

rooms, and rooms attached to the barracks where the soldiers could write their letters, play games and have coffee, in fact to act as soldiers' club. These new plans have been a great success at Gibraltar, Chatham and Montreal. Lord Herbert will be remembered as the first War Minister who seriously set himself the task of saving life and realising that the soldier was a human being.

There is no doubt that all these reforms are really due to Miss Florence Nightingale, as she had first-hand knowledge during the Crimean War of the very bad conditions that existed in the army.

A. M. B.

## THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

### THE TOLL OF ACCIDENTS.

#### Fracture Services Recommended by Inter-Departmental Committee on the Rehabilitation of Persons Injured by Accidents.

Recommendations for the improvement of arrangements for the rehabilitation of persons injured in accidents, and particularly of those suffering from fractures, are contained in the final report of the Inter-Departmental Committee on the Rehabilitation of Persons Injured by Accidents recently published\*. The Committee was appointed in April, 1936, jointly by the Home Secretary, the Minister of Health and the Secretary of State for Scotland.

While it was appointed to enquire into the position in regard to accidents generally, the Committee recommends that in the first instance efforts should be concentrated on the provision of fracture services. It reaches the conclusion that the treatment of fractures can be satisfactorily carried out only if cases are segregated in a specially organised department of a hospital and remain under a unified and specialised control under which treatment should be continued until restoration of working capacity has been effected to the fullest possible extent.

#### Revision of Road Traffic Act.

Investigations carried out by the Committee show that, of a total of 19,286 fracture cases treated in selected hospitals 29.2 per cent. were due to industrial accidents, 14.9 per cent. to road traffic accidents and 55.9 per cent. to other accidents.

The Committee recommends a revision of the Road Traffic Act whereby the limits imposed on the amounts that may be recovered for the treatment of road traffic accidents may be abolished.

The Report refers to the loss to the community resulting from injuries by all classes of accident as "enormous." "There is no means of estimating the cost," says the Report, "but it must run into many millions of pounds. The cost of workmen's compensation under the Workmen's Compensation Acts for the five years ending 1937 averages about £11,900,000."

An efficient fracture service, the Committee point out, should provide, in addition to the primary surgical treatment, proper facilities for treatment by physio-therapy and remedial exercises so that functional activity may be restored to the affected limbs. When this treatment cannot be given in the fracture department the Committee recommend the establishment of rehabilitation centres where a patient not immediately able to resume his work may undergo courses of physical exercises for hardening relaxed muscles and restoring free movement to stiffened joints.

The Committee consider it essential that every hospital with a medical school should have a fracture service

organised on the lines laid down in their report and that a period of training in a fracture department should be an obligatory part of the medical students' training.

#### Finance.

On the question of financing fracture services the Committee recommend that where it is agreed, after consultation between the Local Authorities and representatives of the Voluntary General Hospitals, that the main provision of the service should fall upon the Voluntary Hospitals in the area, and that their resources would be insufficient to meet the cost, an annual contribution should be made by the Local Authorities under their appropriate statutory powers. The Report further recommends an examination by the Government of the possibility of a larger contribution, by way of additional benefits, being made by the Approved Societies to the hospitals which established adequate fracture services.

As the evidence given before the Committee will be available for the Royal Commission on Workmen's Compensation the Committee have made no recommendations in regard to the Workmen's Compensation Acts, except one minor modification arising out of their proposals for the restoration of the working capacity of injured persons. The Committee, however, makes the definite recommendation that as long as the patient requires to be under treatment by the fracture service he should continue to receive compensation as for total incapacity, unless he can be found light work of a remedial character approved by the fracture surgeon and is earning wages.

Further recommendations in the Report are the organisation of an efficient and adequate Almoner's Department as an adjunct to the fracture service to assist patients in their personal difficulties, and the provision of facilities for post-graduate instruction.

The Committee call special attention to the expert service made available to civilians at the Queen Mary's Hospital for Limbless Men, Roehampton, for the fitting of artificial limbs.

### SCOURGE OF BLINDNESS IN INDIA. MILLIONS AFFECTED.

There is no country in the world where blindness is so widespread as in India, and no country where so little is being done to prevent it or alleviate the lot of those affected.

This is the comment of Sir Michael O'Dwyer, the famous Indian administrator, in a foreword to a pamphlet issued by the National Institute for the Blind. The incidence throughout India, he says, is estimated at 1,500,000 totally blind and 3,000,000 partially blind.

India's failure to tackle the problem is attributed partly to her oriental fatalism which regards physical misfortune as the act of God, partly to her caste and family systems which limit the civic sense, and partly to the fact that most of her people live in remote villages.

For some years the National Institute has been helping the Indian Red Cross to run an educational campaign on the prevention of blindness, and films, posters, and other publicity channels have been used. But the immensity of the problem seems to place it beyond voluntary effort and to demand Governmental intervention. In the Punjab alone during a recent year, the medical services treated 3,460,000 cases of eye disease.

"The history of social work in Great Britain," the pamphlet points out, "has shown that, in almost every field of activity, private benevolence must show the way, take risks and make experiments, but that in time the Government must give adequate support or assume actual responsibility."

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