HEALTH OF DUBLIN.

The death-rate in Dublin, which had been 30·4 and 29·2 per 1000 in the two preceding weeks, further declined to 27·4 during the week ending Feb. 2nd. During the past four weeks the death-rate in the city has averaged 28·6 per 1000, the rates during the same period being 18·0 in London and 31·5 in Edinburgh. The 182 deaths belonging to Dublin registered during the week under notice were 5 less than the number in the preceding week and included 18 which were referred to the principal zymotic diseases, against 16 and 20 in the two preceding weeks; of these, 12 resulted from whooping-cough, three from diarrhoea, and one from diphtheria. These 18 deaths were equal to an annual rate of 2·7 per 1000, the zymotic death-rate during the same period being 1·4 in London and 2·7 in Edinburgh. The deaths referred to whooping-cough, which had been 10, 12, and 8 in the three preceding weeks, rose again to 12 last week. The fatal cases of "fever," which had been three, three, and six in the three preceding weeks, declined again last week to three. The 182 deaths in Dublin included 29 of children under one year of age and 44 of persons aged upwards of 60 years; the deaths of infants showed a slight decline, while those of elderly persons were considerably less than the number in the preceding week. Seven inquest cases and seven deaths from violence during the week; and 63 or more than a third, of the deaths occurred in public institutions. The causes of nine, or nearly 5 per cent., of the deaths in the city last week were not certified.

THE SERVICES.

ROYAL ARMY MEDICAL CORPS.

Captain C. T. Sommam has joined at Woolwich. Lieutenants A. J. MoC. Cuddon-Fletcher and A. D. Jameson proceeded to Aldershot for a course of instruction at the Depôt, R.A.M.C., returning to Woolwich on the completion of the course. Major Berryman is in medical charge of the Formosa taking troops to Malta and Egypt. Civil Surgeon J. Freeman has assumed medical charge of the troops at Plymouth barracks on the first Saturday in June (the 8th). The annual meeting was fixed to take place after the council being in the chair. There were present Brigade-Surgeon-Majors J. E. Squire, W. Culver James, and T. H. Dickson, Surgeon-Captain J. Cantlie, (honorary secretary). Amongst other business the annual challenge shield competition was dealt with, the resolution presented by Surgeon-Major V. Matthews to consider the effect of the new Volunteer Act, 1900, upon volunteer medical officers, was adopted:—

That the attention of the proper authorities be called to the possible effect of the Volunteer Act, 1900, pressing unduly on volunteer medical officers, as it may necessitate their throwing up their practices if they are liable to compulsory service at long distances from their homes, as, owing to the shortness of the volunteer medical department of the regular army the volunteer medical services would, in all probability, be called out first and released the last.

It was resolved that a letter embodying the resolution be written to the Secretary of State for War. The following vote of condolence to His Majesty the King, proposed by Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonel J. E. Squire, and seconded by Surgeon-Major W. Culver James, was carried unanimously, and was to be forwarded through the Secretary of State for the Home Department:—

The Council of the Volunteer Medical Association beg with all respect to offer His Majesty the King, who as Prince of Wales was president of the association, their condolence on the irreparable loss sustained by His Majesty and by the whole empire, on the death of Her Most Gracious Majesty Queen Victoria.

GALLANTRY OF A FRENCH MEDICAL OFFICER.

According to a recent Ministerial decision Dr. Henri Mathé of the French navy has been granted special promotion on account of his meritorious services while on duty at Dakar in Senegal. The official announcement says that Dr. Mathé particularly distinguished himself by displaying exceptional qualities of initiative intelligence and devotion during an epidemic of yellow fever. "Left the only officer at the station by the demise of the commandant and his combatant staff he immediately assumed, with as much decision as coolness, the whole of the responsibilities inherent in such a situation."

THE INDIAN CONTINGENT IN CHINA.

The expeditionary force of native troops and followers sent from India to China was provided with a very liberal supply of warm clothing and it is satisfactory to find that although pneumonia has appeared among them the mortality has so far been comparatively small. It is well known that the natives of India when employed on field service during the cold season are much more susceptible to pneumonia and pulmonary disease than European troops.

