

INFANTILE PARALYSIS.

Gov. Roosevelt Opened Way to Restore Thousands of Victims of the Disease.

In the United States today there are more than 300,000 persons who are partly or wholly crippled. To these people an active life is usually closed, and to their care almost an equal number must give all or a large part of their time, so that perhaps the aggregate economic loss to the nation from this cause may be reckoned at approximately 500,000 lives which are removed from normal pursuits and productivity.

In 1921, soon after he had finished a strenuous campaign as the Democratic nominee for the Vice-Presidency, Franklin D. Roosevelt was suddenly stricken by poliomyelitis—infantile paralysis.

Out of that great personal misfortune has grown a hope for thousands of other cripples—a chance, even a probability, that they may return to the joys of active life, and to economic usefulness, thereby relieving their faithful friends and attendants of additional sacrifices.

Half of our cripples, or some 150,000 persons, are the victims of infantile paralysis, that strange malady which for such a long time has baffled medical science. Until Gov. Roosevelt focussed attention upon the problem of restorative treatment at Warm Springs, Ga., no systematized attempt ever had been made to develop methods of alleviating its crippling after-effects.

Infantile paralysis, we are told, was first recorded in Germany in about 1860. It next appeared in Scandinavia, and in the early nineties the United States first felt its dread effects in an epidemic in Vermont.

Since then, the cases have been widely scattered geographically, but the great majority have been in the northern and eastern States. There is an increasing tendency for it to range slightly higher through the age classes, but, strangely enough, it is almost equally divided between the sexes.

Recently the disease has been the subject of the closest scrutiny by the medical profession. The Milbank Foundation, the Rockefeller Institute, the International Infantile Paralysis Commission and the Harvard Infantile Paralysis Commission all are conducting research in this important field.

But even today little is known. The germ, never isolated or identified, is thought to be a sort of "cousin" to the flu germ. Since it attacks children chiefly, it has been the more difficult to search out the cause of inoculation or even to establish the "period of incubation," the time between exposure to the disease and the development of symptoms.

Now it seems reasonably certain that incubation occurs in 6 to 14 days, but science cannot say even yet with any certainty how the disease is carried or exactly how it is taken into the system.

It seems a peculiar thing that in the animal kingdom only the monkey is a victim of the disease or can be inoculated with it. This has greatly narrowed research, because monkeys are expensive.

In captivity they appear to be subject to many diseases, so that not only is research costly, but many an experiment ends in failure because these denizens of the jungle succumb to other diseases of mankind, even before the "polio" experiments can be completed.

Infantile paralysis is described as essentially an inflammation of the nervous system, which kills or cripples the cells giving marching orders to the muscles. If the muscles of the vital organs are crippled, death ensues.

It is reasonably certain now that the disease confers future immunity upon its victims and that a serum from the blood of persons who have had it may be administered to protect suspicious cases. Statistics on Massachusetts cases, prepared by Dr. W. L. Aycock, of the Harvard Medical School, indicate that this serum treatment reduces the death rate and the instances of total or serious paralysis by more than two-thirds.

But when Gov. Roosevelt was attacked by the disease nine years ago, not all these facts had been established. Infantile paralysis came out of nowhere—a mystery—struck without reason and raged to a fatal conclusion, despite the growing opposition of the medical profession, or else it departed as mysteriously, leaving behind an individual crippled in body and muscular activity.

There was no pathological effect on the brain, but scores of thousands were left maimed in mental outlook, life would pass them by. Franklin Roosevelt was discouraged, but not beaten. Burned-out nerve cells in his powerful lower limbs gave no orders, but medical men said that these cells, though damaged, were not dead and might be brought back to some degree of function.

This began Roosevelt's fight back to health. It was a fight which led him to the Governor's chair and culminated recently in the issuance of a \$500,000 insurance policy on his life at standard rates.

The beneficiary is the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation, that philanthropic enterprise which he has been building up, and which he believes to be the first of a series of institutions destined to do great restorative work among the cripples of the United States.

In the beginning of his illness the Governor tried massage and mild exercise. He began to study what little was known of curing this form of paralysis. Exercise, he discovered, was more beneficial under water because there it is not necessary

for the enfeebled muscles to work so strenuously to overcome gravity. But in ordinary bathing the water, quickly chilled affected members, through which circulation is sluggish. Exercising in heated water, on the other hand, proved to be stimulating, and muscles began to respond.

About this time George Foster Peabody wrote to the Governor, telling him of a Georgia boy who had cured his paralysis by swimming at Warm Springs, Ga. This resulted in Mr. Roosevelt's making a trip to try exercising in the pool fed by the warm mineral springs.

This warm water, which comes from a subterranean source of 2,000 feet and reaches the surface at an even 90-degree temperature year in and year out, was not enervating. It was, therefore, possible to remain in the water for long periods and to gain the most complete benefits from systematized exercise.

A circumstance which at the time was rather amusing advanced this cause. An enterprising reporter gave wide publicity, during the campaign of 1924, to the fact that the former vice-presidential candidate was swimming back to health, as had Annette Kellerman, who had been an infantile paralysis victim as a baby.

That story, carrying pictures of Mr. Roosevelt and Miss Kellerman side by side, and appearing as a syndicated feature throughout the country, caused 25 infantile victims to come to Warm Springs, from widely separated sections in April 1925.

