officers returning home from other theatres of war. Applications should be addressed to the Hon. Arthur Brodrick at Hampden House.

The *Times* announces that in connexion with Princess Christian's Homes of Rest for Discharged Soldiers and Sailors now in course of erection at Bisley, Her Majesty the Queen has been graciously pleased to endow two beds, their Royal Highnesses the Duke and Duchess of York endow one bed for a soldier or sailor, her Royal Highness Princess Christian of Schleswig-Holstein one bed for the King's Royal Rifles, and their Highnesses Princess Victoria of Schleswig-Holstein and Princess Aribert of Anhalt a bed for a "Greenjacket."

The following steamships have arrived at Southampton carrying invalids and wounded men from South Africa. The *Kildonan Castle* arrived on July 11th and the *Dunera* on July 12th. From the former 100 patients were admitted at the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, and from the latter 11 cases. Only the severe cases were sent to Netley, the remainder being sent on to other stations. At Netley eight wards are now full of patients suffering from enteric fever.

Major A. S. Rose is in medical charge of the hospital ship *Avoca* which left Southampton for South Africa on July 18th.

Lieutenant Morris, R.A.M.C., has left England for duty in South Africa.

THE SOUTH AFRICAN COMMISSION.

This matter has now been definitely settled and the commission has been increased from three to five by the addition of two lay members with undeniable business qualifications. An objection was raised from the first to one of the three eminent names submitted by the Government. It is absurd to suppose that a man of the high personal character and integrity of Professor Cunningham will not bring to the work a perfectly unbiased judgment; it would be an insult to him to suppose otherwise. It is rather on the score of his scientific attainments in a special direction that we ventured to think that a man of far less scientific reputation might have proved better adapted and more useful for conducting such an investigation. We think, too, that the commission will, in the first instance, have to learn its business from the evidence that will be brought before it, and that for various practical reasons it would have been well if it had someone at hand well versed in military systems. There was no reason why such an individual should have taken part in the deliberations of the commission or signed its report. But it has been ruled otherwise. We may call our readers' attention to an article in the *Standard* of July 18th on the subject of this commission.

DEATHS IN THE SERVICES.

Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel William Wellington Lake, M.M.S.C., Volunteer Company Royal Army Medical Corps, at Bloemfontein of Bright's disease, on July 13th. Educated at St. Thomas's Hospital, he was admitted a Licentiate of the Royal College of Apothecaries in 1876, and a Member of the Royal College of Surgeons of England in 1877. In 1898 he was appointed surgeon-major of the Militia Medical Staff Corps and volunteered for service and went to South Africa with the Volunteer Company of the Royal Army Medical Corps in the early part of this year. For active service in the field as a surgeon in the Ottoman army he received the medal and the fourth class of the Medjidieh for his services during the Russo-Turkish war of 1877-8. Mr. Wellington Lake held many public appointments, among them being those of deputy coroner for West Surrey and medical officer of health for the Guildford and Woking districts of the same county.

THE ASHANTI CAMPAIGN.

With so many other and bigger matters on hand in China and South Africa it is not surprising that recent events in Ashanti and the little campaign for the relief of Kumasi have been comparatively lost sight of. But there has been a fine exhibition of British courage, endurance, and skilful management of late in this very unhealthy and malarious part of the world. What with the fighting with savages and fever, short rations, flooded districts, and trying marches there must have been a good number of wounded and a great deal of sickness, and the wonder is whether medical aid, quinine, and 'suitable or even sufficient food for the sick were obtainable. It seems to be nearly certain, however, that Colonel Willcocks has succeeded in relieving the hard-pressed garrison at Kumasi.

LEAN'S ROYAL NAVY LIST.

Lean's Royal Navy List, published by Messrs. Witherby

and Co., 326, High Holborn, and 4, Newman's-court, Cornhill, price 7s. 6d., is so well known and is of such practical utility that scarcely anything is required but a reminder to our readers that a new issue is ready. We note, however, that the July issue of this quarterly "complete encyclopædia of our first line of defence," which is now ready, includes the war and meritorious services in South Africa of naval officers connected with that campaign.

THE ORDER OF THE MEDJIDIEH.

The Queen has given her Royal authority that Major Richard Hugh Penton, D.S.O., R.A.M.C., may accept and wear the insignia of the Imperial Ottoman Order of the Medjidieh (third class) conferred by His Highness the Khedive of Egypt, authorised by His Imperial Majesty the Sultan of Turkey in recognition of service in the Soudan during the year 1899.

