DISEASE.

At the last meeting of the West of England and South Wales Branch of the Society of Medical Officers of Health, Dr. J. Howard Jones, as reported in the *Lancet*, drew attention to the probable connection between railway travelling and outbreaks of infectious disease, the source of which it seemed impossible to trace. Our railway systems, in his opinion, were fruitful means of the transference of infectious diseases from one town to another. He gave instances which had come to his knowledge recently showing that fresh outbreaks could be started in a town, and also that railway travellers were only imperfectly protected from contact with infectious disease. These included the removal of a child who was suffering from scarlet fever by train from a distant health resort to Newport, the medical attendant and the local sanitary authority acquiescing, but no special arrangements being made with the railway company. Another instance was that of a child with measles who was removed by train from another health resort, and in this case also the idea of making special arrangements for the protection of the travelling public was apparently not entertained by anyone. Two instances of children travelling while in the acute stage of whooping-cough were cited, and one of a sailor who went by train to Newport direct from a vessel in a British port on which two outbreaks of small-pox had occurred during the last voyage. The man was ill on arriving at Newport on a Saturday evening, and early the following Monday was admitted to the small-pox hospital with a well-developed rash. There can be little doubt that he must have been a source of danger to those with whom he had come in contact from the time he left his ship. Similar instances were given which had come to the knowledge of other members of the Society, including one referred to by Dr. W. G. Savage, that of a man who was found on arrival by train at Cardiff from the North of England to be suffering from plague. There appear to be some difficulties in dealing with railway passengers who are found to be suffering from non-notifiable diseases, but Dr. D. S. Davies stated that he had obtained a conviction before the Bristol justices against a person who had wilfully exposed a child in a public place while it was suffering from measles.

### Hospital Laundries.\*

By MISS HELEN TODD.

The laundry is one of the most important departments in a modern hospital or infirmary, and frequently one of the Matron's greatest anxieties. As a rule, it is situated within the hospital boundaries, and the Matron is directly responsible for its management and administration.

I propose, in the ten minutes allotted to me this evening, to look at the matter from the Matron's point of view, and instead of reading a paper in the ordinary sense of the word, to suggest simply points for the discussion which is to follow. From an administrative point of view, then, let us begin by considering the *personnel*.

1. *The Matron*, being the responsible head, should possess a thorough knowledge of laundry technique, but unfortunately in how few cases has she had any practical experience of the working of a steam laundry, of how the work should be organised, of the proportion of staff required, of what constitutes a fair day's work for individual hands, or of the amount of stores which should be legitimately consumed. She may be fortunate in having a capable and conscientious Laundry Superintendent, but the chances are quite as much the other way, and incompetence in the head means mismanagement of the subordinates and a disastrous condition of things throughout the department concerned.

As the first subject, then, for discussion, I would suggest: "What is the best method whereby candidates for the Matronship of hospitals may obtain a practical knowledge of the working and management of a steam laundry?"

2. The actual working head of the laundry is the *Laundry Superintendent*; in some institutions it has been the practice to put a Sister in charge of this very important department, but the experience which she is intended to gain would be far better acquired in a subordinate position than as head of a business of which she knows nothing. To my mind, it appears essential that the Superintendent has learnt all the details of her work in a trade or public laundry, and has also been manager in one of these concerns.

The practice of some Committees and Boards of selecting candidates simply from their application forms, and appointing them after a brief interview in the Board Room, is one that cannot be too widely condemned. If the Matron is possessed of the expert knowledge which she should have, she ought to be deputed

\* Read before the Matrons' Council, January, 1910.

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