

of the fact that there were numerous official and unofficial interviews taking place between him and the Chancellor extending over the periods both before and after the introduction of the Bill, he was the tool of the Chancellor and his political supporters, and on the other hand, the supposition that Government supporters belonging to the Association were instructing him as to his course of procedure.

It is incredible to me that the governing authority of the Association did not give him written instructions as to the course which he was to pursue, both during his missionary tour and during the negotiations which he conducted with the Chancellor. It, therefore, appears to me highly desirable, in justice to Mr. Smith Whitaker, that such instructions should be published, and it is also desirable that the country should know how far the Government has conducted the negotiations with the British Medical Association with clean hands.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Hatfield, Jan. 4th, 1912.

LOVELL DRAGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Much as we dislike it, the National Insurance Act has come to stay, and we must make the best of it. Apart from the medical benefits it has many commendable points which in time will be appreciated by the public. On the other hand, the clauses relating to medical benefits are most unsatisfactory, but they appear to be elastic.

The "six cardinal points" of the British Medical Association have not been accepted by Parliament, and I feel sure that it would now be a waste of time and energy to agitate for their incorporation in the Act. It may be that it is well for the profession and the public that the "six cardinal points" or the most essential of them were rejected, as their adoption would undoubtedly have perpetuated the objectionable *per capita* system of payment.

We are now free to demand our own terms, and I sincerely hope that we shall be unanimous in demanding payment for actual services rendered. I can see nothing in the Act to prevent the Insurance Commissioners from giving this method a trial, and if we give them plainly to understand that we are determined not to work under the Act unless we are paid according to an agreed minimum scale for actual work done, it is possible that this essential will be conceded.

In July last the Imperial Medical Reform Union sent out 20,000 referendum forms to practitioners in England and Wales inviting them to state whether in favour of capitation payment or for services rendered, and of the replies received more than 95 per cent. were in favour of the latter method of remuneration. The adoption of this method is, in the opinion of the Council of the Union, the only way to preserve the independence of the profession.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

GEORGE BROWN,

General Secretary of the Imperial Medical Reform Union.
Basinghall-street, E.C., Jan. 9th, 1912.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—May I ask space in your valuable paper to call the attention of my fellow medical practitioners to the extreme danger to themselves and to the profession at large in rashly signing any pledge or undertaking not to work under the National Insurance Act. It is quite patent that a great deal of the materials published in the lay press is purely of a general political anti-governmental colour, aimed at increasing subscribers to certain papers, and serving up pabulum for lay readers at the expense of the medical profession, whose real interests are sacrificed and the profession put out of court and rendered powerless by their present attitude of "*rust cœlum*." I do not feel myself at liberty to say more, and remain,

Yours faithfully,

F. W. FORBES-ROSS, M.D. Edin., F.R.C.S. Eng.

Harley-street, W., Jan. 6th, 1912.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—What is the use of all this outcry against Mr. Lloyd George's offer to buy our services for his big national club at the rate of 4s. 6d. a head? How can we reasonably refuse to serve under his scheme when hundreds, perhaps thousands, of us are now working for clubs at that rate and less, and hundreds more are hungering for the jobs? How can we blame the Chancellor for taking us at our own valuation and offering to buy us at market price, the price fixed by our own competitive folly in the open, unorganised, medical labour market? No one will believe our demands to be just as earnest while our acts thus belie our words. To regularise

our position every club should be notified that on and after July 1st our charge per member would be 8s. 6d. (or thereabout), otherwise all contracts to cease.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

City-road, E.C., Jan. 8th, 1912.

H. G. DIXON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In connexion with recent correspondence in your columns, my attention has been called to By-law 39, Sect. 4, of the British Medical Association regulations, which enacts as follows: "In voting upon any matter upon which a constituency has passed a resolution within the three months immediately preceding such meeting the Representative or Representatives of that constituency shall be under obligation to vote in accordance with such resolution." It is obviously important that in future the representatives have a clear understanding as to their duties in the matter of voting.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

London, S.W., Jan. 8th, 1912.

EDWIN SMITH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Will you allow me space in your valuable journal for a brief reference to Dr. Edwin Smith's letter in your issue of Dec. 30th. I was present as an onlooker at the Representative Meeting to which he refers (Nov. 23rd), and myself heard Dr. Maclean instruct the delegates that in their voting "they were to vote in accordance with their conscientious opinion on the subjects that arose for consideration." I was amazed when I heard him say this, for obviously the delegates were there as representatives of the divisions only to the extent of expressing the views of the divisions, which had been considered at the meetings held previously throughout the country, certain definite points to vote on, for or against, having been submitted to them previously for their consideration. If, then, the chairman (Dr. Maclean) instructed the delegates to vote in the manner referred to, and assuming they did so, the meeting, I submit, ceased to be representative of the views of the profession. We owe Dr. Smith a debt of gratitude for his efforts to ventilate the matter. Again, as an onlooker, I could not help feeling that an attempt was being made, as Dr. Smith says, to fritter away the time of the meeting in futile discussions. I entirely agree with him that the consideration of the number of medical men (i.e., 3, 5, or 8 against 80) on the committees is not worth a thought, as in either case they would be powerless.