MILITARY HOSPITAL, DEVONPORT.

280 invalid soldiers arrived at the Military Hospital, Devonport, on July 14th, and 350 were disembarked at Plymouth subsequently.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

FACTORY GIRLS' COUNTRY HOLIDAY FUND.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—We again beg for the powerful aid of the press on behalf of the Factory Girls' Country Holiday Fund. Owing to the liberal help of the public we were able last year to give a country holiday of a week or more to 2200 working girls and women employed in all parts of London in factories and workshops. So many are again waiting to go that we are compelled to make a very urgent appeal for funds. Many of these toilers know nothing of the delights of country life and surroundings. Those who have been away appreciate the change and rest more every year and for months save a few pence weekly out of their scanty earnings towards their expenses; £515 were contributed by them in this way last year. They are sent to the seaside and to country villages, and the greatest care is taken in making all arrangements for their holiday. The cottagers with whom they are boarded and the ladies, clergy, and others who look after them during their stay do their utmost to give them a happy holiday; the cottagers in many cases beg to have the same visitors year after year. When it is remembered that many of the girls are little more than children of 14 years of age and upwards, spending the best part of their lives in hot crowded factories, and that in many cases they are in large measure the bread-winners of the family, we feel sure that their claim for a short holiday in fresh air and country surroundings with freedom from daily toil and worry will not be disregarded.

We are, Sirs, yours obediently,

(Signed) { M. LONDIN,
EDW. ROFFEN,
BEATRICE B. TEMPLE,
G. F. BRISTOL,
E. GARRETT ANDERSON, M.D. Paris,
FRANK LLOYD,
H. ADLER, Chief Rabbi,
EDWARD CANNEY,
Chairman of the Executive Committee.
MARGARET A. WYATT,
Honorary Treasurer.

S. Peter's Rectory, Saffron Hill,
London, E.C., July 12th, 1900.

THE NEED FOR REFORM IN DEATH REGISTRATION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—A few weeks ago the vestry of Plumstead addressed a letter to the Westminster vestry informing them that in the Plumstead registration district almost 3·5 per cent. of the deaths were uncertified either by a medical practitioner or by a coroner. As this seemed a large percentage of uncertified deaths in one district alone I took some trouble in finding out how the law stands at present and how its provisions are carried out. At the outset I was appalled to discover that it is apparently

not necessary for the cause of death to be certified by a medical practitioner or by a coroner. In fact, it seems fairly clear that all the law demands is *registration* and not *certification*, and that the act of registration without certification is made easy in some districts and difficult in others. The act of registration is performed by the registrar, who need not necessarily have information either from a medical practitioner or a coroner, but can register a death on the information of a layman present at the death—"a qualified informant"—if he has no reason to suppose that the death was due to violence or accident or occurred under suspicious circumstances. These last must be referred to the coroner.

A Committee of the House of Commons was in 1893 appointed to consider the question and amongst other recommendations the following is particularly noticeable: "Your Committee have come to the conclusion that uncertified deaths should as a class cease to exist and that means should be devised whereby a medical certificate should be obtained in every case not certified by a registered medical practitioner in attendance." The reason given for this is that there is no uniformity of practice amongst registrars and that in some districts cases are registered which in others would be referred to the coroner. Most uncertified deaths occur amongst infants and especially amongst illegitimate children, and it is not difficult to see how, in the case of infants, registration without certification makes murder easy. From the report of the Committee it is evident that uncertified deaths are on the whole diminishing steadily, but further examination of the figures shows that in some districts the percentage is still very large, and that it is extremely probable that under the existing law there will always be an irreducible minimum. To get rid of this quantity an alteration of the law is urgently necessary. The Committee recommended that a medical certifier should be appointed to make a personal inquiry into all uncertified deaths. They further recommended that he should be the medical officer of health, and probably their recommendation is the best one, though there are several reasons against it. The only other medical man likely to be appointed would be the police surgeon, but there would be in the public idea great sentimental opposition to a police surgeon inquiring into a cause of death. It would immediately create objection as implying suspicion of foul play. But whoever the certifier may be I am sure that he should not be allowed to perform a post-mortem examination without a coroner's order and that he should always send his report to the coroner, and that the latter should be, as now, the authority for determining whether an inquest should be held or not. That an alteration of the law is necessary has been asserted by a Committee of the House of Commons, whose recommendation has been approved by the London County Council, by the Society of Medical Officers of Health, and by the Coroners' Society.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Buckingham Gate, S.W., July 16th, 1900. H. A. DES VŒUX.

