

SANITARY PROBLEMS IN HOSPITALS FOR INDIAN TROOPS IN ENGLAND.

In a paper read at the Sessional Meeting of the Conference convened by the Royal Sanitary Institute at Brighton, on September 3rd, Major S. P. James, M.D., D.P.H., I.M.S., of the Kitchener Hospital, Brighton, stated that it is equipped to accommodate over 2,000 patients, and is run by officers of the Indian Medical Service, with a staff of assistant surgeons and sub-assistant surgeons belonging to the Indian Subordinate Medical Department, and a *personnel* numbering about 400, comprising Indian nursing orderlies, storekeepers, writers, cooks, water carriers, conservancy sweepers, and other followers. Among hospitals in England it is unique in the absence of female assistance, even the laundry work being done by Indian washermen specially brought for this purpose. He said further:—

I now turn to the arrangements for enabling Indians to live in accordance with the customs of their country, and in this connection I propose first to show you typical representatives of some of the races for whom the arrangements have had to be made. (This was done.)

All these classes have customs and prejudices differing from those of the other classes, and which must be strictly adhered to and safeguarded in order to prevent the individual members from losing caste. We have ensured this in our hospital by appointing a committee composed of Indian commissioned and non-commissioned officers of every caste, whose duty is to see that the arrangements for safeguarding caste customs and prejudices are adequate, and that the men themselves take advantage of the facilities given.

In the limited time at my disposal I cannot tell you many of the habits and customs of the various classes, but must deal with the matter in a general way. Special arrangements have to be made as regards food, drinking-water, bathing, latrine accommodation, religious observances, and funerals.

In connection with food, we arrange as a routine measure for eight different kinds of diet, and supply separate cookhouses for six different classes. The food of the patients is cooked in twenty-one cookhouses in the hospital grounds, and that of the subordinate staff in sixteen cookhouses in the village. The Hindu cooks must in all cases be of the same or of a higher caste than the patients for whom they cook. The chief article of diet of all the fighting races in India is a kind of bread made

from partially husked grain ground by hand between two round slabs of stone. The flour (which in India is called *atta*) is kneaded into dough with warm water, and is usually unleavened, but a little soda and salt are added. The dough is divided into small portions, which are moulded between the hands into round flat pancakes called *chappaties*, and baked on an iron slab over a wood fire. In this country wholemeal flour most nearly resembles the *atta* used in India and is the kind supplied, one and a half pounds per day being the ordinary ration. So-called high-grade very finely ground flour is considered by Indians to cause indigestion and diarrhoea, and for this reason, on the recommendation of the caste committee, we had some time ago to refuse for their use a large quantity of best quality flour which had been generously presented by the Canadian Government. The iron slabs in our cookhouses are heated by gas-rings, which the Indians admire as a great advance over their wood fire arrangements. I pass round one or two *chappaties* for your inspection, and you will have an opportunity of seeing them being made and cooked this afternoon.

A second indispensable article of diet is clarified butter, which in India is called "ghee." It is essential that this article should be made from milk only, without the addition of any other kind of fat. If animal fat were present, the caste of a high-class Hindu who ate it would be irretrievably broken. In order to avoid any possibility of such an occurrence it has been our practice to issue the best quality of English butter in lieu of ghee, the ordinary ration being three ounces per day.

As regards meat, you are aware, of course, that all Mohammedans eat beef, but that the practice is very abhorrent to Hindus, who regard the cow as a sacred animal. For this reason no beef is allowed inside the hospital. Bacon and similar meat is also entirely prohibited.

You are aware, also, that the Indians must themselves slaughter the sheep which they use for food, and that they must do it in the special manner enjoined by their religious sects. In the grounds of the county borough abattoir they have been provided with a new slaughterhouse for this purpose. For Hindus the correct method is to sweep the head of the animal off the neck with only one stroke of a *talwar* or sword.

For Mohammedans the mouth of the animal must be pointed towards Mecca, and then the throat must be cut from the front so as to sever the great blood vessels, but not touching the

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