

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

CHOLERA AND THE WATER THEORY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The remarkable case which Professor Rolleston publishes in THE LANCET of September 2nd, in support of his opinion that cholera may appear in an epidemic form under circumstances which preclude all possibility of the virus being communicated through water, calls for notice from those who have experience of sanitary matters in India. Notwithstanding the high authority on which the case is given, the facts appear to me to be of a very doubtful character, and altogether insufficient to prove the opinion Professor Rolleston founds on them.

In the first place, the Governor of Jamaica, Sir John Peter (not Sir Patrick) Grant, was never employed in Madras, and had nothing whatever to do with the movement of Madras troops. He was formerly a Bengal civilian, and his whole Indian service was spent in the Bengal Presidency. The officer referred to by Professor Pettenkofer was, no doubt, Sir Patrick Grant, who was Commander-in-Chief in Madras in 1857.

It is strange that this very remarkable case should come to us for the first time through a German channel, for unless I am greatly mistaken it has never been reported in any Indian journal or official report. Dr. Macnamara, who appears to have gone through the whole of the Indian cholera literature, does not refer to it in his admirable treatise on cholera, nor do the Constantinople conference or the Royal Commission on the sanitary state of the Indian army appear to have heard of it.

It is quite possible, however, that Sir Patrick Grant may have issued the order in question; but Professor Rolleston can hardly realise the difficulty there would be in carrying out the experiment with anything approaching to completeness in a country like India, where a mussack made of a goat's skin is the vessel in universal use for distributing water. I would ask, did Sir Patrick Grant provide "an abundant supply of water from healthy districts" for the camp followers of the detachment, who, as I presume the troops were Europeans, must have been pretty numerous? The probabilities are that the camp followers were allowed to drink the water of "the valley of the shadow of death," and that that water was conveyed to them in the very mussacks which supplied the troops. And if so, the imported water would necessarily become infected by the valley water.

I hope that some medical officers who have served in Madras will have the goodness to state whether they know of any valley on the Madras and Bangalore road which answers to Professor Pettenkofer's description, and in which, if troops halted a few hours, they always had an outbreak of cholera as the consequence. Also, whether they have heard of the order attributed to Sir Patrick Grant, and if so, whether they can give a detailed account of the arrangements made for carrying it into effect. It is very desirable that this case should be thoroughly sifted. If Professor Pettenkofer's account of it prove correct, it will no doubt thicken the mystery which at present enshrouds cholera, but it is well we should know the truth.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Kingstown, September 2nd, 1871.

A. C. C. DE RENZY.

POOR-LAW REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Poor Law reformers who have been watching earnestly what would be the first move consequent on the consolidation of departments in the Local Government Board, will learn with much satisfaction that Mr. Gladstone has selected Mr. John Lambert, C.B., as permanent secretary, and those of us who have, during long years, had to encounter the persistent obstructiveness of the permanent chief of the defunct Poor-law Board will not be sorry to

learn that that official has at last been relegated to private life. Verily, the medical reformer, the economist in general relief expenditure, and the humane advocate of just and generous treatment of our sick poor, have severally reason to rejoice and be glad.

