

ASSOCIATION MEDICAL JOURNAL.

EDITED BY JOHN ROSE CORMACK, M.D.

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NEW SERIES.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

COMMUNICATIONS FOR THE EDITOR AND GENERAL SECRETARY MAY, after the 25th instant, be addressed to his residence, 37, RUSSELL SQUARE, LONDON.

NO LOVER OF MEDICINE writes—"I shall feel obliged by your informing me in answers to correspondents if you consider there is anything unprofessional in following the course of practice illustrated in the subjoined statement.

"1. A. practises as a general practitioner in a large town, and, instead of dispensing at his own residence, he engages two established chemists in different and distant parts of the town to supply the whole of his medicines. 2. He arranges to pay his dispensing chemists a fixed sum for mixtures, powders, pills, etc., which they undertake to send out. 3. When A. does not think proper to credit patients, which they undertake to receive his charges for the medicine which, together with the medicine are regularly entered in A.'s day-book on every occasion, whether the medicine is first supplied or repeated. 4. To economise time and labour, by gaining greater regularity of patients' attendance, A. hires rooms of his more distant dispenser, which he visits at stated intervals to meet his more distant patients."

As regards 1 and 2, A. does what is now becoming usual in many places. The plan is found to diminish the receipts of the general practitioner, and to weaken his connection with his clients. In 3 and 4, A. acknowledges an alliance with the two chemists which is calculated to lower the legitimate status of a practitioner in the eyes of the public and of his brethren.

MR. ROEBUCK'S COMMITTEE. We intend to print the whole of the evidence so far as it relates directly or indirectly to the Army Medical Department. An authentic copy of the evidence has not yet reached us. The most complete report is that which is in course of publication by the *Times*. Dr. Andrew Smith has announced his intention to resign, and perhaps has already resigned, his office as Director General. It is well known that the Medical Department of the Army is to be entirely reorganised. No pledge has yet been given by Lord Panmure that in the appointments about to be made merit and capacity are to be the qualifications sought for. It is currently rumoured that private influence will as heretofore be omnipotent. A heavy responsibility rests upon Mr. Roebuck and his colleagues.

CONSTANTINOPLE HOSPITAL. It has certainly been stated in the *Edinburgh Guardian* and other newspapers that Lord Panmure has delegated the formation of the medical staff to Professor Simpson of Edinburgh; but we think that our correspondent has been misinformed on the other points.

MR. JOHN J. NASON. This gentleman's name was misprinted MASON, in our report (p. 285), of the students' meeting lately held in St. Martin's Hall.

PARAGRAPHS FROM OUR PORTFOLIO.

X. VACCINATION AS A DEPARTMENT OF STATE MEDICINE. In the year 1853, when the Vaccination Bill was being hurried through both Houses of Parliament, we took occasion to observe that, however desirable it might be to make the vaccination of the people compulsory, yet the machinery of the measure was very defective, and that its proposed treatment of the medical profession was unjust and insulting. It will be recollected that discussions took place at Branch meetings of our Association regarding Lord Lytton's plan of legislation, and that a deputation from the Metropolitan Counties Branch waited upon Lord Palmerston (then Home Secretary) to represent to him what was believed to be the opinion of the profession. At that interview, his lordship was informed that *compulsory* vaccination and *efficient* vaccination of the people were not convertible terms; and that medical men were alarmed at the indifference shewn to their interests in the proposed measure, which threw upon them increased labour without additional remuneration, and which placed them still under the control and direction of the Guardians of the Poor, a class of officials who have not generally proved themselves the friends of the poor or of the medical profession, and by which they are from their deeds disliked, and in some instances held in merited abhorrence. It was represented, moreover, that although vaccination might be extended by compulsion, yet no means had been devised for the due *superintendence* of the operation, and that no security was provided for the continuous supply of pure lymph.

We are therefore very much gratified to find that these sentiments—sentiments which have always been expressed and entertained by us—have been adopted by the President and Council of the Epidemiological Society, and embodied by them in that very able and elaborate Report which we published at p. 276 of our last number. The objections which exist to the present working of the Act, together with some valuable suggestions towards improving it, will be found admirably set forth in that document. We fear, however, that the Houses of Parliament are in no humour at present to undertake such a question as State Vaccination; but, nevertheless, we hope that the Epidemiological Society will persevere in its endeavours, and force the question upon the attention of the Legislature.

It will be quite impossible for us to follow in detail all the points alluded to in this Report, and we can only advert to a few passages which have reference to the good already accomplished, and that which is still to be effected.

In the first place, we rejoice to find that the late Act has given a remarkable impetus to the practice of vaccination; for that while, in the year 1853, the number of vaccinations amounted to 201,271, in the next year, or that following the passage of the Act, the number was more than doubled, as it amounted to 408,824. Still, it is found that the practice of vaccination is far from universal; and that, for instance, in the Liverpool Union, while the number of registered births was 9,150, the vaccinations under one year of age were only 5,268; in the Greenwich Union, there were 3,599 births, and only 1,922 vaccinations; in the Lambeth Union, 5,221 births, and only 2,194 vaccinations. Now, there is here still an enormous disproportion between the births and the vaccinations; and the disproportion will probably become greater as time advances, and the fear of the compulsory clauses ceases to operate.

The causes which have conducted to obstruct the perfect success of the Vaccination Act are almost precisely those which we pointed out in 1853; and we have now the satisfaction of strengthening our arguments by the deliberate convictions of the President and Council of the Epidemiological Society. The fact is, that the intention of the new Act is very good, but the machinery by which it is proposed to work it is extremely bad. The registration clauses are not efficient, because no remuneration is provided for the medical registrars; and it cannot be a matter of surprise that men will not always do work for nothing, more especially when it is found, as in the present case, that provision is made for the payment of the registrars of births and deaths, and that no corresponding provision is made for paying the medical men for the additional duties imposed upon them.

Again, it has always struck us as a monstrous absurdity that a great hygienic measure, like the vaccination of the people, should be entrusted to the management of the Poor-law Board and the local Boards of Guardians. If one circumstance more than another could render vaccination hateful to the public, it surely would be its connexion with