On the Mortality among Government Officials on the West Coast of Africa. By J. R. HART, F.I.A.

A FEW statistics relating to this subject recently came into my hands, and although the results obtained from them cannot be considered to be of great weight, a short communication may be of interest. In the hope that useful information might be forthcoming, I made enquiry as to whether any record is kept of the dates of departure, death, or retirement of persons who go out in the employment of African merchants to the West Coast ; and ascertained that it was unlikely that data could be supplied from that source. But I thought it worth while to make similar enquiry at the Colonial Office ; and although the West African department could not officially furnish me with information, as they had none here of which they could vouch for the accuracy, I obtained, through the courtesy of one of the officials, the particulars given below. These were contained in a list of all the Europeans employed by the Governments of the four West African Colonies—the Gambia, Sierra Leone, the Gold Coast, and Lagos—during the ten years, 1 January 1881 to 31 December 1890, showing when their service began, and, if ended before 31 December 1890, when and why it ended. The list comprised 296 persons, of whom 138 served on the Gold Coast, 44 at Sierra Leone, 25 at Lagos, and 7 at Gambia ; while, of the rest, 36 were employed both in Lagos and on the Gold Coast, and 46 in two or more of the other colonies, and in 16 cases the colony was not specified, the nature of the official's employment probably necessitating frequent changes from one place to another. The occupations of these persons were not stated ; but I understand that most of them were of the better classes, including consular servants, secretaries, and constabulary, medical and customs' officers ; but some held positions akin to that of foremen of works. A fair proportion of the last-mentioned become, I am told, addicted to drink, and are soon dismissed, their exit being

noted in the column headed "Other causes." If this be so, we may conjecture that the mortality, shown below, would be increased by the deaths, which occur subsequent to dismissal, brought about by this fatal indulgence.

Of the 296 lives, 77 had on 1st January 1881, already been for some time in the service, and 219 joined during the period 1881-90; so that the experience is short, the average being only $3\frac{1}{2}$ years. The causes of service ending were stated in four columns headed (1) death, (2) illness, (3) age of 55, (4) other causes, the totals of each being

Died	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	54
Retired on account of illness	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	37
Retired on reaching pensionable age	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	3
Retired from other causes (<i>i.e.</i> , promoted, resigned, or dismissed)	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	90
								184
Add, still surviving on 31 December 1890	...	...	...	...	...	...	...	112
Total								296

No ages were given, but I understand that colonial servants are not sent out to West Africa under the age of 22, and, as stated above, the lives are pensioned at age 55. The years of entry and exit were given and not the exact dates. In the following table, the Exposed and Died are tabulated according to the period elapsed since first leaving this country. The total number of years of life are $1031\frac{1}{2}$, and the deaths 54, giving an average rate of mortality of 5.2 per-cent.

Year	Exposed to Risk	Died	Annual Rate of Mortality
$\frac{1}{2}$	$105\frac{1}{2}$	3	2.9
$1\frac{1}{2}$	184	14	7.6
$2\frac{1}{2}$	151	8	5.3
$3\frac{1}{2}$	113	5	4.4
$4\frac{1}{2}$	91	4	4.4
$5\frac{1}{2}$	73	6	5.3
$6\frac{1}{2}$	60	1	
$7\frac{1}{2}$	58	3	5.2
$8\frac{1}{2}$	52	6	
$9\frac{1}{2}$	38	1	5.1
$10\frac{1}{2}$	21	1	
$11\frac{1}{2}$	15	1	
$12\frac{1}{2}$	11	...	
$13\frac{1}{2}$	10	...	
$14\frac{1}{2}$	7	...	
$15\frac{1}{2}$	7	...	
$16\frac{1}{2}$	5	...	
$17\frac{1}{2}$	5	...	
$18\frac{1}{2}$	2	...	
$19\frac{1}{2}$	3	...	
$20\frac{1}{2}$	20	...	
Totals	$1,031\frac{1}{2}$	54	5.2

Among the 138 persons who were employed on the Gold Coast only, the mortality was 6·2 per-cent, while the 44 who served in Sierra Leone only experienced the average death of 5·2 per-cent; but to a comparison of these results little importance can be attached, as they must be disturbed to some extent by the selection which takes place on promotion, those who obtain higher posts on transfer from one colony to another being on the whole better lives than those who appear in the list as having served in one colony only.