Dr. Maclean, according to his own statement, had received the offer of Mr. Lloyd George of the post of Commissioner for the secretary of the Association, and in my opinion there would have been no breach of confidence if he had openly explained this to the Representatives instead of talking of "smoke-room rumours," &c. Had he done this it is certain the Representatives would have voted very differently from the manner in which they did.

I was present at the Battersea town-hall when Dr. Lauriston Shaw addressed the Wandsworth division, and was astonished to hear him say that the doctors could have "8s. 6d. or 10s. per annum or 2s. 6d. per visit if they preferred it." There may be no legal barrier to this, but there is every other conceivable barrier, and when he made this statement he should have known this well. It looks as though this statement was made only to prevent those present from supporting the resolution which Dr. Edwin Smith had moved calling on the Council to resign, and I at any rate trust that no steps will be left untaken that will lead to the compulsory resignation of the Council.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

REGINALD THORPE, M.R.C.S. Eng., L.R.C.P. Lond.

Elmbourne-road, Tooting Bec Common, S.W., Jan. 6th, 1912.

* * We hope to publish later some of the many letters on this subject still in our hands.—ED. L.

THE MORBID DIATHESES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am glad to find my old teacher Sir Dyce Duckworth raising a mild protest in THE LANCET of Jan. 6th (p. 54) against the too exclusive attention bestowed in the Bradshaw lecture¹ upon the parasite as against the host, or in his words, upon the seed as against the soil.

In my time, even long after "those dark days" of Mr.

¹ THE LANCET, Dec. 23rd, 1911, p. 1766.

Clement Lucas, Sir Dyce Duckworth—possibly more than any other teacher at St. Bartholomew's—urged that successful medical practice consisted in "treating the patient rather than the disease," a dogmatic maxim of profound truth which not only encouraged his students to study their "cases," but which also enables those who practise especially in the department of mental medicine to treat successfully, and happily in many instances to ward off, the most disabling scourge which can afflict the human race.

In his "thundered out" destructive criticism of diathesis, the Bradshaw lecturer has been carried by the interest of his subject further than he possibly intended, for—and this is why I write—as the orator of the Royal College of Surgeons he lends the influence of his powerful authority and position (to quote his words) "to destroy the reproductive function of the generative organs without the knowledge of the individual" in cases of lunacy! He varies his theme "on some points in heredity" by an excursion into eugenics, and points out that the present moment would seem to be a favourable time for medical men to press upon the Government for some drastic measure for the protection of the State against the gradual increase of lunacy. Apart from the intrusion of medical men into politics—and not with the most happy experience if recent events are to yield a precedent—it may be well to note here that an inquiry made by a medical officer (Dr. G. Clarke) in one of the London asylums elicited the information that if the parents of those who were admitted insane had themselves been treated in the manner recommended by Mr. Lucas only about 1 per cent. of the offspring referred to would have been saved the scourge of insanity—i.e., insanity had occurred in the parents in nearly 99 per cent. after the birth of the certified patients. If every defective were deprived of those organs which are stated to belong to the next generation, then on the morrow there would be defectives again. Degeneration and defect are not the consequence of defective seed alone. By common consent they are equally the product of the environment or soil, and they are attendant upon evolution towards the perfect. In this progress towards perfection defectives will never be wanting. Defectives came not originally from other defectives, but from normal types. It is by no means certain that the offspring of two defectives even will be defective. The following letter from an old patient illustrates my point, although by itself I acknowledge that it carries no great weight:—"You will remember some years ago my giving birth to a child at the asylum. I am pleased to tell you he is (up to the present) a very good boy. He has been awarded four medals and several prizes and is in the highest standard in the school."

Hitherto no pathogenic organism has been connected with insanity, and it may be stated to possess no more clearly defined pathology than in "those dark days" when insanity was recognised to have a definite "diathesis," and which, in the opinion of many, is still to-day a real condition—i.e., if such may be interpreted to imply a *tendency*, under certain conditions, for the tissues inherited from the parents to develop disease on certain definite lines; in other words, a defective constitution (soil) which is inherited and which is so constructed as to permit of readily disordered metabolism under the influence of some specific or non-specific organism (seed).

