

ON GUARD AGAINST DISEASE Officials and Citizens Join Forces

By ERNEST A. MOTT-SMITH
Secretary of the Territory of Hawaii

ONE of the greatest assets in health matters which Hawaii possesses is the constant and dependable interest of its residents in matters of public health and sanitation. This interest exists among the oriental as well as among the Caucasian population. Its manifestations run in many directions and have always been enthusiastic and steady. It has generally taken the form of hearty co-operation with the territorial board of health and federal service. It has arisen to every emergency and has not stopped when the emergency was over, but continued during ordinary times, when no imminent questions of public health were at issue. Hawaii has firmly established this reputation of civic interest at home and abroad by actual work and not by mere talk or mere organization.

In 1895 a cholera outbreak of no mean proportion occurred in Honolulu. The infection undoubtedly came from the orient. The emergency was great. A call was made for the citizens to organize a citizens' sanitary committee and corps to assist the territorial board of health in stamping out the disease. The response to this call was remarkable. The citizens immediately effected and put into operation an organization under which the entire city was districted, policed and quarantined, a twice daily inspection and census taken, all cases of sickness promptly reported and within a short time the disease was stamped out.

In 1900 plague broke out in Honolulu. The same process was gone through.

CLEANUP DAY

In 1911 cholera again broke out, and within an incredibly short time was eradicated, the mortality, with the exception of two Portuguese, being confined to Hawaiians. This was followed a few months later by a "cleanup day" campaign which was organized, put into operation and financed by the several improvement clubs of Honolulu. Immediately thereafter the citizens organized and conducted a mosquito-elimination campaign at a cost of \$100,000, which has so diminished mosquitoes in Honolulu that they are now hardly noticeable. In matters of health, cleanliness and sanitation the people of Hawaii insist that not only shall public officials, but also individuals, do their share in the maintenance and continuance of health conditions. The city is now on the eve of another cleanup day campaign, and the indications are that cleanup day will become an annual affair.

Hawaii Can Combat Easily All Disease

Hawaii, like other communities, has been assailed from time to time by contagious diseases. With the exception of the two smallpox epidemics which occurred in 1852 and 1851, and a small outbreak in 1910, the outbreaks of cholera in 1895 and 1910 and that of plague in 1900, there have been no serious outbreaks of diseases of a contagious nature. Whatever cases have occurred in the last 10 years have been promptly and efficiently met by the health officials and organizations above named and without danger and with very little inconvenience to the public. The recurrence of these is growing less and less as time passes. There are the usual occurrences of mumps, whooping cough, measles and occasionally diphtheria and typhoid, such as are found in any community, but they are promptly met and usually occur in modified forms. The general health of the territory is good.

Hawaii is a healthy place in which to live. It has been aptly termed the "Paradise of the Pacific." The place is unique. It has many scenic attractions, interesting sports and customs. The temperature is semitropical, never too hot in the summer nor too cold in winter.

The islands lie 2,000 miles away from the nearest mainland coast in the track of the northwest and the northeast trades which blow steadily from March until November and intermittently during the other months. Hence Hawaii with its sea isolation, surrounded on all sides by a vast expanse of the Pacific ocean, with its salubrious and healthy climate, is enabled to control and combat the introduction of diseases from without and to prevent the spread of disease from within. Our state borders are the sea, our assets perennial sunshine and healthful winds. Hawaii is not the endemic focus of any disease. Every disease has been introduced, principally from the orient. Before the advent of other races disease was practically unknown in these islands. The native race was composed of healthy men, women and children. The usual and destructive ills of modern civilization were absent. Mosquitoes were not to be found nor any of the other insects which play so important a part in the transmission of diseases. These were all introduced into Hawaii from without. Hence it is important that the precautions taken at the ports of entry should be complete and efficient and the outer defense be strong.

