But times are changing. In the appointment of medical officers of health, we see some members of the profession employed to prevent the disease by which the others gain their living. The causes of disease are being closely investigated and generally discussed, and steps are being taken in various ways to give instruction to the laity on the means of preserving health. And no one seems to see that all this is surely cutting the ground from under the feet of the extensively educated and greatly underpaid practitioner. How long will he stand passive while the bread is being taken from his mouth? Is it not high time to consider how he can best adapt himself to the altered circumstances of the times, and maintain together the usefulness and the embluments of his profession? ness and the emoluments of his profession?

But we cannot hope to do so unless the prevention of disease be henceforth But we cannot hope to do so unless the prevention of disease be henceforth recognised as one of the functions—and, in course of time, the principal one—of the ordinary medical practitioner. Every medical man in general practice would then be a medical officer of health, and all would work in harmony. In this way, his usefulness would be perpetuated, and he would be as indispensable as ever. But obviously he cannot afford to work in this way, so long as he is paid according to the usual custom. There is private hygiene as well as public hygiene. In preserving the health of the individual, there is plenty of scope for the private practitioner; but, before he can be expected to direct his energies into this channel, he must be paid to keep his clients well. The advice and instruction which enable a man to avoid disease are worth far more than the advice which is intended to cure him, and so often necessarily fails; and it is for us to teach the public that cure him, and so often necessarily fails; and it is for us to teach the public that important truth.

How, then, can the doctor exercise this function? By making an agreement

How, then, can the doctor exercise this function? By making an agreement with his clients for a definite sum fer annum, varying in amount, within certain limits, according to their pecuniary resources, and the more or less onerous nature of the duties undertaken by him. Let this fee cover a certain number of visits or consultations in a year, irrespective of the client's condition as to health; it being understood that, should more attendance be required by actual illness or otherwise, it will be covered by the fee agreed upon. Midwifery, the treatment of fractures and dislocations, and serious injuries resulting from accident, and all surgical operations involving much trouble, or requiring special skill, would be considered extras, to be paid for as the patient pleases, or thinks he can afford.

Let me suppose a case. The father of a family, for himself, his wife, and two children, agrees to pay two guineas a year for four quarterly visits. The medical history of each individual of the family having first been ascertained and noted, the attendant will, from time to time, inquire into the sanitary condition of the house and its surroundings, and the state of health of the inmates, not only at the time of his visit, but as it has been in the interval. While talking on these matters, he will not only learn much that will guide and help him in future possible illnesses, but he will detect unwholesome habits and circumstances before they can have done much harm. At the same time, he will answer any questions that may be put to will not only learn much that will guide and help him in future possible illnesses, but he will detect unwholesome habits and circumstances before they can have dome much harm. At the same time, he will answer any questions that may be put to him on those vital affairs which it concerns every one to be acquainted with, and on which every well educated medical man is able to give information. Thus, by "line upon line, precept upon precept, here a little and there a little", he will be able, far more completely and efficiently than is at present possible, to instruct and enlighten, warn and direct, to the preservation of health and the saving of life. And in another way these visits will be useful. It is a familiar fact in medical experience that many ailments that seem unimportant are neglected because they are thought too trifling to require the doctor's aid; or, from motives of economy, the patients are unwilling to apply for skilled advice. Many of these cases are, no doubt, really trifling; but many, on the contrary, are of serious import, and, if neglected or improperly treated, may be followed by the gravest consequences. According to the present custom, these ailments do not, but by the merest accident, come under medical observation till the golden opportunity is lost, and an intractable disease has been established. Under the system I am advocating, this result could hardly happen. The system of medical clubs, which have long been in existence, is obviously an approximation to the plan I now propose; but, in these, the understanding between the doctor and the members is that the latter only pay for and receive attendance and advice in actual sickness. Now, judging from the usual routine of club practice, the profession generally hardly seems to be aware that it is both the duty and the interest of the doctor to dispel this crude idea of his work and usefulness. Here, and here alone, the doctor is withaily paid for keeping his clients well; and it is not a little curious that, although club members do no practitioner were to become less a druggist and more a teacher, his status would be raised, his usefulness and influence increased; while, under the system I propose, his pay would certainly not be diminished. But the practitioner who is fortunate enough to have a club connection need not wait for these coming developments to exercise this function of prevention. So far as his club patients are concerned, it is, as I have said, his interest to do so; and I can say, from some experience, that it will well repay him for his trouble; and he will find that the more instruction he it will well repay him for his trouble; and he will find that the more instruction he gives on the causes of disease, and the means of avoiding them, the less will be the need for the administration of drugs. It is true that, in order to be able to give this instruction with much effect, he must pay far more attention to the subject of causation than the curriculum of the schools and the routine of general practice has hitherto required; but, if he continually keep before him in his dealings with the sick the question of the causes of their illness, he will, at the end of twelve months, be able to give preventive advice to an extent which he had never supposed to be nessible. to be possible.

