

analysed during the particular epidemic in question, contained no nitrites whatever; and even in his own paper he observes that, apart from excess of organic matter, its chemical composition was satisfactory.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Houndsditch, August 23rd, 1899.

WOLF DEFRIES.

## MEDICAL ORGANISATION: PROPOSED SCHEME.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—I enclose you a copy of a circular that is being distributed at the instance of the Medical Guild, Manchester, amongst the secretaries of all associations of general practitioners in England and Wales about whose existence we have been able to obtain definite information. For a good deal of that information we are indebted to your Special Commissioner. We fear, however, that many societies exist about which we have been unable to learn anything and we appeal, therefore, to you to help the work by printing this letter, if possible in your next issue. In this way we may be able to reach all parts of the country and I shall be glad if any secretary who has not received a circular will communicate with me at once. I should like to mention one or two points with regard to the proposed conference. In the first place, it is proposed that it should be a conference of delegates elected by each medical society to represent its members. In this way it would be elected by, and speak in the name of, a large section of the profession. Each delegate would, in fact, have the authority of perhaps 30 or 40 of his brother practitioners behind him. In the second place, it is intended to be *national* in character, although it is of necessity organised locally in the first instance. Thirdly, it is hoped that the conference if it meets will elect a central executive committee whose business it shall be to perpetuate the work and perfect the organisation of the profession.

By means of this organisation each individual practitioner in the country would have, if he chose, his share of representation at its annual conference and would be able to exercise through it his influence on all questions affecting the welfare of the profession. We are somewhat sanguine, therefore, in appealing to all general practitioners in England and Wales to exercise all the influence they possess to secure the representation of every society at the proposed conference. As it is not proposed to hold that before the spring of 1900 there is ample time to form new societies in districts which do not already possess them and it is hoped that men who are really anxious to further their own interests, as well as those of their fellows, will take steps in this direction.

I do not know that I need dwell upon the necessity—the present necessity—for organisation along these lines. The work of your Special Commissioner has done a great deal to make known the evils under which the general practitioners suffer and the steady encroachments on their prerogatives that are continually being made. Under these circumstances it is absolutely essential that we stand together shoulder to shoulder. We shall then not only be able to resist aggression effectually but be in a position to uphold the dignity of the profession and have in our hands the machinery with which to improve its status. Thanking you in anticipation for the insertion of this letter,

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

S. CRAWSHAW, M.B. Vict.,

Secretary to the Conference Committee of the Medical Guild,  
Ashton-under-Lyne, Sept. 11th, 1899.

## PLAGUE PREVENTIVES.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of July 29th, 1899, p. 308, your Hong-Kong correspondent has stated as follows: "Plague is increasing in Hong-Kong and the whole of the western part of the city is declared to be infected." "No very great efforts are being made to diminish or to stamp out the epidemic. Cleansing and whitewashing of the city proceed and Haffkine's prophylactic serum is imported, but no one seems to want to be inoculated with it."

In the Baroda State in India since nearly a year use

has been freely made of plague preventive pills (each containing two grains of quinine, a quarter of a grain of ipecacuanha, a quarter of a grain of camphor, and a quarter of a minim of carbolic acid) in plague-stricken places. Thousands of these pills are freely distributed and people are advised to take them daily, two each, one at a time, and the results are satisfactory.

In my evidence before the Plague Commission I stated as follows: "Medical men, nurses, and menials, numbering in all 171 persons and working in Government plague hospitals, were advised to take the pills daily, two each, one in the morning and another in the evening, and the result was that only one servant in the Dalyawadi Plague Hospital in Baroda was attacked with plague, but he got well. One nurse in connexion with the Savli Plague Hospital succumbed to the disease. On making inquiries it was found that the nurse had never used the pills. Another nurse and one compounder escaped with a mild attack of the disease. From the accounts that have appeared in newspapers regarding the evidence given by medical officers before the Plague Commission it seems that eight servants and four hospital assistants connected with plague hospitals in Bangalore were attacked with plague, of whom seven servants and all the four hospital assistants died and only one servant recovered." "Some medical men and nurses working in plague hospitals fell victims to the disease at Bombay and elsewhere."

