

UNQUALIFIED ASSISTANTS.

SIR.—Permit me to say a few words with respect to the assistant question, which is at present eliciting some attention in your JOURNAL. I have had a great number of assistants in my time, and a few of them were qualified ones. The unqualified assistants, almost without exception, were worth their salaries, but the qualified ones, without exception, were useless, and ignorant of the daily routine of a general practice. If it had been ignorance alone that they possessed, I could have instructed them; but combined with their ignorance was an immense amount of conceit, which formed an impassable bar to their instruction. The qualified assistants that I have had have been all men who have spent the smallest amount of time possible in going through their curriculum, and receiving their diplomas to practise; their salaries were considerably higher than I pay unqualified assistants; and their services were really of no value whatever if we take into account the constant watching that they required for fear they made any serious mistakes, and the number of patients alienated by their supercilious and off-handed manner of speaking and assisting them. They could talk about minute anatomy, microscopical preparations, and a lot of other similar matters, which are all very well in their place, and things not to be despised; but for dispensing they did not know an eight-ounce bottle from a six-ounce; and, for book-keeping, they were far above such drudgery.

I think it is a great shame such raw fellows should be permitted to practise, and the licensing bodies should protect the public by insisting that every student, before he is allowed to pass, should spend one year at least as a pupil with some private practitioner, where he would get an insight into practice; that would take the conceit out of him, or, rather, it would choke its growth. —I am, etc., J. B. D.

FOOD REFORM JOURNAL.—In reply to "X. Z." (p. 182), the *Food Reform Journal* is published by Messrs. S. W. Partridge and Co., and it may be obtained at the Vegetarian Restaurant, 429, Oxford Street, W. T. G. V.

Dr. DUTTON is thanked for his communication.

THE PARCELS POST, AND THE CARRIAGE OF MEDICINES.

SIR.—I wish to draw the attention of my fellow members to a matter of considerable practical interest, to those of us who, like myself, live in a country village. I refer to the operation of the new parcels post, so far as it concerns the carriage of medicines. As you are aware, letter carriers, and mail cart drivers, have hitherto been allowed to carry medicines for their profit, and the consequence has been, that they have been delivered quickly and cheaply to the great convenience, both of ourselves and our patients. When August 1st arrives, this will be no longer allowed for all parcels, except newspapers, will be obliged to go through the post. The result will be considerable delay, inconvenience and expense. Each bottle of medicine must go to the post town, in many cases passing its destination on the way, and come back again, being delivered with the letters the next day, so that no medicine can be received the day it is sent off, no matter how urgently it may be needed; and many a poor working man after a hard day's work will be obliged to walk several miles to fetch medicine, and many of the poorest will be unable to get what they may most urgently stand in need of. All parcels weighing between 1 and 3 pounds, will be charged 6d. Bottles must be securely packed to go at all, and this will increase the weight. I find an ordinary 8-ounce bottle, corked, and filled with water, weighs 14½ ounces, and a 10-ounce bottle similarly treated, 1 pound 2 ounces. The 8-ounce mixture, with great care in packing, might perhaps go for 3d., but the 10-ounce must be 6d. A poor patient, living six miles from the doctor, would consequently have to pay, in many cases, three times the amount he has now, and would not receive it until the next day. Say, he requires a renewal three times a week, the cost will be at least 1s. 6d., thus a serious tax will be imposed upon him at a time when he is least able to bear it. I hope some influential members of the Association will take the matter up, and urge the Parliamentary Committee to draw the attention of the Postmaster-General to the serious inconvenience and loss to the public which will result, and urge upon him the withdrawal of the prohibition. Surely it would be as reasonable to make an exception in favour of medicines, as it would be in the case of newspapers, and less likely to be abused.—I am, sir, yours faithfully, CHARLES J. MYERS.

North Somercotes, Great Grimsby, June 23rd, 1883.

SIR.—The danger of a bottle breaking and spoiling articles appears to be the foundation of the objection to postmen carrying medicine. If that be all, then it is simple for each parcel-van to have a strong box, lined and padded, for carrying bottles of medicine only.—Yours truly, A MEMBER.

SIR.—Would any member of the British Medical Association kindly favour me with the following particulars? The capacity of Gambetta's skull; the measurements of the skull; and the weight of his brain.—Yours faithfully, G. HOULTON BISHOP.

1, Oxford Mansions, London, June 20th, 1883.

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BOOKS, ETC., RECEIVED.

Transactions of the Sanitary Institute of Great Britain. Vol. IV. Congress at Newcastle-upon-Tyne. 1882-3. London: offices of the Sanitary Institute, 9, Conduit Street, W.; Edward Stanford, 55, Charing Cross, W.C. 1883.

Brain Rest. By J. Leonard Corning, M.D. New York: G. P. Putnam and Sons. 1883.

The International Encyclopedia of Surgery; A Systematic Treatise on the Theory and Practice of Surgery, by authors of various nations. Edited by John Ashhurst, Junior, M.D. Illustrated with Chromo-Lithographs and Woodcuts. In six vols. Vol. III. London: Macmillan and Co. 1883.

The Medical and Surgical History of the War of the Rebellion. Part III. Volume II. Surgical History. Prepared under the direction of Joseph Barnes. By George A. Otis and D. L. Huntington. Washington: Government Printing Office. 1883.

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