The facts are too scanty to admit of our drawing any definite conclusions from a comparison of the rates at successive periods of duration of service; but the comparatively low annual rate of 2·9 per-cent in year $\frac{1}{2}$, and the sudden increase to 7·6 per-cent in the following year, may possibly be explicable by a comparison of the rates at which the lives retired on account of illness.

After adjusting the period of exposure of the "Died" and "Invalided", we get the following table, giving 1029 $\frac{1}{2}$ exposed and an average rate of 3·6 per-cent.

Year	Exposed	Retired from Illness	Annual Percentage
$\frac{1}{2}$	106 $\frac{1}{2}$	6	5·6
$1\frac{1}{2}$	180	5	2·8
$2\frac{1}{2}$	148	3	2·0
$3\frac{1}{2}$	113	2	1·8
$4\frac{1}{2}$	89	1	
$5\frac{1}{2}$	71	2	
$6\frac{1}{2}$	60	2	4·2
$7\frac{1}{2}$	58	1	
$8\frac{1}{2}$	51	4	
$9\frac{1}{2}$	37	1	
$10\frac{1}{2}$	24	5	
$11\frac{1}{2}$	15	1	
$12\frac{1}{2}$	11	0	7·3
$13\frac{1}{2}$	11	1	
$14\frac{1}{2}$	8	1	
$15\frac{1}{2}$	7	0	
$16\frac{1}{2}$	6	1	
$17\frac{1}{2}$	5	0	
$18\frac{1}{2}$	4	0	
$19\frac{1}{2}$	6	0	
$20\frac{1}{2}$	19	1	
Totals . .	1,029 $\frac{1}{2}$	37	3·6

It will be observed that the annual rate at which these officers retired on account of illness was, during the first six months, double that of the following year. No information was furnished as to the subsequent experience of those who so retired; but, were they traced out, we may assume that the ratio of deaths to

exposures would be increased; and this assumption seems to be borne out by a comparison of the rates of mortality for years $\frac{1}{2}$ and 1.

Another point suggested by a consideration of Table I is that, with the exception of the first eighteen months after commencement of service, there is not at any time a great divergence from the average rate of 5.2 per-cent. This is probably the result of the special opportunities allowed to Government officials for recruiting their health, thus preventing a large proportion of the lives dying off in the early years to leave but a few exceptionally good lives at later periods. The rules as to leave, adopted by the Government, may be summarized as follows: Subject to the necessities of the service, officers, under the rank of governor, who were not themselves born in West Africa, and whose parents were neither of them born there, may be granted six months' leave of absence after they have completed (1) in Sierra Leone and Gambia fifteen, and (2) on the Gold Coast and in Lagos twelve, consecutive months of residential service. Notwithstanding the more extensive leave allowed in the case of the two latter colonies, the mortality among the officers resident there is shown by the present facts to be higher than the average.

It was impracticable to ascertain the years of exposure while resident in Africa apart from the time spent on leave, and the figures, therefore, relate to the experience of Government servants during their term of service, and cannot be taken as a guide to the risk attendant on continuous residence on the West Coast. While the precautions taken by the Government must tend to reduce the mortality among their servants, most persons coming before an insurance office will be somewhat similarly circumstanced in being able to recruit their health by some months' leave after a stay of a year or two in Africa. A fact that must not be overlooked in comparing the present results with others is, that nearly all these Government servants have to reside on the coast, and are not able to choose the more healthy spots on the higher ground farther inland.