OUTPOSTS AGAINST DISEASE

The outer defense against the introduction of diseases consists of the United States public health and marine service and its station in Hawaii, the federal immigration service and the territorial board of health. The functions of the public health and marine hospital service are well known. That service has absolute quarantine powers against cholera, yellow fever, smallpox, typhus fever, leprosy and plague. The efficiency of the service is beyond question. The federal immigration service has authority to reject and deport immigrants afflicted with other disease. The territorial government has control of internal health matters and concurrent jurisdiction



tion with the federal government over vessels and passengers entering the harbors of the territory. Its quarantine powers extend and apply to the whole category of infectious and contagious diseases. These three services work together in hearty co-operation and form an effective barrier against the introduction of diseases from without. In addition thereto the territorial board of health has among its other functions, quarantine powers over tuberculosis in cattle and rabies in dogs. The activity of the territorial board of health in internal health matters includes among other things a complete system of inspection and sanitation in which each house is mapped and the owners and occupants recorded.

Fumigation and disinfection work is carried on by a system of vital statistics and the maintenance of 24 physicians under government pay in the various districts of the territory, whose duties are not only to report births, deaths and marriages and issue birth certificates and burial permits, but immediately to report all cases of sickness of a contagious or infectious nature as well as to take care of and treat individuals suffering from sickness and to pass upon the location of dairies, markets, slaughter houses, laundries and the like; the maintenance of an insane asylum, a mosquito campaign and an efficient system for the quarantining, care and treatment of all diseases of a contagious or infectious nature.

No person coming to the Hawaiian islands need fear contracting any unusual disease or any disease for that matter. Very few communities look after their general health conditions more consistently than this community does. The purpose of its health department, with its elaborate organizations, its liberal appropriations, its system of care and treatment of indigent sick, its facilities, among others, for quarantine, disinfection and fumigation is to make these islands a "Paradise of Health" as well as the "Paradise of the Pacific." There is no reason why this can not be done with the facilities at the disposal of the federal, territorial and county services and with the advantage of a fresh, brisk and healthful climate and sea isolation. The territory has already gone a long way toward this consummation.

Statistics Prove Rumors False

"Leprosy in the Hawaiian islands. It is increasing at an alarming rate among the white population. One Hawaiian in 24 is a leper. Lepers may be seen in the streets of Honolulu almost every day. The law governing segregation of lepers is feeble, conciliatory and inefficient and does not protect public health. The whole subject is governed by politics," quoted Ernest Mott-Smith, secretary of the territory of Hawaii, to the interviewer. "These and like statements are the head lines and body material occasionally met with in daily papers," he continued. "Then again writers of fiction have touched on this disease.

"For dramatic effect the subject is easy. To depict it needs no imagination; the bare mention of the affliction is alone sufficient. It is, and has been, pictured as the highest form of martyrdom—a horrible living death. Worse still it is now so considered and has been for centuries. Some even regard it as an adequate and fitting method of personal expiation, while others hale it as an opportunity of dying in a blaze of glory. These statements are not unfounded. Applications have been received in Hawaii from soldiers, nurses, doctors, divines, clerks, in fact from people in all walks of life in the United States and elsewhere begging the territorial officials that they be allowed to go to the leper settlement on the island of Molokai that they may there suffer and die.

"To those who are familiar with leprosy this sentiment is all rot. It is in maudlin contrast with the high purpose and devotion of the Catholic brothers and sisters and of the officials and others who are ministering to the afflicted at the leper settlement on Molokai. These people are not afraid of leprosy. Nor do they seek to get it; nor do they hope nor contemplate dying of it.

LITTLE DANGER OF CONTAGION

"The fact is, leprosy is one of the least, if not the least, communicable of diseases. It can not be communicated by direct inoculation; it is not hereditary. Eminent medical authorities have held that the disease is not even contagious. No qualified authority goes further than to claim that it is more than very mildly contagious or communicable, and then only under very special conditions, or because of the peculiar receptibility of the host through anemic or diseased conditions, accompanied by filth, poor and restricted diet, poor ventilation, poor sanitary conditions and the like. Leprosy is seldom ever communicated by direct contact, though such contact may be daily and intimate, as will be shown below by statistics concerning Kokuia at the leper settlement on Molokai.

"A person of clean habits and diet need have but little fear of contracting leprosy.

