Present and Post-War Health Problems in Connection with Parasitic Diseases

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As a nation without imperialistic aims and with few colonial possessions, we have viewed with considerable nonchalance the tropical disease problems of other countries. Now that we are engaged in an all-out war on many fronts, we are frantically endeavoring to absorb and put into practice knowledge of these exotic diseases. For the moment, most of these problems are military problems, but sooner or later they are apt to become public health problems of direct concern to our civilian population.

Our past military campaigns in tropical areas have been confined to small-scale operations in Cuba, Puerto Rico, the Philippines and briefly in Central America. Now our troops are serving by the thousands in such hotbeds of exotic disease as Africa, India, China and the South Pacific. While every effort is being made by our military authorities to practice effective preventive medicine in these areas, it is inevitable that some of our troops will contract one or more tropical diseases and will return to the United States as infected individuals. Already the homeward trek of these men has begun. The return of military personnel from all these areas will probably constitute a cumulative introduction of tropical disease equaled or exceeded only by such introduction during the slave trading days. It is well, therefore, to consider some of the possibilities which confront us and to ponder the relationship of these possibilities to civilian health.

Some of the diseases of greatest importance from a military standpoint and possibly from a subsequent civilian standpoint are those caused by protozoan and
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