The views of a great surgeon upon biological problems cannot fail to be of interest to those who are attempting to unravel the facts of experience, even if these are only on the subjective side. Mr. Lucas supports his destructive criticism in regard to leprosy from Holy Writ and refers to the discovered "seed." May I also quote from Holy Writ and draw the attention of the lecturer to the parable of the sower which gives the vicissitudes of the seed resulting from environment? That which fell by the wayside served only as food for birds, that on stony places became scorched and sunburnt, and that which fell among degenerate thorns was choked out! None of the effects were in the least attributable to defective seed. It is essential for good development to have good surroundings, and good environment is as essential as good seed. It is clear, as Sir Dyce Duckworth has pointed out, that the individual organisation (soil), or in the case of lunacy the environment, has intimate proclivities which it is the fashion to-day to ignore.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Claybury, Jan. 9th, 1912.

ROBERT JONES, M.D. Lond.

MINERS' PHTHISIS IN THE TRANSVAAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—From recent cables in the Johannesburg newspapers it is gathered that in your issue either of Dec. 1st or 8th, 1911, appears a somewhat sensational letter from a medical practitioner in this city in respect to miners' phthisis in the Witwatersrand Mines. This letter has also since been published here, and, with your permission, it is desired to refer to its last paragraph. In this paragraph are quoted certain statements by a local engineer and tutor, who is known to feel aggrieved that no member of the Commission (before which, of course, he had every opportunity of adducing any evidence he desired) will discuss its statistical and other findings publicly with him, or descend to any exchange of personalities. While this policy will be adhered to it is thought right that the history of the Mining Regulations Commission should for general information be briefly set out; for, though well known in Johannesburg, it is naturally little known elsewhere.

This Commission was appointed by his Excellency Lord Selborne on May 11th, 1907, and consisted of five members (Messrs. Krause, M.L.A. (chairman), Nicholson, Porter, Price, and Heymann). Its immensely wide reference was to inquire into and report upon the following matters:—

1. The working of the Mines, Works, and Machinery Regulations, and to make recommendations for any amendments thereto necessary for the better protection of the health and safety of persons working in mines, with special reference to the following subjects: (a) prevention of accidents; (b) ventilation; (c) underground sanitation; (d) change-houses.
2. The present system of measuring up work underground, and to make recommendations as to the necessity or otherwise for legislation on this subject.
3. The question of extending the operations of the Mining Certificates Ordinance, No. 50 of 1903, to engine-drivers driving stationary and traction engines, not being man-hauling engines.

In order to clear the ground it was decided to deal first with the second and third of the terms of reference as being matters of limited scope compared with those comprised under Term 1.

On Sept. 21st, 1907, an interim report upon these subjects was presented, which report is printed as Appendix "B" to the Final Report. The Commission then proceeded to take evidence on the very wide ground covered by Reference No. 1 and virtually completed this work by June, 1908. About this time, however, commenced the curious sequence of misfortunes with which the *personnel* of the Commission was pursued. In April, 1908, Mr. Nicholson resigned through ill-health and died shortly afterwards. In June, 1908, Mr. Price resigned and left the Transvaal, and in November, 1908, Dr. Porter went on sick leave until May, 1909. In September, 1909, Mr. Heymann met with a serious motor accident, and in October, 1909, developed dangerous illness which confined him to bed for eight months. The progress of the report was, therefore, considerably delayed, and the great labour of its preparation fell eventually mainly on the shoulders of the two remaining Commissioners, whose time was, even in the ordinary way, sufficiently occupied by their professional and official duties. They were, therefore, unable to report till March, 1910.

It must not, however, be thought (as is tacitly implied in the letter under reference) that nothing was done between June, 1908, when the taking of evidence finished, and August, 1910, when the report was published. For in November, 1908 (*vide* p. 40 of Report), the Commission made the strongest official interim representation to the Honourable the Minister for Mines on certain matters, and notably on the outstanding importance, from the point of view of dealing with miners' phthisis, of preventing and allaying dust in mines. As the result of the Commission's recommendations in November, 1908, the following additions to the Mining Regulations were gazetted on Dec. 24th, 1908:—

5. Every place where development work is carried on and where the natural strata are not wet, and every dry and dusty stope shall be adequately supplied at all times with suitable clean water. Such supply shall be continuous, and shall be sufficient for effectively damping the broken ground and for allaying the dust caused by drilling operations.
6. Blasting shall be so arranged that men working in other places shall be exposed as little as practicable to dust and smoke.
7. All plant, material, and other things necessary to enable the above rules to be carried out shall be provided and maintained in working order.
- 146 (II.). The ganger or miner in charge of workmen shall be responsible that the following provisions be observed: (1) No person shall in the drilling of holes use any percussion machine-drill unless a