

other Eastern wools, I cannot say whether they may give rise to bacillus anthracis or any other form of blood-poisoning; but I think I have proved that alpaca must be held guiltless.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

J. DICKSON HUNTER, M.D. Edin.

Arequipa, Peru, April, 1880.

SUPRAPUBIC PUNCTURE OF THE BLADDER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Attention has been recently drawn in your columns to the value of suprapubic puncture of the bladder in cases of retention. This operation has been justly extolled as of great value; and, so far as I am aware, the method of puncture adopted when an aspirator is used is considered to be a perfectly safe measure, and to have had so far no case of death recorded against it. I think it might be of use, therefore, to record a case where the results were not so satisfactory.

A few years ago a young man with a history of previous stricture was admitted into the London Hospital with retention that had appeared suddenly after exposure to cold and an outburst of drunkenness. All attempts at catheterism failed, as did also the treatment by hot baths, opium, and a dose of croton oil. The bladder was, therefore, aspirated above the pubes without preliminary incision. Next day the patient passed water spontaneously. On the third day a small catheter was passed, and the patient insisted on leaving the hospital. In less than a week he returned very ill, developed symptoms of pelvic cellulitis, and died in about three weeks. The stricture had given no further trouble. The post-mortem showed no trace of the wound in the bladder, but very extensive suppuration of the pelvic connective tissue.

Another case in the hospital about the same time gave great support to the other side of the question of prognosis. A seaman started on a voyage with a stricture and a medium-sized catheter. He passed the catheter once a week. One day, when on the high seas, he found himself unable to pass either his urine or his instrument, and no surgeon was on board. His symptoms of retention becoming very severe, he deliberately punctured his bladder in the middle line above the pubes with the small blade of a penknife, allowed the water to run out by the side of the knife, and then introduced his catheter into the bladder through the wound. He kept it there until he found he could pass it *via* the urethra. The wound healed well, and the man recovered without an evil symptom.

I remain, Sir, yours faithfully,

FREDERICK TREVES, F.R.C.S.,

Assistant Surgeon and Senior Demonstrator of
Anatomy to the London Hospital.

Gordon-square, W.C., Aug. 1880.

WORK AND PAY IN PROVIDENT DISPENSARIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The subject of Provident Dispensaries being one of considerable importance and interest to the medical profession, I should be glad if you would allow me to publish the following account of one which has been working for two years and a half.

In the beginning of 1878 Messrs. Tangye Brothers, engineers, Cornwall Works, Birmingham, started, at their own expense for twelve months, a Provident Dispensary for their workpeople, their wives and families, after which time their *employés* were to contribute towards its support.

The cost of making certain alterations in a house already existing in connexion with their works, furnishing the same for the resident medical officer, and as waiting and consulting rooms, fitting the dispensary with all necessary appliances, supplying drugs and surgical instruments, together with the salaries of the medical officer and dispenser, was upwards of £1000.

At the end of 1878 it was decided that the *employés* should contribute as follows towards its support: men 4s., women 4s., children over thirteen years of age 4s., other children 1s. 6d., per annum; families consisting of five or more children under thirteen years of age were to pay a

maximum sum of 15s. per annum for attendance upon all members. These sums were not to include attendance in midwifery cases or vaccination, these being left to the discretion of the medical officer.

The services of the medical officer and dispenser were entirely retained for attendance on members of the dispensary.

The following is the account for the six months from January 1st to July 1st, 1880:—

There are now 2890 members, composed as follows: men, 1297; women, 554; children over thirteen years of age, 60; other children, 1056; and 57 families included in the 15s. per annum fee. The total amount received has been £237 0s. 4d. The expenditure has been as follows: salaries of medical officer and dispenser, £191; drugs, £57 12s. 5d.; surgical instruments, &c., £2 8s. 5d.; railway fares, &c., £1 3s. 4d.; rent, rates, and taxes, £17 10s.; sundries (coal, gas, &c.), £6 6s. 9d.; total, £276 0s. 11d. Leaving a deficiency on the half year of £39 0s. 4d.; besides which there is no allowance made for the use of a conveyance, which has been required on an average twice each week.

The amount of work done stands as follows:—The number of fresh cases of illness has been 1728: of these 877 have been men, 280 women, 571 children; 487 have been too ill to come to the dispensary, and have therefore been visited at their own homes, and to these 3078 visits have been paid. There have been 5250 consultations at the dispensary, and 8463 bottles of medicine, &c., have been supplied.

It was thought that it would be of interest to keep an account of the number of men, women, and children visited during the months of May and June; this was accordingly done with the following result: men 25; women 60; children 88; total 173.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

CORDLEY BRADFORD, L.R.C.P., M.R.C.S., L.S.A.
Smethwick, August, 1880.

INDIAN MEDICAL SERVICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Several recent numbers of THE LANCET which have reached me show that, contrary to the spirit of the motto which heads your correspondence columns, and in misapprehension I feel quite sure of the actual merits of the case, you have refused admission to letters from officers of the Indian Medical Service on the subject of the recent changes in their Service. Apart from the homely proverb that "they who wear the shoe know best where it pinches," the fact that such a number of letters have been addressed to you, that a deputation had lately an interview with the Secretary of State for India, that numerous petitions are at the present time being submitted to the Viceroy, and that others are in course of presentation to Parliament, might have convinced you that there was "something in" the agitation. There are several events in the history of our service which show that we are far from being an unreasonable body of men. Your strong point appears to be that we are wrong to object to the principle of selection. We are very far from doing so, if the principle is fairly applied, and, indeed, in combination with seniority, it has always governed promotion to the administrative ranks in our service. But what has happened to us is this: that though ours is in its essence a military service, many of us who have stuck to the legitimate, that is the military, line, find that as we are approaching the period at which we might expect promotion, and should undoubtedly have got it under the old rules, it is retarded or altogether taken out of our reach by the administrative rank having been split into two, a military and civil, the appointments in the latter being reserved exclusively for men who have passed most of their service in civil employ. The effect of this rule is that the promotion of some of our most distinguished men has been greatly retarded, and in some cases rendered impossible; for it must be borne in mind that the superannuation rule requires a man to retire at fifty-five if he has not been promoted to deputy surgeon-general; consequently a man who enters the service at twenty-five cannot get promotion at all unless it comes to him within the thirtieth year of his service, and it is exceedingly doubtful whether it will ever under the new rules be attained within that period; seeing that before the split in the administrative grade twenty-six years was an average service on promo-