But it is not to the amalgamation of departments and the selection of an efficient permanent chief that I would specially direct attention; my object in addressing you is to briefly comment on some parts of the last report of the Poor-law Board, which, in many respects, is more interesting to the medical service than any which I have ever seen. Last year I did my best to expose the manipulation of statistics (to suit a purpose), and the gross misrepresentations which the report of 1870 contained. This year it has been compiled more truthfully, and some parts of the appendix will well repay perusal. Thus it appears that last autumn Mr. Goschen directed three of the inspectors to investigate the subject of out-door medical relief. The report of Mr. Farnall (for several years the metropolitan inspector) affords a series of most interesting statistics on several matters relating to medical relief in the counties of which he is at present inspector. Indeed, I may state that he has treated the subject in the most exhaustive manner. His conclusions, therefore, are entitled to, and will doubtlessly receive, the respectful consideration of guardians and the public. He strongly advises "that it should be incumbent on every board of guardians in his district to establish a sufficient number of dispensaries in each union, to provide competent dispensers, and medicines of the best quality"; and further, "that the guardians should also supply all drugs for the sick poor in the work-houses." This opinion of Mr. Farnall is not recently formed. Ten years ago, when I was about to give evidence before the Select Committee on Poor Relief, he asked me what would be the points of my evidence, and on stating the provision of all drugs by the guardians, he not only fully concurred in its advisability, but put into the hands of the chairman, Mr. C. Villiers, some heads of questions which enabled that gentleman to draw me out properly, and the recommendation as to the supply of expensive medicines by guardians resulted from it. How Mr. Henry Fleming delayed the issue of that recommendation has been already exposed in your columns. Reverting to Mr. Farnall I here state my conviction that if that gentleman had not been driven out of the metropolis by the obstructives of the permanent staff, because he had expressed views in favour of considerable changes, now in process of being worked out, his local knowledge and considerable administrative capacity would have saved the London ratepayers thousands of pounds, recklessly expended in bricks and mortar; and unquestionably we should not have had to wait so long ere the dispensary clauses of Mr. Hardy's Act had been brought generally into operation. But to continue. Mr. Peel, I find, states that it would be "practicable to establish dispensaries in thinly populated unions, as well as in large towns; but that it would be attended with considerable expense, and it might be contended that their establishment would have a prejudicial effect upon all medical clubs." To this I make reply that the experience in Ireland shows that their general introduction, in both town and country, has led to a diminution of expenditure; and as regards their anticipated injury to the club system, I have yet to learn that any provision exists under that system for medical attendance on other than the male head of the family. Still, though he thus damns the subject with faint praise, the tone of his report is in favour of this reform.

Mr. Cane, whose remarkable evidence before the Select Committee in 1861 gave a majority of that body an opportunity of reporting "that medical relief was satisfactorily administered, and required no amendment," and whose misstatements were subsequently fully exposed by poor Richard Griffin, lets out "that what has been done in his district to extend the dispensary system has arisen from voluntary action on the part of the local authorities, and that little direct official support and encouragement has been afforded." I have yet to learn that there has ever been any.

It is, however, in the recognition of the value of medical attendance, and its bearing on the increase or diminution of pauperism, according as it is or is not efficient, that this report as a whole is to be commended; and it is an

augury of eventual success when we find the admission "that the co-operation of the guardians in the formation of dispensaries has been, in nearly all cases, readily obtained as soon as the objects to be obtained by them had been placed clearly before them." It will be in the execution of this latter that Mr. Lambert's appointment will be so valuable.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Dean-street, Soho, Sept. 19th, 1871.

JOSEPH ROGERS.

TREATMENT OF TETANUS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Some cases of lock-jaw having been reported lately ending fatally, as they almost invariably do, I think the following case of successful treatment may be interesting and worth recording in your journal:—

Stephen K—, aged fifty, farm-labourer, had his left thumb severely crushed about two months since by the fall of a heavy plank of timber, lacerating the flesh, and nearly tearing off the nail. He applied poultices, and, as it appeared to be going on very well, tried to continue his work, feeling, as he describes it, "a curious sensation all along his spine such as he never felt before." After some days lock-jaw set in, and I was sent for. I found him in bed, propped up and leaning forward, with symptoms of emprosthotonos. The jaws were firmly locked; muscles of the face, throat, and neck rigid and contracted; pulse small, quick, and very irregular; skin dry; rigors frequent, with cold extremities; great tenderness along the spinal cord, more particularly over the cervical vertebrae.

Having previously seen a few cases of that formidable disease, and read of others treated with the various forms of opium, belladonna, and other narcotics without any good result, every case terminating in death, I considered that line of treatment waste of time. Having noticed the power of bromide of ammonia over nervous affections implicating the spine, I determined to try it in large doses. The patient having lost the greater number of his side teeth, liquids were introduced, although deglutition was extremely difficult. I commenced with the following mixture:—Bromide of ammonia, half a drachm; spirits of chloroform, one drachm; camphor mixture, an ounce and a half: every four hours. After twenty-four hours there was just a perceptible improvement. I increased the dose of bromide of ammonia and spirits of chloroform one-third more, every four hours, as before. After forty-eight hours the skin began to act powerfully; the sheeting, blankets, and bed were completely saturated. The perspiration being free from the slightest acidity, differed in that respect from the perspiration of rheumatic fever. Still there was no relaxation of jaws or muscles, and he was unable to lie down. I persevered steadily, getting in as much nourishment as possible. There was great obstinacy of bowels, another feature of this disease, requiring twenty grains of jalapine, combined with the same quantity of scammony, every morning, to produce one evacuation. I occasionally added five grains of calomel. After eight days the jaws and muscles were slightly relaxed, but did not admit of his lying down. After two weeks the relaxation was complete; he could open his mouth, but had no power of mastication for several days. I had tried galvanism, producing spasmodic twitchings of the facial muscles, but cannot say it was of much use. Of course there was extreme prostration after the attack was subdued. Quinine, portwine, &c. &c., overcame that, and this week he has resumed his employment.

