whether more than 3 out of 293 houses in Klang escaped infection during the last 4 months of that year. Port Swettenham was opened in September, 1902, and within 2 months 41 out of 49 government quarters became infected, while 118 out of 196 government servants were attacked before the end of the year. An energetic system of drainage similar to that which proved so effectual in Havana and Ismalia was instituted. Swamps were filled up, jungle and undergrowth cleared, and a contour drain was constructed round the declivities in order to intercept incoming springs. The cost up to date was \$26,000 (Mexican) for Klang and \$59,000 (Mexican) for Port Swettenham, this comparatively large expenditure being sanctioned in order that the work of reclamation should be as permanent as possible and should provide good building sites in both towns. The admissions to hospital for malaria fell considerably. Only 2 out of 260 children, or 0.77 per cent., residing in Klang and Port Swettenham were found to contain the malarial parasite in November and December last, as against 91 out of 298 residing in the surrounding district, or 34.8 per cent. The amount of sickness in officers in the two towns showed a remarkable fall. The following are the figures: Sick certificates—1901, 236; 1902, 40; 1903, 23; 1904, 14. Days of leave—1901, 1,026; 1902, 198; 1903, 73; 1904, 71. Further, no officer has suffered since July, 1904, that is, during the worst malarial season. Perhaps Dr. Watson's most convincing statement, which he says he can not help recording with less satisfaction, is that his fees from private patients suffering from malaria have fallen to zero. He sums up thus: "The two areas which were so malarious in 1901 are now practically, if not absolutely, free from the disease, and the district surrounding them remains much as it was." Ninety-nine per cent. of the breeding places of anopheles have been removed. There is no evidence of any considerable emigration of anopheles into the drained areas from the extensive breeding grounds outside—a most important fact, for the possibility of such emigration has always been an excuse for neglecting anti-mosquito work.

Lord Lister's Birthday.

Lord Lister, famous in the earliest days of antiseptic surgery, has just celebrated his seventy-eighth birthday. His admirers throughout the world will be delighted to hear that he is still in good health.

Correspondence

Abuses in Medical Literature.

SAN ANTONIO, TEXAS, 1905.

To the Editor:—I believe that the ponderous systems of medical literature are indefensible on economic and on moral grounds. Our literature, in its present bulk, is accessible to the student, but, in two respects at least, it is wholly inadequate. The most brilliantly endowed and acquisitive mind can hardly grasp, in all its ramifications, the essential literature of a single department of medicine, and yet some general knowledge of all departments is a necessary prerequisite to the intelligent practice of any of its specialties. When every branch of medicine has a half dozen or more systems devoted to it, is it not a gross imposition on the reader's mind, a confusion of his memory and a waste of his time? In the desire to be just, rather than critical, in my search for motives, I have been forced to indulge hypotheses, and to ask myself if these repetitious compilations are honestly put together, and diluted through countless pages, to suit the assumed lower intelligence of the reader. It may be presumed that many collaborations, not a few of them displaying in their pages the blurred literary images of men of deserved eminence, grow out of the notion that the reader's respect for authority is weighed by the bulk and heft of the volume. Evidence might be adduced to support the graver charge, that it is not the first aim of expansive authorship to present concisely, to the more or less credulous and dependent reader, new and important knowledge, or old knowledge in new and improved form, but elaborately to display itself as high consultant authority. The desire for a wider clientele is peculiarly seductive, and there is a certain objectiveness about increasing fees which seems to blunt the moral perceptions and to confuse the most virtuous intentions. Even writers of conspicuous ability and of unimpeachable moral character give the weight and in-

fluence of their commanding names to many of these successful impositions on the patience of the profession.

Recently I was permitted to read the manuscript of an exceptionally able and conscientious writer, under contract to contribute 15,000 words to a certain new system. He assured me, with charming innocence of any intentional complicity in wrong doing, that his paper was a compilation, that it added not an iota to the knowledge of the subjects, and that he could have completed his part of the work in 2,500 words. I am an advocate of the one book for the one man, and I would qualify the man and hold him to certain rigid conditions. He should not be permitted to write, with nothing but the itch for inspiration, air egotistic puerilities or display the turbulent impulses of covert ambition, in too much space. He should not confuse his subject and the reader by senseless repetitions. forsake the sufficient pamphlet for the degenerated book, or needlessly abstract from its original accessible source knowledge already familiar to the reader.

It is a matter of common knowledge that medical literature is luxuriant in its growth, abundant in its knowledge and brilliant in its achievements; but it does not courageously adhere to its own intrinsic ordinances, and its ethics are too much under the influence of alien and prohibitive influences. It flaunts its wretched superfluities in the face of knowledge, and its benefits are administered too seclusively to the writer and exclusively to the reader.

Without, however, seeking to pry too curiously into the character of personal responsibility to science, impartial evidence seems to confirm the statement that each member of the profession has contributed, in one way or the other, to the general confusion and misbehavior of medical literature. We have not recognized and sustained with the right intelligence or moral courage its superior claims to impersonal consideration, nor have we opposed, as individual units of resistance, the impositions that have weakened its vitality and compromised its character. By what initiative and with what force and persuasiveness shall we undertake the re-establishment of literary authority? It is easier to ask this question than to answer it. Nevertheless, it may be suggested, as a beginning, that it is possible for each of us to discourage in himself, and to oppose in others, the suave and fluent insinuations of self-interests. It is possible to refuse to sanction collaborations of dubious merit, even when we discover held over them, in editorial benediction, the palms of some acknowledged high priest of medical thought. An aroused general sentiment, expressing itself along these lines, would separate, in time, the wheat from the chaff, attach responsibility where it belongs, and relegate to the background the conscious and willing disturbers of literature's more honest and capable efforts to meet the requirements of scientific progress.

When the general demand for truly expressive literature is raised high enough, in quality and morals, both writer and publisher will be forced to adapt themselves to the higher claims of literary propriety. This disposition apparently settles the question of mischievous authorship, for it may be argued that without readers the publisher must fail, as without a publisher the writer must fail. It is certainly true that the right demand will produce the right book, for it is as obviously a fact that the cultivated intelligence of the reader has its source and authority in books as it is that the book has its source and authority in the writer.

JAMES HALL BELL, M.D.

Clay Mixture Poulices.

UNIVERSITY OF MICHIGAN,
DEPT. OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY.

ANN ARBOR, MICH, May 4, 1905.

To the Editor:—Certain medical journals are publishing a letter from the Denver Chemical Company criticising Dr. A. H. Roth's article on clay mixture poulices (*THE JOURNAL*, April 15, p. 1185), and criticising *THE JOURNAL* for publishing it. The letter contains several erroneous statements and as I had something to do with the article, as I shall show below, I think it only fair to Dr. Roth and to *THE JOURNAL* to give the facts.