Correspondence.

"Andi aleram parum." A CONTROLLED STUDY OF SANATORIUM RESULTS.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—I am glad that Dr. Thompson Campbell has replied to Dr. E. Ward’s article on sanatorium results in your issue of March 22nd. The statistics on which Dr. Ward’s conclusions are based must have struck many who read his article. If he were right, in our present state of knowledge, the best that can be done for tuberculous patients is to leave them alone. The worst, almost, is to send them to sanatoria for treatment. Statistics, as quoted by Dr. Ward, are of no value because they give figures which only deal with tuberculous cases from one, and that the least important aspect. To classify patients as suffering from slight, medium, and extensive tuberculosis is irrational and useless. In the ultimate issue it is not the extent but the intensity of the disease that tells. Slight disease with marked toxemia has a far worse prognosis than extensive disease with a slight degree of toxemia. Further, he does not state the duration of treatment. Three months in a sanatorium is rarely of much good, and, to judge the results of sanatorium treatment, at least a year and a half is required. Three months in a sanatorium is rarely of much good, and, to judge the results of sanatorium treatment, at least a year and a half is required. Many patients require three years’ treatment and not three months. That it pays to keep patients for prolonged periods one has had frequent proofs. For example take the following case:—

One of our large Scottish Universities gives a prize to the student who proves to be the most brilliant man of his year in any faculty. Last year the man who obtained that prize was one who had been a patient in the Consumption Sanatoria of Scotland, Bridge of Weir, six years ago. He suffered from advanced phthisis and had very marked toxemia. Had we discharged him at the end of one year, I have little doubt that he would have been dead within a few months. Had we discharged him at the end of two years, I fear that he would have survived but a short period. Keeping him for three years so established him that he was enabled to go through an arduous university course, and gain not only this coveted prize but a scholarship of several hundreds a year for four years. He has, I may say, had no recurrence of the symptoms during the period of strain. Dr. Ward says that "if a tree growing feebly in a poor soil is transplanted to a good one and then after improvement is returned again to the bad soil, it will not resume its feeble growth, but will probably die." That is not quite true. It depends upon how long the transplanted tree is allowed to remain in the good soil.

Dr. Ward’s controls seem to have been a doubtful collection. One of the reasons why they were not sent to sanatoria was because it was decided to keep them under observation for a while, to avoid for them the stigma of a sanatorium. Another reason is, that in the opinion of the London Panel Committee the present medical records are neither advantageous to the medical service nor beneficial to the community, and that it is desirable that they be discontinued forthwith.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
R. J. FARMAN,
Secretary, Panel Committee for the County of London.
Staple House, St. Chansery-lane, W.C., March 26th, 1921.

THE FIGURES OF VENEREAL DISEASE.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—In your Parliamentary Intelligence of March 26th Lord Knutsford is reported to have made the following statement in the House of Lords:—

"The figures of venereal disease in this country were almost too great to be believed. At the London Hospital alone they had 33,000 new cases last year. At a low computation each of these new cases would put in at least 12 attendances, so that the total number of attendances at the venereal department of that hospital would amount to considerably over a quarter of a million a year. As the total number of attendances at the department in 1919 was actually 24,499 Lord Knutsford was quite justified in his statement that "the figures of venereal disease in this country were almost too great to be believed." They most emphatically are.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
Queen Anne-street, W., March 26th, 1921
J. ERNEST LANE.

A VERY ENERGETIC PROPAGANDA.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—During the recent debate in the House of Lords on the report of the Special Committee on Venereal Diseases Viscount Knutsford urged the need of a "very energetic propaganda" directed towards the creation of a higher standard of morality and a lessening of the incidence of these diseases.

In this connexion a few figures as to the extent and scope of the propaganda undertaken in one year by the National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases may be of interest:—

Personal letters of inquiry received and answered by the medical department ............ 33,000
Free pamphlets individually distributed, each pamphlet published or approved by the Ministry of Health and the N.C.C.V.D. ................ 606,000
A very large number of addresses have been given to teachers, social organisations, employees of large firms and workshops, and to unselected audiences of the general public:—

Hyperalga, hyperalimentation, and selected cases tuberculin do the rest.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
JAMES CROCKET, M.D.,
March 21st. Lecturer on Tuberculosis, Glasgow University.

INSURANCE RECORDS: THE VIEW OF THE LONDON PANEL COMMITTEE.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—At their meeting on March 22nd the London Panel Committee directed me to send you a copy of the following resolutions:—

1. That the Committee are of opinion that some form of medical record is necessary.
2. That the Committee are of opinion that practitioners should be required to enter matters on the record cards which in their opinion are likely to be detrimental to the interests of the insured persons concerned.

In the opinion of the London Panel Committee the present medical records are neither advantageous to the medical service nor beneficial to the community, and that it is desirable that they be discontinued forthwith.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
E. O. GRANT,
Secretary, National Council for Combating Venereal Diseases.
March 26th, 1921.