

Register 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 07. Register 21<sup>st</sup> Feb 07.

## BRITISH SCHOOLS OF TROPICAL MEDICINE.

In view of the Bishop of North Queensland's scheme for promoting the scientific study of tropical diseases in Australia, special interest attaches to the report for the year 1906 of the Advisory Committee which is entrusted with the administration of the Tropical Diseases Research Fund in Great Britain. This committee, which consists of nine members, under the presidency of Sir J. West Ridgeway, was appointed by the Secretary of State for the Colonies in 1904 to supervise the expenditure of contributions voted by the Imperial and Colonial Governments for the purpose of carrying on the research work initiated by Mr. Chamberlain with the object of improving the conditions of life in England's tropical possessions. Last year the revenue received by the committee totalled £3,000, made up as follows:—From the Imperial Government, £500; the Government of India, £500; the Rhodes Trustees, £206, and various Colonial Governments, £1,800. The latter amount includes the annual contribution of £200 by the Australian Commonwealth to the Research Fund. Grants aggregating £2,750 were made by the committee to the London and Liverpool Schools of Tropical Medicine, to the University of London, and to the Royal Society. The report states that "the Advisory Committee, in allocating the funds placed at their disposal have desired to establish on a secure basis the study of tropical diseases. The ends they have endeavoured to attain are, on the one hand, the provision of instruction in regard to tropical diseases for medical officers employed in the Colonies and Protectorates; and, on the other hand, the furtherance of research work and investigation as to the nature and causes of such diseases." Having regard to its limited financial resources, and the comparatively short time during which it has been in existence, the committee appears to have achieved gratifying success. The scientific value of much of the research work conducted by the various agencies under its auspices can be appraised only by medical experts; but in several instances practical results have been achieved which will facilitate the immediate amelioration of the conditions of life in tropical countries. Hitherto the value of the British Empire's tropical assets have been seriously depreciated by the prevalence of many obscure diseases, which have levied heavy tolls upon both men and beasts. Not only has the development of tropical colonies been delayed owing to the actual mortality among pioneer officials and settlers, but in many cases their progress has been arrested owing to the difficulty of finding qualified and efficient men willing to expose themselves to the risks of such an unhealthy environment. There is reason for hope, however, that the systematic and thoroughly scientific investigations which are now being conducted by the Schools of Tropical Medicine and by experts in various Crown Colonies will lead to the prevention or conquest of many dangerous maladies.

Irrespective of the research work which is constantly being performed in scientific institutions and universities, and by specially equipped expeditions in Asia, Africa, and elsewhere, the problems of tropical medicine are now being studied by an ever-increasing army of young practitioners, who have received instruction in the institutions subsidized from the Research Fund. Nearly two years ago Sir Charles Bruce stated in a lecture at the Royal Colonial Institute that the British Schools of Tropical Medicine had "qualified for practice in the tropics, and equipped with a knowledge of the most recent methods of research, over 500 students, including medical officers of the army and navy and of the Colonial, Foreign, and Indian Services, representatives of foreign Governments and Universities, missionaries, and employes of trading, railway, and mining corporations." Comparatively few men employed in official capacities or engaged in private practice can devote much time to original investigations; but the training provided by the Schools of Tropical Medicine will enable those who graduate in such institutions to apply to the practical branches of their work the latest scientific thought and discoveries. The present Secretary of State for the Colonies believes, however, that "what is still wanting is to link the side of scientific research more closely to that of medical training." In a circular dispatch which he sent to the Governors of all the tropical Crown Colonies and Protectorates last year Lord Elgin pointed out the defects in the existing system, and suggested that:—

When a colony or protectorate has an adequate medical staff, and is in a position to devote funds to scientific purposes without unduly stinting its other requirements, a sum might be voted, either annually or at longer intervals, for the express purpose of detailing one or more of its medical officers to study the latest phases of modern scientific research at the best known centres; and possibly, after a few months spent in this way, to carry out further researches in the colony before reverting to ordinary professional work. . . . I simply recommend that over and above the work of the bacteriologist of the colony, if there is one, some member of the practising medical staff shall year by year, or at stated intervals, be deputed to bring back to the colony, and directly into the medical work of the colony, the latest results of the most highly organized scientific research.

This is an important matter which should not be overlooked by Dr. Frodsham and those who are acting with him in regard to the proposal to establish a School of Tropical Medicine in Australia. Even if the Bishop's scheme should be adopted it would still be desirable that the Commonwealth should keep in touch with the centres of scientific research in the motherland, and a reciprocal or co-operative connection between the proposed Australian institute and the London and Liverpool schools would probably be of mutual advantage.

Appendices attached to the Advisory Committee's report indicate that the Commonwealth has lagged behind several of the Crown Colonies in matters relating to the study of tropical

diseases. The Government of Hongkong, which contributes £100 a year to the Research Fund, has built and fitted up a bacteriological institute, and in last year's Estimates provision was made for the expenditure of £1,820 for scientific research in the colony. The Governor of Southern Nigeria has formulated a definite scheme for the establishment of a medical research institute at Lagos, at an annual estimated cost for maintenance of about £1,500; and laboratories have already been established in the Federated Malay States, Ceylon, Singapore, and Mauritius. The cost of carrying out Dr. Frodsham's proposals would be exceedingly moderate in comparison with the amounts set apart for similar objects by some of the colonies mentioned. Valuable as is the work done by British scientists, it needs to be supplemented by "a continuity of research in situ," and that adequate facilities should be afforded for the study of tropical pathology in Australian medical schools. Lord Elgin states that "there is every reason to be satisfied that a future supply of medical officers, well versed in the special studies which tropical conditions and tropical diseases demand, is assured for the British possessions." At present Australian medical students are placed at a disadvantage in this respect, with the result that settlers in the Australian tropics are not deriving the full benefit of recent medical progress.

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### ADVANCED COMMERCIAL COURSE.

To the Editor.

Sir—I was pleased to notice that "Student" struck the right note with regard to the necessity of the University granting some distinguishing letters for those who have been successful in the above course. Take, for instance, the Institute of Accountants; they confer the following letters upon those who pass their examination—A.I.A.S.A., and yet the University will not grant a degree to the successful University students. This gives an undue advantage to those who pass the institute examination over the University students, and if the University still neglects to grant letters to those who have proved themselves proficient by securing the certificate I would propose that the students form an association similar to the Institute of Accountants, and grant initials accordingly. It is only right that the University student should at least be placed on an equality with an institute student. If such an association is formed I think it would meet the case. Until the Association referred to above is formed, or the University grants a degree, I intend to place the following initials after my name in any matters connected with accountancy—A.U.A.S.A., which represents, Accountancy, University of Adelaide, South Australia.—I am, &c.,

ALWYN G. ROBERTS.  
Adelaide, February 21, 1907.