Now the question arises as to why medical men, nurses, and servants working in plague hospitals in the Baroda territory should have suffered so little as compared with hospital assistants and servants attached to plague hospitals at Bangalore. It is very likely that it was the use of the pills that saved the medical men, &c., of the plague hospitals in the Baroda State. I submitted to the Plague Commission two statements, giving names of infected villages and towns, their population, total number of attacks and deaths, and the duration of the epidemic at each place. One statement contained the names of those 56 villages and towns where the pills were not used as they had not then been introduced, and another showed the names of those 15 places in which they were freely made use of.

The following tabular statement gives the average figures of duration of the epidemic, the average number of attacks, and the average number of deaths:—

—	Average duration of the epidemic.	Average number of attacks.	Average number of deaths.
Villages and towns where the pills had not been used ... ..	40·6 days	27·2	21·2
Villages and towns where the pills had been freely made use of ... ..	33·8 days	16·8	11·4

From this it would appear that where the pills had been used the average duration of the epidemic was comparatively short and the average number of seizures and that of deaths were reduced by 38·3 and 46·3 per cent. respectively. Under these circumstances it would be advisable to use the said pills freely at Hong-Kong and other plague-stricken towns. Daily burning of fresh Nim (*Azadirachta Indica*) leaves so as to produce dense smoke in houses, whether infected or not, has been found in some villages to be a good precaution against plague. This is a very cheap and useful measure against the epidemic and deserves a further trial.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Baroda, August 24th, 1899.

SHAMSUDIN J. SULEMANI.

## MINERAL POISONING.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—Is it a fact, as I have recently been given to understand, that there is an Act of Parliament in force which compels any member of the profession, under fine and imprisonment, to notify directly to the Home Secretary any cases of accidental poisoning by certain scheduled minerals—viz., lead, mercury, &c.—that may come under his treatment and observation? Although it is a legal fiction that every British subject is supposed to know the law, if such an Act be in existence I believe there are a large number of medical men, including myself, who are in total ignorance of it and

of its provisions. As lead poisoning is far from infrequent, many of us may thus unconsciously be rendering ourselves liable to legal pains and penalties.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

ALFRED RAWLINGS.

Herne Street, near Canterbury, Sept. 5th, 1899.

\* \* There is no obligation to notify to the Home Secretary. By Section 29 of the Factory and Workshop Act, 1895, any medical practitioner attending or called in to visit a patient whom he believes to be suffering from lead, phosphorus, or arsenical poisoning *contracted in any factory or workshop* must notify the case to the Chief Inspector of Factories. This section was extended to cases of mercurial poisoning by an order of March 27th, 1899. Leaflets containing the above information were circulated, we understand, by the Home Office among medical practitioners in the districts most likely to be affected.—ED. L.

## THE MALARIA EXPEDITION TO WEST AFRICA.

(FROM A CORRESPONDENT.)

WILBERFORCE, mentioned in my last communication as the temporary station of the 3rd West India Regiment, is situated just over the crest of the hills which back Freetown on the west side. The village is about 400 ft. above sea-level and is occupied by the barracks and a small number of native huts. The district is only cleared of bush immediately around the barracks. Towards the sea the hill slopes down for a distance of about four miles to the coast; this slope is interrupted half way down by a swampy terrace covered only by a short grass. The country along the shore is also very swampy. These swampy patches are looked upon as the breeding grounds of myriads of mosquitoes, the prevailing wind, from seaward, being supposed to carry the mosquitoes up the hill to the village. Several excursions have been made by the expedition to the neighbourhood of this village and many mosquitoes of the genus *anopheles* have been caught at the barracks, but the breeding places have not yet been found. Several small streams run down the hillside to the sea, making, in places, small puddles of water in the rock. These contained no mosquito larvæ, but it was surmised that they might serve as breeding places, when, at the beginning of the dry season, the torrents had ceased to scour them out—they would then be left for several days as isolated puddles. At one spot was a regular dumping ground for old disused tins, cans, bottles, &c., from the barracks and those that held water were found to be full of the larvæ of *Culex*. A systematic and thorough search of the marshy terrace was made by members of the expedition helped by several native servants, but no larvæ of any description were found. In fact, it was from the first thought highly improbable that this could form a breeding ground, being about two miles from the barracks, separated from them by a belt of thick bush through which the mosquitoes would have to filter, and further, the mosquitoes, heavily laden with eggs, would be required by this theory to fly a distance of two miles against the wind. A much nearer spot had therefore to be sought for, and accordingly the neighbourhood of the village huts was tried, but again unsuccessfully. Collections of water around the barracks were also searched in vain. It is now thought that the mosquitoes found about the barracks must be old insects which have survived since the beginning of the rainy season. Some 50 have been caught, all gorged with blood, and one in every three has been found on dissection to be infected—some showing recent “zygotes,” some in various stages of maturity, others empty capsules and infected veneno-salivary glands; in fact, every stage of the development of quartan, tertian, and æstivo-autumnal infection is displayed. Mosquitoes are caught almost daily in the barracks, but are evidently becoming scarcer, being now difficult to find; at the same time the medical officer reports a considerable decrease in the number of fever cases in hospital.

