

THE MEDICAL CONGRESS.

SIR.—*Apropos* of the awards of the Medical Congress, we wish to lay before you a grievance peculiar to ourselves, but which we have not hitherto made public, having been in correspondence with the Secretary of the Exhibition Committee, Mr. M. H. Judge. Until recently, we hoped that the injustice of which we complain would have been remedied without the necessity of our referring it to the powerful, though informal, arbitration of the medical press. The Secretary's reply to our letter of the 8th ultmo absolves us from this reticence, inasmuch as we informed him that, failing some satisfactory answer to our complaint, we should lay the matter before you.

Our grievance differs from that of Messrs. Burroughs and Wellcome, and other exhibitors, inasmuch as we do not complain that our manufactures were examined and then deemed unworthy of commendation (in which case we should have submitted, albeit with reluctance, justified by the fact that, on every occasion when we have exhibited, we have received awards of merit—*i.e.*, Paris 1867, Dublin 1868, Vienna 1873, London 1873, Brussels 1876); our complaint is that, although we complied with every condition laid down by the committee, and were personally represented by one of ourselves during the entire two days officially set apart for the examination of exhibits by the judges, *our exhibit was not examined*, and consequently no adjudication could have been made upon its merits.

Subsequently, we have offered repeatedly to attend at any time and place to submit the same articles we exhibited to any authorised tribunal, but have been refused the opportunity, being informed that the decision of the judges was final, and could not be reopened.

We submit these facts, which are easy of proof, and contend that we have not been fairly treated. The entire correspondence is at your disposal, and we respectfully invite your opinion thereon, as we cannot without protest submit to that which appears to us an injustice.—We are, sir, yours obediently,

SALT AND SON, Anatomical Mechanicians to H. R. H. the Prince of Wales.
21, Bull Street, Birmingham, December 6th, 1881.

A MEMBER (Wimbledon).—The suspected man is not a member of the London College of Surgeons.

RAILWAY ACCIDENTS AND SOME OF THEIR CAUSES.

SIR.—A verdict of manslaughter has been brought against the pointsman who turned the wrong signal in the late lamentable railway accident at Blackburn. I do not know whether the pointsman in question was similarly circumstanced as the same class of persons in other places, but I think it is very probable that he was. Having been fairly well acquainted with many railway servants for nearly twenty years, I feel sure that both the service and the wages of these men are incompatible with a due discharge of their respective offices. To prove these assertions, I will instance one case. A pointsman is on uninterrupted duty for twelve hours out of the twenty-four. Every alternate week, he is employed in the day, the intermediate weeks in the night, the average number of trains *per diem* (twenty-four hours) being eighty. When the change of time comes from day to night, about two out of three changes are made by a third man. When the alteration is made without assistance, it is effected by the person off duty returning two hours sooner to work each change until the usual hour arrives. Whilst a pointsman is on duty, he is more or less cabined in an oblong room, usually having a basement of from six to twelve yards square, the walls mainly made of glass, and, therefore, soon affected by atmospheric influences. The prospect from these places is generally dull and depressing; it always includes a dark road relieved by steel stripes, bricks and mortar abound, and sometimes not much besides the sky. These men are not put in their places to study astronomy or to admire the beautiful in nature; this is one reason I object to long hours in such monotonous places. The men at the station with which I am well acquainted receive twenty-two shillings per week. One has a wife and four little children to maintain; and, when he has paid for rent, rates, coal, gas, clubs, school-fees, etc., he does well if he has eighteen shillings left, or three shillings for each member of the family to subsist on for a week.

The pointsman at Blackburn admitted that he had turned the wrong signal. Can it be astonishing that he did? The wonder to my mind is not that there are so many, but so few, wrong signals turned. Who amongst us, who are more favourably circumstanced, in healthy exercise, wholesome and memory-sustaining food, is not absent-minded betimes? What absurd sayings and doings are sometimes said and done, both in public and private places, by the wisest and cleverest men. Why, then, should a railway official, who is surrounded by a variety of depressing causes, not be more liable to a lapse of memory than the majority of mankind? Engine-drivers and stokers are much exposed to the evil influences of our very changeable climate; these changes frequently disturb the circulation considerably, and through it the memory. Year by year, as the temperature declines, it is not uncommon to read in newspapers "the railway accident season has set in". To what can we ascribe these reiterated remarks, except to climatic change, favoured, in some cases, by unusual constitutional susceptibility to atmospheric vicissitudes, and by unsuitable food and drink? A few of these men are sometimes drunk when on duty, and not unfrequently somewhat under alcoholic influence. There are, I think, relatively fewer accidents by railway travelling than by any other mode of locomotion; but there ought to be fewer than there are. About six years since, I was in a collision; the company had to compensate a number of persons, but no report of the accident appeared in the papers, although it occurred at the junction of one of the largest cities in the kingdom, and a very large borough (Salford). Twenty-five years since, I could have given the signs and symptoms of concussion; I am utterly unable to describe what I then felt, or what since, at varying intervals, I have suffered.

The Darwinian doctrine of selection from the fittest fails in the choice of railway servants. If a man can say shibboleth, especially in one of the smaller sects, he is the sort to be selected; or, if he have a relative or friend who has influence with one in authority, that is too often considered an important qualification for the office. Directors are blamable for this state of things; but, so long as false economy continues, it will prevail.

