WORKHOUSE INFIRMARY REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—You mention so honourably and with so much graciousness the “essential services rendered to the cause of humanity by Mr. Ernest Hart as one of THE LANCET Commissioners,” that I am sure you will allow me to rectify an important misapprehension which the latter part of your article in last week’s LANCET is calculated to produce, if uncorrected.

The services of Dr. Anstie and Dr. Carr as joint Commissioners are well known to the Committee of the Workhouse Infirmary Association and to the whole public: they have been repeatedly acknowledged. On the occasion of the very meeting at which the testimonial to Mr. Hart was suggested, that gentleman himself repeated the expression of his gratitude to them for their large share in the visitations of workhouses, and the excellent judgment and ability with which they had conducted them.

The meeting offered their thanks, by resolution, to the honorary secretaries of the Association; but this special testimonial is felt by all who have watched the great and successful labours of Mr. Hart, to be due to him, for reasons which were ably expressed by the mover of the resolution, who pointed out that but for him “this great work would never have been carried to a successful termination”; and perhaps still more clearly by the seconder, Sir John Simeon, M.P., who said that the success of the Association was due to “the tact, earnestness, business power, and singular suggestiveness, displayed by Mr. Hart: that gentleman had kept the whole thing together.” We propose to recognise Mr. Hart’s successful and unselfish labours in converting written words into political deeds, and public opinion into legislative action.

He has requested that any fund raised should be devoted to the continuance of the good work by instituting a periodical premium for the best essay or report by any Poor-law Medical Officer upon his patients or wards, with suggestions bearing upon the Poor-law system. This will, it is hoped, not only prove beneficial to the poor, but will tend to assist the medical profession by affording a recognised medium for their suggestions or complaints, and by rewarding labour and merit in the Poor-law Medical Service.

The suggestion is one which can hardly fail to meet the approval and support of the journal in whose columns the suggestion of the good work accomplished first appeared.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

W. H. ASHURST,
Hon. Secretary and Treasurer.

Prince of Wales-terrace, Kensington, June 19th, 1867.

* * The remarks to which our correspondent refers were called forth by the circumstance that the editorial notice in several of the daily journals was worded so as to lead to the inference that the testimonial was intended in a great measure to mark Mr. Hart’s labours on THE LANCET Commission. It seems, however, that it is to Mr. Hart’s exertions as honorary secretary of the valuable association which was an offspring of the Commission that the mark of public approbation is directed. We cordially acknowledge the skill, untiring energy, and tact which Mr. Hart has displayed in this office, and which well merit the intended tribute. Our notice of the laborious services of Dr. Anstie and Dr. Carr bore special reference to the work of the Commission, which involved the minute inspection of workhouse wards in all their details, and with all the care which the responsibility of describing them naturally demanded. Nor was this public recognition in our columns undeserved by these gentlemen. Of the seventeen reports upon sixteen infirmaries which appeared in THE LANCET, thirteen were, jointly or separately, the productions of Dr. Anstie and Dr. Carr; one was by Mr. Hart in conjunction with Dr. Carr; and the remaining three by Mr. Hart alone. The valuable introductory article was written by Dr. Anstie.

A MAN died in the imbecile ward at Clifton Workhouse last week. At the post mortem, some of the ribs on both sides were found to be broken, and the lungs wounded. How the injuries arose is uncertain. It is believed that a Government inquiry will be held. The verdict at the inquest was, “Death from inflammation of the lungs, caused by fracture of the ribs.”

Parliamentary Intelligence.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

JUNE 14TH.

VACCINATION BILL.

On the order of the day for the committal of this Bill,

Lord R. MONTAGU explained the provisions of the various measures which had been passed with regard to vaccination. By an Act of 1853 vaccination was rendered compulsory; but the Act had failed, both as regarded numbers and quality—the numbers vaccinated and the numbers vaccinated successfully. The Act of 1853 required every child to be vaccinated within three months from birth, and to be examined eight days afterwards, with a view to revaccination if necessary, or the taking of lymph to vaccinate elsewhere. The experiment being successful during ten years, the legislature in 1863 passed Acts extending compulsory vaccination to Scotland and Ireland, but with improved machinery; and the object of the present Bill was to assimilate the law and machinery of vaccination in England to what it was now in Scotland and Ireland. Thirty years before 1853 the annual death-rate from small-pox was 3000 in every million. From 1838 to 1841, when vaccination had become known, the number of deaths per million fell to 770. From 1841 to 1853, when the legislature made vaccination gratuitous, the number again fell to 304. Subsequently, when vaccination had been rendered compulsory, the ratio fell further to 171 per million. The noble lord quoted other statistics to show even more striking results from the adoption of stringent compulsory vaccination, and said it could be made absolutely certain by vaccination that no person should ever be attacked by small-pox. This Bill would make it absolutely certain that 7000 lives should be saved every year from small-pox. That was the case he had to lay before the House, and he felt certain that the House would deal with it in a proper spirit (hear).

Mr. BARROW strongly objected to compulsory vaccination. It was now the opinion of a very large proportion of medical men that vaccination introduced disease into the system to a serious extent, and he hoped this Bill would not be passed until some complete and thorough investigation had been made into the whole matter.

Sir J. C. JERVOISE moved as an amendment that the consideration of the Bill be postponed till after the report of the medical officer of the Privy Council for 1866 should have been distributed. He urged the objections of the previous speaker to vaccination, and expressed the opinion that it was nothing more than inoculation with the cattle plague.

Colonel BARTELOT said they ought to be quite sure upon the points raised before they passed such a measure.

Mr. H. A. BRUCE thought it would be impossible to get more conclusive evidence of the utility of vaccination than they had at present. They were not now considering the principle of compulsory vaccination, but the machinery by which the principle could best be carried into effect. In that sense he approved of the Bill, but would be glad to see it altered materially in committee.

Mr. HENLEY agreed with the hon. gentleman opposite (Mr. Bruce) in his way of looking at this measure. But although he took exception to some parts of the machinery of the Bill he could not vote with those gentlemen who wished to delay this Bill for six months (hear). No one could doubt from the information which they already possessed on the subject that vaccination generally was badly performed, and it behoved them all to do their best to strive to remedy the existing defects (hear).

Dr. BRADY said the medical profession as a body were unanimously of opinion that compulsory vaccination was absolutely necessary for the welfare of society (hear). Compulsory vaccination ought to be made as perfect as possible. It would be penny wise and pound foolish to go to the expense of carrying out this Act and not provide for the liberal remuneration of the medical officers. The failure of the Act of 1853 was due to the want of proper remuneration.

Mr. LOWE defended the principle of the Bill, and advocated local stations, a better payment to medical men, registration, and inspection.

Mr. KENDALL spoke from his experience in Cornwall against sending children to stations. The vaccination, to conciliate parents, ought to be performed at home.

The motion was then negatived without a division, and the House went into committee.