So Roosevelt tried, with the aid of a local physician, to systematize treatment. The following year, a committee of physicians from the National Orthopedic Association investigated this pioneer effort, approved it and made suggestions. A six-month experimental study under the supervision of Dr. LeRoy W. Hubbard, New York state orthopedic surgeon, was begun.

Such astonishing results were obtained that many leading orthopedic surgeons urged that the experiment be enlarged in scope. And so the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation was organized in the spring of 1927.

With privately raised funds, a tract of 1,200 acres, on which were the warm springs, an old hotel and many cottages, was acquired. The property was modernized, the pools enlarged, concrete walks built for wheel chairs, with ramps at the cottages, and steam heat installed so that the plant might function the year around.

After a while, another pool was added, so that one was available for under-water exercises on tables, bars and rings, and another was available for swimming.

When Edsel Ford visited Warm Springs in the fall of 1927, he noted the need for a pool enclosed against bad weather, and presented a beautiful pool to the Foundation. It is 35 by 56 feet, glass roofed and steam-heated, with dressing rooms and facilities for sun baths. Patients who have benefited have added an infirmary recently, and gradually remodeling has occurred until there on a plateau, 1,000 feet above sea level, 70 miles out of the Atlantic, there has grown up a constantly changing little community of happy people, as visitors will attest.

They come by recommendation of their own surgeons, pay actual cost of their care and keep, are examined and have their cases carefully recorded. After a brief rest, following their arrival, there begins a daily regime of systematized exercise.

A staff of 10 to a dozen young women, all trained physiotherapists, go into the pool with patients each morning, giving each patient special exercises on the submerged tables.

Specialized treatment worked out scientifically for each different case is watched carefully and the degree of improvement shown is recorded. Gradually there has been built up a knowledge regarding remedial treatment such as had been available nowhere else in the world before.

The girls in charge of treatments are also swimming instructors for those who cannot swim, and, following the formalized exercise regime, the pools resound to the shouts and laughter of patients playing water games.

Visitors have been amazed at the speed with which persons partially paralyzed for years acquire skill in swimming.

The youngsters especially take to swimming quickly. Last year there was a four-year-old boy who seemed more adept under water than on it, while an eight-year-old girl, whose recovery had been despaired of by her family, returned to her Kansas home walking with braces and promptly won a free-for-all race for swimmers under 10.

Sun baths, luncheons, rest—and then patients who thought they never would walk again are out on the walking ramps learning how all over again. They learn to climb stairs, and the best exercises to strengthen their back muscles.

And from these patients, living under healthful conditions, come serums which help to save others from a similar condition. Immune and regaining mastery of themselves, they are glad to aid the fight of others against this dread disease.

I should explain that no quick miracles are performed. The process is a slow one, covering tedious months and years. But many who have gone to Warm Springs quite helpless have come to walk with braces, or with a cane, or even without material aid.

This is not only a restorative institution, but a laboratory, a pioneer experiment, and, as the ultimate possibilities of the project have become better understood, we have had help from such prominent men as Vincent Astor, John D. Rockefeller, Jr., Walter Chrysler, Herbert Lehman, Fred Vanderbilt, Pierre du Pont, Paul Warburg, the Harriman brothers, Jeremiah Milbank and many others.

When former President Coolidge, former Gov. Alfred E. Smith, of New York, and Julius Rosenwald, of

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Chicago, sat down recently as a committee named in the will of Conrad Hubert to distribute for philanthropic purposes the \$7,000,000 estate of that pioneer manufacturer of flashlights, they listed the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation as one of the 33 beneficiaries.

In order that the Foundation may develop in harmony with all branches of medical science, and to assure it the best medical advice and supervision, a board of orthopedic specialists were formed by Mr. Roosevelt.

Its members are: Doctors LeRoy C. Abbot and Fred Warren Bailey, of St. Louis; George E. Bennett, of Baltimore; Frank C. Dixon, of Kansas City; Albert H. Freiberg, of Cincinnati; George Draper, of New York; Ludwig Hektoen and Beveridge H. Moore, of Chicago; Arthur T. Legg, Frank R. Ober and Robert B. Osgood, of Boston; John Lincoln Porter, of Evanston, Ill., and Dr. Paul Haertl, of Berlin, Germany.

The Foundation has passed, as Gov. Roosevelt points out, "from a theory to an established system of treatment."

The Governor goes on to say: "Many of the leading orthopedic surgeons have come to recognize the growing importance of physiotherapy, especially when these directed exercises are given in the medium of warm water. Certainly the results obtained so far at Warm Springs, Ga., prove the value of warm water treatment."

"Placing the Georgia Warm Springs Foundation on a permanent and much larger basis means not only more effective work among more patients there, but eventually the establishment of similar centers in many other sections of the country."

"I think most cripples—children or adult—are worth taking an interest in. Restorative work is economically sound; humanely, it is right. It is reaching out to a field for which no other agency is now adequately caring. We need pioneers."

—Subscribe to the Watchman.



SNOW had fallen generously for several days in Western Pennsylvania and the country sides rang with the merry tinkle of sleigh bells, that had long hung rusting in the barns. One cheery member of the farm community had turned to his telephone and passed along the word for a general sleighing party by moonlight—an evening's entertainment which proved the social event of the year.



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