

From Darkness to Light

By

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"Once I was blind but now I can see", "I can be of some good in the world now that I have my sight restored ;" "I will no longer be a burden to my family as once again I have the use of my eyes." These and many others are the exclamations of joy heard as one walked round Eye Camp Hospital.

It was a pleasure to watch the nurses doing their work so efficiently and cheerfully.

The first camp, a compact mobile unit, was started at Warangal in 1944, as an experiment. Since then each camp has been an improvement on previous camps.

The site chosen for the camp this year was at Latur in Osmanabad District, Hyderabad State; this was the fourteenth camp. With local co-operation and State aid, the camp was opened on March 15. From then on the old and the young swarmed the precincts of the camp, bringing the blind from far and near.

The staff consisted of the Superintendent, two Assistant Surgeons and six registered Nurses. The most unique feature of this camp was the trained nursing staff—one theatre Sister, three graduate nurses trained at the Sarojini Devi Eye Hospital, two nurses with general training, two compounders and two 'dais'.

On the average there were 400-500 outpatients and between * 100-120 operations performed in a day. The camp provided 200 beds in the beginning but more were added to meet the demand.

The camp was a mobile unit, fully

equipped with an operating theatre, fitted with all the latest sterilising apparatus and instruments.

In India, most of the Eye diseases are due to dirt, poverty, negligence, ignorance and climatic conditions. The majority of the people who come for operation are suffering from Cataract and Trachoma. These are not dangerous diseases if attended to in the early stage, but if neglected they can result in blindness.

There have been several eye camps in various parts of the country where the surgeons performed mass operations or applied a few drops of medicine and then sent the patient home to care for himself. If he was lucky he recovered, otherwise what little sight he had was often lost through neglect. The aim of our camps is to keep the patient until he was fit to go home and resume his normal life. Cataract patients are given a pair of glasses, free of charge; the other patients are sent home with drops to be used for a few more days. The in-patients were supplied with free milk and food.

On the last day of the camp all the poor and deserving patients are called before a large gathering and given a set of clothes before they were discharged; a sari and a 'choli' for each woman, a cap and 'kurta' for each child, a 'dhoti' and shirt or a blanket for every man.

There is need for many such camps in other parts of India and if the people of India would wake up and agitate for such a humanitarian cause, India would be a happier, healthier and greater country.