

Preservation of Books in the Tropics

THE following is the gist of an article published in 1920 by W. J. Blackie, Government Chemist, Fiji, and reproduced this year in several English journals.

To minimise the deterioration due to damp and insects,

- (1) Book-cases should have tightly fitting doors.
- (2) The air in the book-cases should contain the vapour of some volatile chemical deterrent.
- (3) The books should be treated with some chemical poison which will preserve them without injuring them.

To meet (3) the author recommends two solutions.

Solution 1, with which the covers of the books are painted inside and out, using a flat brush.

Mercuric Chloride ... 1 drachm (see note below).

(Corrosive Sublimate)

Carbolic Acid ... 1½ oz.

Methylated Spirits ... 2 pints.

Solution 2, which is a varnish and should be applied after the covers are dry.

Shellac ... 1 oz.

Oil of Creosote ... 3 drachms.

Methylated Spirits ... 8 oz.

Dissolve the shellac in the spirits and add the creosote.

The shelves of the book-cases should also be treated with the two solutions.

To meet (2) place small dishes containing para-dichlorobenzene in the book-cases.

For keeping valuable papers in cardboard boxes, a spring-back lid is necessary, and the boxes should be painted inside and out with the two solutions. The para-dichlorobenzene may be placed in an envelope.

NOTES.

- (a) The author recommends fumigating the books first of all with hydrocyanic acid gas, to kill spores, etc., but this is a highly dangerous proceeding to all but a scientific expert, owing to the deadly nature of this gas.
- (b) In the copy of the original formula, the amount of Corrosive Sublimate in *Solution 1* is one ounce. This is certainly too much, and in view of the highly poisonous nature of this chemical is risky. The amended formula gives a solution of 1 in 320, which is more than sufficient for the purpose.
- (c) Para-dichlorobenzene costs about 5/- per lb. in England.
- (d) For preserving card-board file cases, *Solution 2* (the varnish) should prove sufficient, except perhaps in coast districts.

G. BURTON.