

ASSOCIATION MEDICAL JOURNAL.

EDITED BY JOHN ROSE CORMACK, M.D.

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LONDON: FRIDAY EVENING, FEBRUARY 9, 1855.

NEW SERIES.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

BOOKS RECEIVED. [** An Asterisk is prefixed to the names of Members of the Association.*] 1. LARDNER, DIONYSIUS, D.C.L. *The Electric Telegraph popularised.* pp. 144. Illustrations. London: 1855. 2. TATE, T., F.R.A.S. *Elementary Course of Natural Philosophy, for the Use of Beginners.* Vol. I. pp. 102. Vol. II. pp. 102. London: 1855.

MEDICAL BENEVOLENT FUND. The list will appear next week.

ORIGINAL COMMUNICATIONS have been received from Mr. HENRY LEE, Mr. ELLIOTT, Mr. HUNT, Mr. HUSSEY, Mr. HOLTHOUSE, and Mr. HINGESTON. These papers will be inserted with the least possible delay.

BOOKS, LETTERS, AND COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE EDITOR and General Secretary may be addressed to 21 Edwards Street, Portman Square, till after the 25th March, when it is requested that they be sent neither to Edwards Street nor to Putney, but to 37, Russell Square, London.

OUR ARMY MEDICAL SYSTEM.

NO. II.

Is the present Medical System in the Army the best? was one of the questions we proposed in our concluding remarks last week. We now proceed to its consideration.

The Duke of Newcastle and the nation seem disposed to answer this question in the negative; the editor of the *Medical Times and Gazette*, on the contrary, stands forth as the champion both of the Army Medical Department and of its Chief. Our contemporary wishes to throw upon the Duke of Newcastle the blame of all the horrors and of all the deaths which have resulted from the want of ambulances, hospital-ships, medical comforts, and steam transports for the sick and wounded, on the ground that the minister disregard the representations of the Head of the Medical Department, and refused his requests. Why, then, did not the Head of the Army Medical Department resign, since he could not do his duty? Why did he sit silent, and see the army perish? What the people of Great Britain want to know is, Did the Head of the Medical Department of the Army use proper foresight and exertion? Did he exert himself to the utmost to make those provisions which pertain to his department? If he met with refusal, Did he urge his demands, and remonstrate with the ministry? and finally, if he did so remonstrate, and was obstinately refused, why, rather than allow the army committed to his care to perish miserably, did he not long ago protest and appeal to the Queen in council and to the people in Parliament?

But it is ridiculous to pretend that there have not been gross neglect, gross mismanagement, and a blind and obstinate adherence to a system of routine totally unsuited to the crisis, shameful in a liberal profession, and such as no editor or minister in this country can much longer dare to defend. That the medical officers of our army in the East have done their duty, under heart-breaking difficulties, we know well; but that the system, or the heads of the system, will come unscathed out of the inquiry to which they must now be subjected, we do not for one moment believe.

We must emphatically protest against the doctrine that the Heads of the Army Medical Department are to make the

Duke of Newcastle the scapegoat to carry off all their sins into the wilderness. The Director-General is not responsible to the Minister for War; and this is the grand defect of the present system. The Director-General is absolute and irresponsible, dispensing his favours to whomsoever he pleases, without check or control. He is therefore answerable for all that is done, and for all that is left undone, in his department. The unlucky but honest Duke of Newcastle, with all his strong conservative predilections, admits the necessity for that reform on which the Director-General and his supporters in the medical press ought to have long ago insisted, but which they seem still to wish to retard. In the House of Lords, last week, the Duke spoke as follows:—"My noble friend (Lord Grey) has referred to the Medical Board; and there again I consider great improvements might be made. An attempt has been made, possible in a time of peace, but impossible in a time of war, to maintain a medical system exclusive to the army. *I think it has broken down.*" Here his Grace refers to the desperate tenacity with which the Director-General has clung to his autocratic system of patronage and routine. Then, after a well-deserved compliment to the acting surgeons in the Crimea, he refers to the necessity, in spite of the official opposition, of "introducing the civil element" into the hospitals in the East, and emphatically pronounces "the organisation of the Medical Board *at home* to be defective"—a verdict in which he will be supported by all disinterested members of the medical profession who are acquainted with the merits of the matter.

We shall take another opportunity of referring to the admirable views of Earl Grey on this subject. "Would that the Medical Department and its patronage," says an eminent professional friend, referring to his Lordship's views, "were under one head, and that head a minister responsible in Parliament, and holding office on; whilst giving satisfaction to the country."

But we have been led away from our object by the extraordinary circumstance of finding the editor of a medical journal willing to defend a system so injurious to the honour and independence of our profession, as that of the present Army Medical Department. We now return to that object, which was to show the necessity for sending a body of well-trained and practised surgeons to the Crimea.

The war was commenced with a military establishment reduced to the lowest peace standard; and it has been found so difficult to raise fighting men sufficiently rapidly, that we have been obliged to have recourse to a foreign legion. We by no means agree with the arguments which have been adduced against the employment of a moderate number of foreign troops in an emergency like the present. The condemnation of such troops as "mercenaries" by hired barristers; the cry of the Manchester apostles of supply and demand, that the calling in a foreign legion was a proof that our resources were "exhausted" (although they well knew that it was our prosperity, and not our exhaust-