The employment of the doctor in systematic efforts to prevent disease would be of benefit in various ways not yet referred to, but notably in this. Our knowledge of the causes of disease and their modes of operation is, though certainly improving, far from perfect; and the only wonder is that, under such a régime as the present, far from perfect; and the only wonder is that, under such a regime as the present, we have come to know so much. When the doctor has no professional interest in the prevention of disease, he cannot be expected to devote much time and trouble to the solution of the complicated problems of causation. No wonder, therefore, that, as Dr. H. Bennet recently deplored (although he strangely failed to see the reason or the remedy), physiology is still so much neglected by the medical practitioner. But, to employ him in the manner I have indicated, would stimulate him to investigation and reflection; much in this department would be observed and noted that now escapes detection; every practitioner would be encouraged to contribute data; and, if this were done under an organised system, which would then become as easy as it is at present difficult, those generalisations that are now wanting in the science of causation would be arrived at with more certainty and speed, and the art of prevention would undergo a correspondingly rapid development.

Space forbids my entering more fully into this important subject here. Elsewhere I hope to do so soon. But I think I have said enough to show that it is worthy of immediate and serious attention. If disease be really preventable to anything like the extent which sanitarians believe, the present limitation in the work of the medical practitioner is nothing better than a relic of primitive barbarism.—I am, etc.,

W. F. PHILLIPS.

Phosphorus as a Preventive of Congenital Malformation.

Str.—The following case seems worthy of notice. A young married lady applied to me to attend her in her confinement. The child, when born, was puny, feeble, never breathed properly, or took proper nourishment. It died in a few days. A second pregnancy ensued; the child of this delivery had terrible convulsive attacks from a few days after birth until its death, at the age of over a year. Its feet were clubbed, its hands twisted, and its spinal column hopelessly curved. A third pregnancy and delivery took place; this third child had hare-lip, cleft palate, club-feet, twists of the hands on to the forearm, in addition to spinal curvature. It lived, if I remember rightly, over a year. The poor mother came to tell me the dread news of her fourth pregnancy. Happening at the time to be much exercised in my mind, on account of an annoying fallure I had had in selection or in luck in the breed of horses, I had been reading every available treatise thereupon, and was greedy for every scrap of information. In an American veterinary note, I saw that a farmer down West had used phosphorus, with marked success, as a medicine given throughout pregnancy to mares who threw malformed foals. I immediately put my patient on a combination of phosphorus and quinine, made by Messrs. Kirby and Co. of Newman Street. She took the pills regularly thrice daily, and a healthy girl was born, when the pills were discontinued. Soon after the confinement, my patient told me she "missed the phosphorus dreadfully"; and, there being no sign of milk, I sanctioned the resuming of it, and lactation speedily supervened. This child throve well until it caught whooping-cough, when it nearly died from the most severe attack of that malady which I have seen in a child so young; but that it possessed stamina sufficient to withstand the disease (and, perhaps, the treatment, for we left no stone unturned), speaks volumes for its vital power. And, yesterday, a healthy child was again born to her (a son PHOSPHORUS AS A PREVENTIVE OF CONGENITAL MALFORMATION. pernaps, the treatment, for we left no stone unturned), speaks volumes for its vital power. And, yesterday, a healthy child was again born to her (a son), after nine continuous months of phosphorus, which, rightly or wrongly, I accredit with having prevailed upon Nature to change the type in this instance. These are the bare facts which seem to me worthy of this much record. To many, no doubt, they will be trite enough, and all may have expected such a result. I was one of those sceptics who "expected nothing", and was anything but disappointed.—Your obedient servant,

A COUNTRY DOCTOR.

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REVIEWS & NOTICES.

HASSALL (A. H., M.D.) San Remo and the Western Riviera 781 Rondor (Dr. L.) Des Gangrènes Spontanées ... ib.

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Fry's Malted Cocoa.— Symington's Essences of Coffee.—Lawley's Surgical Pocket-Case . . . 782

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.. 782 SURGERY PATHOLOGY ...

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THE WEEK, Miscellaneous.—Dwellings of the Poor. — Milk-Typhoid. — Typhoid Fever at Haverbordwest.—The Meeting of the Association in Cambridge.—Metropolitan Water-supply.—Typhoid Fever at Newlyn East.—Medical Riffemen.—Pathological Demonstrations.—Scaplating and Universitions. Medical Killemen.—Patnological Permonstrations. — Scarlatina and Unsanitary Conditions.—Royal Bounty.—School Punishments.—Eau de Seltz.—Nephro-lithotomy.—The Seamen's Hospital Society.— Certification of Causes of Death.—Antiseptic Treatment of Absorption of the Liver. ment of Abscess of the Liver .. ib. THE WEEK. SCOTLAND .. 790 THE WEEK. IRELAND ..

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