

his or her "marriage lines" are considered. Thus beyond dogging through life the footsteps of the unvaccinated with sundry disabilities, no penalties or pains would be necessary.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully.

South Godstone, Surrey, May 23rd, 1898.

F. W. WRIGHT.

"THE MEDICO-LEGAL ASPECT OF CREMATION."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Engrossing matters at a distance from home have prevented my seeing the leading article on the above subject in THE LANCET of May 14th till to-day, when it is, of course, too late to offer you any observations on it of a nature to be available for your issue of May 21st. Nor, to say the truth, is it at the present moment very clear to me how, without a greater expenditure of time and energy than have been left to me, I can hope to add anything very material to the three letters which within the last few months I have addressed to the editor of the *Times*. At the same time there is something which I cannot—or rather which I will not—say to the editor of the *Times* which I can and which I will, if you will only give me room for it, say to you. In the whole course of a long life I have held and doubtless shall continue to hold that a public newspaper is not the place in which to discuss matters of a purely professional and technical nature—matters of which neither the editor nor his readers can be competent judges, and whose influence therefore it is only possible to purchase by highly-coloured statements or by arguments which appeal rather to their prejudices than their judgment. For the moment I will say no more.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

F. SEYMOUR HADEN.

Woodcote Manor, Alresford, May 18th, 1898.

BUBONIC PLAGUE AND CATTLE DISEASE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the following brief statement of facts I should like to call attention to some coincidences which seem to me to show that diseased meat is one of the factors in the dissemination and causation of plague. Previously to the epidemics of plague in Hong-Kong in 1894 and 1896 an outbreak of rinderpest occurred amongst the cattle at the Hong-Kong dairy farm. In like manner this year an outbreak of rinderpest occurred at the dairy farm, following an epidemic of foot-and-mouth disease, which prevailed in November and December last in all the dairy farms of the colony, native and European. In connexion with this see Brigade-Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel Weir's report on the epidemic of plague in Bombay, quoted in THE LANCET of Feb. 26th, page 602.

In 1896 an epidemic occurred amongst the pigs which arrived here from Pakhoi. Pork, it should be explained (sun-dried pork), is one of the staple foods of the Chinese. Dr. Wilson and myself examined several pigs that died from the epidemic and the symptoms were almost identical with those of rinderpest in cattle. We obtained a diplococcus from the spleen, mesenteric glands, and blood of these pigs almost identical with the pest bacillus in man. Similarly this year I have found a like bacillus in the nasal mucus, spleen, and mesenteric glands of cattle that were killed on account of rinderpest. Of course, I know that this theory at present is not proven sufficiently, but any facts that present themselves, like these I now adduce, appear to me to bear forcibly on the etiology of this prevalent disease. Next mail I will forward you specimens of the original bacillus obtained from the rinderpest carcasses and cultures to the third generation of this bacillus in agar bouillon.

There are many cases of rinderpest in Canton just now. At a dairy kept in the Shameen (the European settlement of Canton), where there are 32 head of cattle (Alderneys, Guernseys, and half-breeds), an outbreak of rinderpest has occurred within the last two weeks, the result being that up to the present time 13 animals have been attacked and 4 have died.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. M. ATKINSON, M.B. Lond., M.R.C.S. Eng.,

Principal Civil Medical Officer and President of the Sanitary Board.

Hong-Kong, April 9th, 1898.

MEDICAL QUALIFICATIONS AND TITLES IN GERMANY.

(FROM OUR BERLIN CORRESPONDENT.)

IN THE LANCET of April 16th, p. 1069, there was an annotation to the effect that after the commencement of next winter session the German Universities would only confer the degree of M.D. on candidates who had already passed the State examination and thereby become legally qualified to practise medicine. As the laws on medical qualification and examination in Germany are quite different from those in England a few particulars on the subject may be of interest to the readers of THE LANCET. In 1867 the various laws and regulations concerning the practice of medicine which were in force in the different States of the then North German Confederation (Prussia, Saxony, &c.) were replaced by a uniform system applicable to the whole Confederation, the provisions of which were included in the *Gewerbe-Ordnung* (trade-law). In 1871, when the German Empire was founded, this law was extended also to the southern States (Bavaria, &c.) and is now an Imperial law for the whole of Germany. Since this time unqualified practice has not been illegal, anybody being at liberty to give medical advice; but in order that the public might be able to distinguish between practitioners who had received a medical education and those who had not the State instituted a system of examinations of its own, the successful candidates at which receive certificates of "approbation," as they are termed, and thereby become legally qualified medical practitioners. Candidates for this certificate must for their ordinary school education spend nine years in a German *gymnasium* and must pass the *Abiturienten-examen* in general science, after which they study medicine for four and a half years at a university. After the end of the curriculum, in the course of which there is a preliminary examination in anatomy, physiology, botany, &c.—the so-called *tentamen physicum*—the candidate may apply for "approbation," and is thereupon examined by the commissioners appointed by the Government. These commissioners, although they hold examinations in university towns, are not necessarily university professors, but may be any other medical men, such as hospital physicians and surgeons, Government medical officers, &c., whom the Government sees fit to appoint for the purpose. They are, in fact, Government officials and in their capacity of examiners they are quite independent of the universities. After the candidate has passed the State examination, a description of which would make the present article unduly long, he receives the certificate of "approbation" from that state of the empire to which the university belongs. This certificate is valid throughout the whole Empire and confers on its owner the title of *praktischer Arzt*, which he makes use of for his visiting-cards, for his door-plate, and when he signs a medical certificate. This title enables him to hold appointments, to enter the services, and to practise wherever he likes. A certificate of "approbation" may be revoked if it has been obtained by fraudulent means, but this is the only ground for withdrawing it, and a medical man retains it during his whole life even though he may be convicted of a crime and punished. There is no statutory limit of age for medical practice in Germany, there is no annual sum to be paid as a licence or tax, and the only formality which a man beginning practice has to attend to is that he must personally call on the medical officer of the district, show him his "approbation," and write his signature, which is then communicated to all the licensed chemists and to the police officials of the district. It is a penal offence for any unauthorised person to use the title of *praktischer Arzt* or any other title or description by which the public may be induced to believe that he is a duly qualified medical man. The courts of law have to decide in each individual case whether a description used by an unqualified person is one by which the public may be deceived, and the police are authorised to remove door-plates which are held to be infringements of the statute. It is, of course, very easy to secure the conviction of unqualified practitioners in cases of gross imposture, but many of these individuals are very ingenious in evading the law. It results thus from the above that unqualified practice is not in itself an offence, but only