Among the floral tributes received at Windsor Castle was a wreath of white flowers from the sick and wounded in the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley. The card bore this inscription: "In affectionate remembrance of our beloved Queen from the sick and wounded soldiers at the Royal Victoria Hospital." A superb crown of white flowers with an appropriate inscription was also sent by Colonel Charlton and the military officers of the hospital. A wreath had previously been sent to Osborne House by Miss H. Norman, R.R.C., lady superintendent, and the nursing sisters at Netley. Among the military officers who formed part of the procession from Osborne to the Royal yacht were numbered Colonel W. J. Charlton, R.A.M.C., principal medical officer of the Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, and Major Treherne, R.A.M.C., his staff officer.

According to the Pioneer Mail of Jan. 11th it is reported that the 2nd Battalion, Durham Light Infantry, are to be moved from Burma to Wellington, pending their departure home with a view to an improvement of the state of health of the regiment. The 1st Battalion, Royal Fusiliers, at Nasirabad will proceed to Burma.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE SOUTH AFRICAN HOSPITALS COMMISSION.

To the Editors of The Lancet.

Sirs,—Considering the circumstances which surrounded the birth of this Commission—the essentially technical character of the inquiry as originally proposed, the tergiversation of the Government on its composition and scope, its subsequent composition, the tone of the speeches in the House of Commons, the animus against medical men and the absence upon it of any member with knowledge of

THE SERVICES.—THE SOUTH AFRICAN HOSPITALS COMMISSION.
THE ADAPTABILITY OF CLOVER’S INHALER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

Sirs,—This well-known inhaler has, with slight modifications, held its own for many years in the administration of ether and when fitted with a tap at the free end of the bag is frequently used for giving nitrous oxide prior to etherisation. It does not appear to be generally known that a Clover’s inhaler without the bag is safe and effective for administration of chloroform or of mixtures of chloroform and ether. (Chloroform pure or in a mixture must never be given with the bag on, as this is practically a closed method, which results in death.)

In the past few years Mr. Arde has drawn attention to the utility of this method in giving Taylor’s mixture, which consists of chloroform one part and ether two parts, and it is generally known that the following modifications in the method of administration, I find it equally useful for administration of chloroform alone and other mixtures of chloroform and ether. The following mixtures are of service:


For a healthy man .... 2 parts .... 1 part

For a feeble man .... 1 part .... 1 part

The chloroform and ether are best kept in separate bottles.

FRANCIS H. WELCH, F.R.C.S. Eng., Surgeon-Colonel (retired), Medical Staff.

Brandoom-road, Lee, Feb. 4th, 1901.

"SELENIUM COMPOUNDS AS FACTORS IN THE RECENT BEER-POISONING EPIDEMIC."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

Sirs,—Since the publication of our last note1 upon this subject we have continued our work in this direction, and have been able to demonstrate the presence of selenium in brewing sugar and beer, the only source of which is the impure sulphuric acid used in the manufacture of the sugar. The brewing sugar in addition to selenium contained arsenic. We may say incidentally that this sugar was not manufactured by the firm implicated in the recent epidemic. The beer we analysed showed the presence of selenium, which has been said to be of the nature of a scandal with regard to the care of the sick and wounded, no general or widespread neglect of patients or indifference to their sufferings, and all witnesses of army work were practically unanimous in the view that taking it all in all the campaign the sick and wounded been so well looked after as they have been in this." One bubble which has been pricked is the asserted existence of an army reserve of medical men in the army reserve as such. The majority of our officers, however, are on active service, and it is the hitherto accepted competency of the civil section adequately to take the place of a trained army medical staff.

To enter further into details would occupy too much of your valuable space. Suffice it to say, that the business-like recommendations of the Commission are emphasised by the defects elucidated, for instance, in the method of administration, I find it equally useful for administration of chloroform or of mixtures of chloroform and ether. (Chloroform pure or in a mixture must never be given with the bag on, as this is practically a closed method, which results in death.)

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1 TIER LANCET, Feb. 2nd, 1901, p. 318.
3 Archiv für Experimentelle Pathologie und Pharmacologie, xxvii., 1893.