"Hence while there are several means by which leprosy is known to be communicated, means by which it has been

popularly thought to be communicable, it remains to be ascertained how it usually is communicated. The incubation period of most communicable diseases is known, as also the means of communicability and degree of virulence. These facts are unknown in leprosy.

"But few months have elapsed since the introduction of leprosy has been successfully grown artificially, this having been first accomplished by M. T. Clegg who is now developing his discovery in the federal laboratory near Honolulu. The incubation period and transmissibility of the disease are now receiving close attention and some light may be thrown upon these important points so that in the near future a cure for the disease may be discovered. The disease is not incurable. There have been natural cures and some apparent cures. The difficulty is that the universal specific is as yet unknown.

DOES NOT SPREAD AT MOLOKAI

"The facts above stated are not based on theory. They have been learned from actual experience in Hawaii and do not differ from facts learned from experience in other countries where leprosy has been or is present," continued the territorial secretary. "There is a good deal of leprosy in other parts of the United States today.

"In regard to hereditary and contact the following statistics are instructive: "Since 1908 there have been 156 children born at the leper settlement on Molokai of whom but one, who was not removed at birth from the leprosy mother, became a leper. It has been ascertained that if a child is removed at birth from the mother and from contact with other lepers it will not become leprosy. During the last 46 years there have been 224 Kokuia at the settlement of whom 156 have been there more than five years, 97 more than 10 years, 67 more than 15 years, 43 more than 20 years, 21 more than 25 years. These Kokuia are the helpers and personal nurses of helpless lepers in most cases the husband or wife of the leper. Hence the contact between them is daily and intimate. Of these 224 Kokuia over a period of 46 years only four have acquired leprosy at the settlement. Not one of the officials, doctors or nurses connected with the settlement on Molokai since its establishment in 1886 has acquired leprosy. Father Damien contracted leprosy, but that was an extraordinary exception to the experiences of others.

"It is a fair question: Is there any truth in the reports in newspapers and periodicals which are contrary to the records of the settlement?"

LEPROSY ON DECREASE

"Leprosy is not on the increase in Hawaii. It is on the decrease," declared the official. "Moreover, there is a material diminution in its virulence. From a statistical standpoint it may be said that one Hawaiian in 70 is a leper. But to convey the impression thereby that one Hawaiian in every 70 met with in the streets or at large in the country is a leper is a crime against truth. The figures mean no more than this, that the Hawaiian and part Hawaiian population in the territory is estimated at 38,000, of which 550 are lepers, segregated over a number of years, who are now confined at the leper settlement on the island of Molokai. The lepers are not allowed to remain at large in the community.

"In regard to leprosy wandering at large, an inquiry on this point was made a short time since of every practicing physician in the territory, with the consequent effect that there were no lepers seen at large who were not then or shortly afterward apprehended by the territorial board of health. The value of this testimony arises from the fact that all physicians are required by law, under penalty of a fine and forfeiture of license, immediately to report all new cases of the health authorities. All sheriffs, deputy sheriffs, police officers and school teachers, as well as other officials, are also required to do the same. Moreover the territory maintains 24 physicians under pay upon whom is laid this duty of discovering cases of leprosy. These and many other means and precautions are employed to remove the afflicted from the community. The segregation law is backed by a warrant of arrest and forcible removal if necessary. A case occurring among the thousands of tourists and the more thousands of soldiers who have come to Hawaii is yet to be heard of.

"Among the 6,000 people made homeless by the great Chinatown fire of 1900, which occurred during the plague outbreak of that year and destroyed more than 30 acres of congested and crowded quarters, there were housed people of all nationalities, but three lepers were found, and the existence of these had already been known to the health authorities. These 6,000 people were individually bathed and given a careful inspection and examination by physicians before being placed in the quarters temporarily erected for them. The chance that there are more lepers among them is very remote. The deplorable house and living conditions of that day have not been allowed to recur.

"Leprosy is confined almost wholly to Hawaiians. There are a few cases among Portuguese, Japanese and Chinese. Among American, British and German there has been but one case since 1910, and but very few cases before that date. Almost without exception, every case has been the result of extraordinary contact with or exposure to the disease."

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