Cases containing “crescents” are still very rare; at present only two cases have been seen—one in a very severe

case, the patient's blood showing about one in every eight corpuscles to be infected. Even in this case the number of crescents was by no means numerous. The other case was a mixed infection of quartan and æstivo-autumnal. Numerous mosquitoes (*anopheles*) continue to be caught at Kissy, but a complete search has not yet been made for larvæ.

A single specimen of a third species of *anopheles* has been caught at Government House, the residence of the Governor of the colony, situated in the middle of the town. No specimen beyond this has been obtained from the town itself; but from the fact that several cases of fever have been reported among inhabitants of the town and, further, that *anopheles* larvæ have been found at two places in the town, there can be no doubt that the *anopheles* is plentiful there. A vigorous search has now been instituted in the town. The two breeding-places mentioned are as follows:—

1. A tub of water outside the sanitary offices. This was discovered by Dr. Prout, the Principal Colonial Medical Officer. It was watched and two mosquitoes have already hatched out from these larvæ and been captured. They were undoubtedly *anopheles*.

2. A small water-puddle in the road leading to Wilberforce, but in the centre of the most thickly populated part of the town. The principal roads in Freetown run steeply down from the hills towards the sea. These are deeply guttered on each side. The gutters are well scoured out during the heavy rains so that water seldom lodges for more than a few hours. Across these roads run others very badly drained and here, just in front of the houses, one often meets pools of water which last for days. It was in such a puddle that the *anopheles* larvæ were discovered. They have been watched growing for some four days in spite of some very heavy showers which threatened to wash them all out. They will apparently soon become pupæ and hatch out.

I hope to be able to give a short description of the larvæ and the three species of *anopheles* later.

Several Tsetse flies were seen at Wilberforce during the examination of the mountain streams. They were similar to those from Kissy mentioned last week.

The German Consul died here during the past week from blackwater fever. Unfortunately the members of the expedition became acquainted with the case rather too late after the first onset of the disease. However, a careful examination of several specimens of blood showed no malarial parasite. The patient admitted that he had taken shortly before large doses of quinine. From the history of several cases which have occurred here, and more especially from one or two very striking cases, the colonial officers at Sierra Leone are obtaining evidence tending to confirm Koch's observations as to the connexion between blackwater fever and quinine poisoning.

Freetown, August 28th.

## NOTES FROM INDIA.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

*Terrible Plague Mortality at Poona.—Reappearance of the Disease in Hyderabad (Sind).—The Prevalence of Enteric Fever among British Officers in India.*

IMAGINE a death-rate of over 500 per 1000 per annum and you will have some idea of the frightful mortality in Poona city during the past two weeks. Very few shops remain open and business is nearly at a standstill. Dead rats in large numbers were discovered in the quarters of the Southern Mahratta Railway employés, some being actually observed dropping dead from the roofs. It is said that through fear of increasing the panic the authorities refuse to publish the total number of plague patients in the hospitals. With a considerably diminished population by the exodus of the people there has nevertheless been a weekly mortality of over 1000. Nearly the whole of this is due to plague. It will be remembered that the disease reappeared in this city in February but seemed to slumber until June. Then it broke out with great virulence. The average number in hospital has been about 500 since August 1st. The staff of nurses is quite inadequate and ward boys and ward attendants have been very