I am, Sir, very truly yours,

Watford, Herts, August 29th, 1871.

P. O. H. BRADY.

WESTMINSTER HOSPITAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It having been stated in the *British Medical Journal* of the 16th inst. that the site of the Westminster Hospital has been claimed by the Government, we are desirous, in the interests of that institution and of the medical school attached to it, to make it known that such statement is entirely unfounded.

A rumour of this kind, circulated at this particular period of the year, is not only likely to prove damaging to the funds of the hospital, but is calculated also to mislead those who are about to commence their medical studies in London. Both governors and lecturers therefore would be greatly obliged by your insertion of this letter.

We are, Sir, your most obedient servants,

F. J. WILSON,
Secretary of the Westminster Hospital,
OCTAVIUS STURGES, M.D.,
Dean of the School.

September 20th, 1871.

BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

THE health of the town is improving. The death-rate stands this year at 28, as against 32 per 1000 during the week ending Sept. 2nd. The mortality among infants from diarrhoea is still very great, and amounted to upwards of 50 per cent. of infants under one year of age. Small-pox seems to be leaving us, not one death having been registered from that disease.

Dr. James Sawyer, late house-physician at the Queen's Hospital, has been appointed junior physician to that institution—a well-merited preferment, and a just recognition of the industry and ability displayed by Dr. Sawyer during his tenure of the former office for a period of three years.

The Birmingham Lying-in Charity seems to have lost somewhat of its popularity since its cases have been entirely attended by midwives. Its subscription list has fallen off considerably, and now two out of three of its medical officers have resigned. These vacancies are to be filled up on October 5th, and Dr. Savage and another gentleman, two of the surgeons of the newly established Hospital for Diseases of Women, are spoken of as likely to receive the votes of the majority of the governors. One paragraph of the advertisement has the aspect of singularity. After enumerating the various legal qualifications candidates may possess, and which are of the widest and most liberal character, it goes on to say: "Further, they shall give satisfactory evidence of possessing a competent knowledge of midwifery." How this evidence is to be obtained is not said; possibly a "jury of matrons" may be empaneled to decide the question, or a competitive examination may be instituted by the sole remaining surgeon of the charity. Any how, such a regulation seems absurd and unnecessary, for it is irrational to suppose that the governors would appoint any gentleman whose obstetric experience was not of a widely extended character, or whose reputation as a practitioner of this special department of the profession was not thoroughly established.

The special meeting of the British Medical Association, called for the purpose of electing secretaries and treasurers to the forthcoming annual meeting of the Association at Birmingham, unanimously appointed Dr. Foster and Mr. Bartleet, respectively physician and surgeon of the General Hospital, and Mr. West, senior surgeon of the Queen's Hospital, joint secretaries; and Mr. Thomas Taylor and Mr. S. A. Bindley joint treasurers. No definite arrangements were made as to who should give the addresses in Medicine and Surgery, but it was generally considered probable that Dr. Fleming would be invited by the Branch Council to give the address in Medicine, and Mr. Oliver Pemberton that in Surgery.

The recent bazaar for the Midland Counties Idiot Asylum at Knowle proved a great success, and resulted in a net profit of more than £1000.

The Act for punishing those who wilfully expose themselves while suffering from small-pox has recently been called into operation here; a man being fined 10s. and costs for travelling hither from Sheffield, a distance of eighty-five miles, in spite of his pleading ignorance of the law, and of his being at the time he started the subject of small-pox. It is to be feared that this law is too often evaded, and that thus contagious diseases extend themselves to a great degree; and therefore the Aston Board of Guardians, who undertook the prosecution in this case, deserve the thanks of the community for their energetic action in the matter. Mr. Hayward, the recently-appointed