Assuming the above to be a fair account of what it professes to describe—and I am not conscious of having overstated anything or drawn any wrong inferences—for our own happiness and life, as well as for the benefit of all connected with the efficient working of our railways, would the following suggestions, hastily put together, be unsuitable? 1. Railway officials, who have to have a direct or indirect control over human life, should be selected from men of good morals and healthy constitutions. 2. They should work shorter time. 3. They should be paid higher wages than is now the custom. 4. They should have every facility for keeping the body in health; when sick, they should receive medical attendance, etc., free, and their wages should continue for a certain time. 5. Old and valuable servants should be pensioned.—I am, etc.,

Brackley Park, Bolton.

GEORGE GREGORY, M.D.

TREATMENT OF DIABETES.

SIR.—I think we may conclude that Dr. Murrell's carefully prepared report upon Bethesda as a remedial agent in diabetes is, upon the whole, encouraging; for we find that when the water was given with a restricted diet the average of the first twelve and sixteen days showed the amount of saccharine matter to have been reduced by nearly one-half. Dr. Murrell admits his patient had been a sufferer as well from "recent pericarditis", "pulmonary tubercle", and kidney mischief; therefore it is evident he was in a very precarious state of health from the first. I have prescribed the water to several persons suffering from diabetes, with marked benefit, and several of my medical friends have done the same with the like good results. In all cases where there is a congestive condition of the digestive organs I have found it a most valuable therapeutic agent; and possibly by relieving the hyperaemic condition of the liver in diabetes, it may thus modify its sugar-producing function. I would like, however, to hear further evidence from others who have tried it in practice.—I am, sir, yours obediently,

HARVEY J. PHILPOT.

35, Warwick Road, Maida Vale, W., November 29th, 1881.

MR. J. WILSON.—*The New York Medical Record* is published by Messrs. Wood and Co., of New York.

TREATMENT OF GANGLION BY MEDICINE.

SIR.—Can any member give me his experience of having treated a ganglion by the use of medicine? A lady lately came to me with a small ganglion on the dorsal aspect of the right wrist, of about a month's standing. I tried continued pressure by means of a coin for three weeks; but as no improvement resulted, I determined upon puncturing it. This I attempted with an exploring needle, and failed, as I imagined I would, for want of a suitable instrument. However, just before this, my patient came across a lady friend who had also suffered in this way, and had been induced to try some pills made up by a chemist. I felt certain that it was only some quackery; but was much surprised when the lady showed me her hand without the ganglion after four days' internal treatment.—Yours, etc.,

A. T.

A MEMBER had better read up the subject of external applications of nœvi with an approved modern handbook, and then frame his question a little more definitely, as, in its present form, it seems to betoken a want of knowledge of the methods of treatment generally in vogue.

TRANSATLANTIC MEDICAL LAWS.

"IN Maine", says the *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*, "they have a law that no medical student shall be allowed to graduate and practice medicine who has not had regular practice in the dissecting room. Then they passed a law that no bodies, save only the bodies of executed criminals, should be cut up in dissecting rooms. Then, as a climax to all this, they abolished capital punishment. That's the kind of a country Maine is. This is like the County Commissioners who passed the following resolutions:—1. Resolved, That we build a new jail; 2. That we build the new jail out of the materials in the old jail; 3. Resolved, That we use the old jail until the new jail is finished."

ERRATUM.—In the article on "The Bacillus of Typhoid Fever", in the JOURNAL for November 26th, an explanation of the woodcut was omitted. On referring to the engraving, the relative size of the bacilli will be appreciated by comparing them with the lymph-corpuscles shown in the same field, in which *a* represents a lymph-corpuscle, *b* a bacillus, and *c* a bacillus undergoing division.

COMMUNICATIONS, LETTERS, etc., have been received from:—

Dr. Thomson, Luton; Mr. F. W. Lowndes, Liverpool; A Member; Dr. Saundby, Birmingham; Mr. W. Prowse, Cambridge; Dr. S. Rees Philips, Exeter; Dr. G. Hunter Mackenzie, Edinburgh; Dr. T. G. Atkins, Cork; Mr. A. Reade, Chester; Dr. C. E. Glascott, Manchester; Our Dublin Correspondent; Mr. Lewis H. Jones, London; Dr. Sutherland, London; Mr. A. H. Boys, Pill; Dr. F. E. Pocock, London; Dr. R. W. Burnett, London; Dr. A. T. Brett, Watford; C. J. H.; Mr. W. D. Steele, Abergavenny; Mr. W. T. Angove, Mildenhall; Mr. C. G. Wheelhouse, Leeds; Mr. Dacre Fox, Manchester; Dr. Greenhow, Weybridge; Mr. A. Slater, London; Dr. Robert Kirk, Glasgow; Mr. Francis Vacher, Birkenhead; Mr. Lennox Browne, London; Dr. Douglas MacLagan, Edinburgh; Mr. S. Wellesley Coombs, Worcester; An Old Practitioner; Dr. A. Samelson, Manchester; Mr. N. Stevenson, London; Mr. W. T. Grant, Birmingham; Dr. W. Strange, Worcester; L. S. A.; Mr. D. R. Jones, Carmarthen; Mr. J. P. Edwards, Tunstall; Mr. Louis H. Tossill, Exeter; M.D.; Dr. J. Bryan, Northampton; Dr. E. Markham Skerritt, Clifton; Mr. W. W. Morris, East Bridgford; Sanitas; Dr. Bushell Annisong, Cambridge; Dr. J. H. Aveling, London; Dr. J. S. Bristow, London; Dr. Sawyer, Birmingham; Our Glasgow Correspondent; Dr. J. Rogers, London; Mr. J. Le Page, Durham; Our Edinburgh Correspondent; etc.

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