

Parasitism in Southeastern United States

a symposium

The program of the Association of Southeastern Biologists, meeting in Charleston, S. C., April 21, 1955, included a symposium on parasite problems in the southeastern United States. The three papers of the symposium include a historical review by Dr. Faust, an appraisal of the progress made and the problem today by Dr. Wright, and a general summary of veterinary problems in parasitology by Dr. Bailey. The symposium moderator, Martin D. Young, Sc.D., director, Laboratory of Tropical Diseases, National Microbiological Institute, Public Health Service, Columbia, S. C., wrote the following introduction.

ABOUT three centuries ago the English successfully colonized the southeast coast of the United States. These colonists brought some exotic parasites, and later they imported slaves who also brought certain tropical parasites. In addition, the colonists encountered native parasites in the indigenous hosts. Confronted with a new set of epidemiological factors, the parasites behaved in different ways. Some became established to cause recurring epidemics. Others established endemic foci, of which some were to disappear gradually by attrition. Still other parasites were unable to maintain themselves in this area.

The parasites exerted a great influence upon the economic and social development of the people. Some of the more important para-

sitic diseases, such as malaria, were instrumental in causing the establishment of medical schools and influenced the type of culture evolved in the plantation low country, especially in the Carolinas. The investigation of hookworm disease emphasized the need for public health organizations and laid the foundation for the present-day county health systems.

Some of the parasitic diseases, namely malaria and filariasis, have virtually disappeared from this area. Others are still present. The symposium was held to review what has happened in the field of parasite problems in the southeastern United States and to estimate the current situation.

The eminent parasitologists in this symposium discuss their subjects authoritatively.