

Anyone who is really concerned for the liberty of the subject, and does not merely cherish it as an obstructive fad, should work heart and soul for the passage of this Bill, and for the excision of the absurd clause which limits its operation to the period of six months after the conclusion of the war.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Parkstone, Dorset, May 17th, 1915.

CHAS. A. MERCIER.

THE MEDICAL DEFENCE UNION AND THE NATIONAL INSURANCE COMMISSIONERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I see a letter in your last issue from Dr. A. G. Bateman, of the Medical Defence Union, stating that this body intends to challenge the right in the High Courts to surcharge practitioners who, in the opinion of their colleagues, represented by the panel committees, have prescribed extravagantly and improperly. As a member of the Medical Defence Union I shall strongly oppose any of the funds of that body being used for such a purpose. If Dr. Bateman had had the opportunity, as I have had, of seeing the extraordinary concoctions ordered by certain panel practitioners, the total disregard as to the cost, even when a drug with a similar therapeutic action is much cheaper, and the preference shown by some to drugs that are unknown to the general run of practitioner, and particulars of which are only to be found in advertisements, he would realise that it is absolutely necessary to have a check of some kind. In the insurance area of Bucks three-quarters of the doctors who prescribe are able to keep to the level of sevenpence per prescription, the other quarter are mostly at the eightpenny level and seldom above 1s.

Yet we know that in the London area the cost is much higher, and there is no doubt whatever in my mind that there are many men who are prescribing expensive medicines solely with a view of making the Act unworkable. If they succeed in doing so and have a State Medical Service they will only have themselves to thank for it.

It is sincerely to be hoped that an important body like the Medical Defence Union is not going to be captured by enemies of the Act.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Buckingham, May 24th, 1915.

ARTHUR E. LARKING.

DIFFICULT LABOUR AND DENTAL DEFORMITIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have no wish to enter into a discussion in your columns with Mr. F. Lonnon, but I should like to correct a false impression he conveys in his letter in THE LANCET of May 22nd that subsequent to his interviewing the mother of the patient my attention was attracted to the relationship of difficult labour to dental deformities. My interest in the question was long antecedent to the International Medical Congress. Still further, until Mr. Lonnon's letter appeared I was quite ignorant of the fact that he was working on the subject. I shall be grateful for any help from your readers, and I have no doubt that I shall be able to obtain sufficient material without Mr. Lonnon's help. Incidentally, I may say that in the case to which he has referred the condition was probably due to a developmental defect, and not to injury at birth.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

May 25th, 1915.

J. F. COLYER.

THE ZEPPELIN THREAT : SURGICAL FIRST AID FOR THE METROPOLIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—With regard to the note appearing under this heading in your issue of May 22nd (p. 1104) it is important to remember that the work and organisation of the Committee of the Royal Society of Medicine, in consultation with and with the assistance of the War Office, deals chiefly with the East Coast from Dover to the Wash, and that it takes no responsibility for organisation in the metropolitan area, which is exclusively in the hands of the Commissioner of Police. Your notice suggests that certain steps suggested by the committee have been adopted and arranged for in the metropolis, but we have no knowledge that this has been done.

With regard to the metropolis, the committee has laid before the Commissioner a memorandum of suggestions for the organisation of surgical aid for London, but we have no right to assume that the Commissioner either heeded or adopted these suggestions. It has also provided the Commissioner of Police with a list of hospitals, infirmaries, and dispensaries willing to receive patients, and a map of London indicating the positions of these places, but the list did not include any extemporised emergency centres. Further, it has undertaken, if called upon by New Scotland Yard, to send surgeons, assistants, and anaesthetists to any point in the metropolitan area where their services are required, but only if summoned by the police.

We have no knowledge that copies of the map, which was prepared by Sir Rickman Godlee, Mr. Ernest Clarke, and Dr. H. Moreland McCrea, have been distributed to every police office, or that copies of the map can be supplied on demand.

Would you kindly allow me to add a personal note? You were good enough to say that the organisation has devolved upon myself, but this is only true in the limited sense that as honorary secretary of the committee I have endeavoured to the best of my ability to carry out its instructions. The Executive Committee, consisting of Sir Rickman Godlee, Bart. (chairman), Mr. C. A. Ballance, Mr. A. H. Cheate, Mr. Ernest Clarke, Mr. E. M. Corner, Dr. J. C. Dunn, Mr. Edmund Owen, Mr. W. H. Clayton-Greene, Mr. G. J. Jenkins, Dr. Moreland McCrea, Mr. J. W. Thomson Walker, has been in every sense of the word a working committee, and has held numerous meetings here and at the private residences of its members, and the detailed work of arranging the list of receiving places, and corresponding with the officials has fallen almost entirely on Sir Rickman Godlee, the chairman of the committee.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

J. Y. W. MACALISTER.

Royal Society of Medicine, Wimpole-street, W.,
May 26th, 1915.

BAZETT V. THE LONDON INSURANCE COMMITTEE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—This action was brought as a test action to raise the questions (1) whether "insuperable difficulty," such as the Committee alleges, is a legally justifiable answer—unless there is actual *physical* impossibility, uncontributed to by incompetence, and not merely *moral* impossibility aggravated by slack enforcement of provisions to meet it—to a