"THE COMPARATIVE GERMICIDAL ACTION OF SOME DISINFECTANTS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have read Mr. A. H. Burgess's article under the above heading in THE LANCET of June 23rd (p. 1797) with much interest and no little surprise. The results set forth in the article are of such an extraordinary nature and so altogether opposed to those obtained by myself when working with many of the same disinfectants that I feel constrained to express considerable doubt in the efficiency of the *thread method* as employed by Mr. Burgess. This method was condemned as long ago as 1890 by Dr. V. von Gerlach. Commenting on the results obtained by Remouchamps and Sugg when estimating the comparative value of certain preparations of phenol and cresols—in *solution* and *emulsion*—Von Gerlach states that he suspended threads in solutions and emulsions of phenols for an hour, after which he hung them for another hour in about 400 cubic centimetres of water, at the expiration of which time the threads which had been suspended in the emulsions "smelt plainly of the disinfectant," and that he "had to ascribe absence of growth in the gelatin to insufficient washing of the threads, as subsequent inoculation with vigorous cultures proved." From which it will be seen that when working with emulsions there must ever be a certain amount of doubt

attaching to investigations carried out with this method, as an alternative to which I should like to recommend one I have employed in several thousands of experiments with most regular and consistent results. This method has the further advantage of being extremely simple. Briefly stated it is as follows. To a known volume of an active culture of the organism add an equal volume of the dilute disinfectant; shake and take sub-cultures in suitable media at definite intervals. Incubate for at least two days at 37° C. In practice I prefer to take five cubic centimetres of a 24-hours' blood-heat culture of the organism to five cubic centimetres of, say, 0.2 per cent. disinfectant. This reduces the percentage of the latter to 0.1. (I may add the disinfectants are allowed to act at a room temperature of about 15° C.) Sub-cultures are then taken every two and a half minutes up to 15 in tubes containing about 10 cubic centimetres of bouillon. No exception can be taken to this method as regards the introduction of disinfectant during inoculation. I have made careful weighings and find that any disinfectant in the bouillon tubes introduced with the "loopful" employed in inoculation is present in such an extreme state of dilution (1 in 6,000,000) as to be quite innocuous.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Clapham, S.W., July 14th.

J. T. A. WALKER.

PADDLING IN THE SEA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—My object in writing is to try to do a good turn to the thousands of children who are now going to the seaside. For some reason or other paddling is very generally condemned by the medical profession. My own experience, extending over some 30 years, is that the practice is most beneficial. The children love it and a child who has once paddled, when at the seaside always craves to do it again. I have no idea on what grounds the medical objection is based, but for some reason or other the prohibition is strongly impressed on the parents. The parents think the cold water to the feet sends the blood to the head, and believe that the hot sun on the head and the cold water to the feet are injurious. No doubt the same blood which is cooled in the legs is circulating through the brain and certainly the children's legs are red after paddling, so I suppose if it does anything it what people call "draws blood" to the legs and tends to prevent congestion elsewhere. A child on a very hot day is fretting and sweating, but a child paddling on such a day is perfectly happy and does not feel the heat. There is certainly no undue fatigue in standing, walking, or trotting about in the shallow water. Paddling seems a trivial subject for a letter in THE LANCET, but I am so convinced that it does the children good that I trust this may get inserted.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

WM. KNIGHT TREVES, F.R.C.S. Eng.

Margate, July 12th, 1900.

THE JOINT COMMITTEE TO OPPOSE MID-WIVES REGISTRATION: AN APPEAL FOR FUNDS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have been directed to request the favour of space and permission to appeal to the readers of THE LANCET for donations to the voluntary fund to carry on the work of this committee. Its operations thus far have, on very limited resources, been most successful, being based on the broad principle of maintaining the rights of the profession as essential to the public welfare. Memorials to Members of Parliament have been well signed in large and important centres, and signatories have besides given letters introducing the representative of my committee, who has thus obtained personal interviews with about 20 and correspondence with over 30 Members of Parliament on the influential introduction of electors. Of these the most successful were the memorials and introductions of Mr. Griffith-Boscawen's medical constituents, securing his valued support, serviceable motion to consider the Bill "upon this day three months," and admirable speech imparting a new and improved tone to the debate.

Although the Bill is probably dead for this session very vigorous action is necessary in the constituencies to rouse