

medical profession that suffers but in reality the whole nation.

What is being done at Walsall is only typical of what is taking place all over the country, and it is pitiable to think how much harm will not unlikely be done to the general practitioners of the country by the multiplication of these whole-time officials, who, in order to have sufficient work to justify their existence, must undertake duties that in the not remote future will seriously threaten the little private practice that still remains to their brethren endeavouring to gain a living in poor districts.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
Hackney-road, N.E., May 28th, 1910. MAJOR GREENWOOD.

THE OPERATION FOR CLEFT PALATE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The remarks of Mr. Thomas H. Kellock on this subject, which appear in THE LANCET of this week, raise a question of considerable interest and of great importance. Mr. Kellock tells us that he had recently under his care two children who during infancy had been operated upon for cleft palate. "It is true that in both of them the cleft had been closed over, but the palate that had been so fashioned was a most inefficient one, the soft palate was very short in an antero-posterior direction and terminated posteriorly in an almost straight transverse line, the movements of the soft palate were almost absent As far as speech was concerned the result was very poor, and in one case, that of a child aged about 9 years, it was little, if anything, better than in a case where no operation had ever been performed."

The unsatisfactory results in these two cases may, of course, be exceptional, but those of us who delay operating upon the palate until the child is about 2 years of age believe that if an operation is performed during infancy it must be at the expense of the soft palate. The chief object in closing a cleft palate is to render the powers of speech more perfect than they otherwise could be, and a well-formed and freely moveable soft palate is the all-important factor in obtaining a good result in this respect.

During the past ten years the early operation for cleft palate has been very frequently practised by surgeons in London, due no doubt largely to the fact that the operation has been extensively advertised, and the attention of the profession and of the public directed to it. What are the after-results as regards the powers of speech when a cleft palate has been closed during infancy? The answer is entirely a question of evidence; and surely, Sir, there must be plenty of evidence at hand in London. I would suggest that it would be extremely interesting if, at the meeting of the British Medical Association in July next, London surgeons who so strongly advocate this early operation should bring forward some of their cases and so let those of us who are sceptical be convinced by hearing the children speak.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
Liverpool, May 28th, 1910. R. W. MURRAY.

HOSPITALS IN SHIPS AT SEA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your Annotations of last week I read with great interest your *résumé* of the paper on the Hospital Establishment of Passenger Ships, by Dr. Dupuy and Dr. Villejean, read before the International Medical Congress held at Budapest. As the subject is one in which I have taken considerable interest it is with great satisfaction that I note that it is at length meeting that recognition from the medical profession that its importance merits.

In 1906 I pointed out what steps I considered necessary to be taken in order to ensure efficient reform in the medical, nursing, and hospital arrangements of passenger ships carrying large numbers of emigrants, and I venture to enclose you a reprint of my letter to the *British Medical Journal* of July 21st, 1906, giving the details of the reforms that I then advocated. That my suggestions were not considered unreasonable by the medical and lay press was shown by the flattering notices that they received in the *Tribune* and *Hospital and Nursing Mirror* of this country, and the lengthy extracts from my letter that appeared in the English papers of Rio, Montevideo, and Buenos Aires, and also in some Australian papers.

Although for the last five years laboratory work on land rather than surgery at sea has fallen to my lot, still I should like to add my word on behalf of the sick emigrant, whose treatment I then considered an anachronism and a disgrace to the hygienic and humanitarian principles of modern civilisation.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
HUGH WANSEY BAYLY.

Brook-street, Grosvenor-square, W., May 30th, 1910.

MEASLES AND THE POST-OFFICE AUTHORITIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I was interested in reading an annotation in your issue of May 14th on the question of how measles is spread, but I must say that my experience of over 20 years in general practice does not enable me to accept the teaching laid down. As your readers may remember, the medical officer of health to the Brixham urban district council advised the Post Office authorities to withdraw a postman from his duties on the ground that as his wife had contracted measles he was carrying about the infection wherever he went and thus was spreading the disease. I know that our text-books nearly all contain this teaching, and the public generally have an idea that the infectious diseases can be transmitted in all sorts of strange ways, but has not the time come for some authoritative statement to be made in this matter? Is there not a danger of our believing time-honoured statements which, when examined by the light of scientific facts, will not be so generally accepted?

With reference to measles, for instance, I have never heard of an authentic case where a medical man had carried the infection to any member of his family. For some years past I have asked as many medical men as possible if any of them could remember ever having been the means of carrying the infection to any of his family, and I have been invariably answered in the negative. I am informed that nurses who are in our isolation hospitals never take the infection with them when they visit their friends. Dr. F. G. Crookshank, medical officer of health of Barnes, actually employs the same nurse for the different infectious diseases, the patients being separated by glass screens, but he has never found an instance where the nurse has conveyed one disease to a patient suffering from a different disease (see THE LANCET, Feb. 19th, 1910, p. 477). All these instances, and I could cite more, go to show that it is not the experience of those who have to do most with these infectious diseases that these diseases are carried about in this manner, but personal contact is absolutely essential and personal contact alone.

The fact is, if you stop the postman from his daily round because he has measles at home, you might as well stop the members of our profession from pursuing their calling also and brand them as carriers of infection wherever they go. But are they? I certainly do not believe it for a moment. I have not yet heard or seen any facts which would warrant our acceptance of such a statement, but I fear there is a good deal of prejudice left in our profession and a disinclination to let go old beliefs even if their fallacy is shown. It is really ridiculous, if it were not serious, to notice how people are boycotted by their friends and how many are interfered with in their daily avocation because there happens to be in their homes some case of infectious disease. Let us by all means properly isolate these diseases for as long a time as we may think right, but do not let us interfere unnecessarily and without any good purpose with the calling of bread-winners or the convenience of the public.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,
Wimbledon-hill, S.W., May 28th, 1910. S. R. COLLIER.

THE LATE DR. E. CRESSWELL BABER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The obituary notice of the late Dr. E. Cresswell Baber, though giving a sympathetic and full account of his life history, must seem to his friends, who are many, to be susceptible of a little amplification. Those who as his fellow specialists came most closely in contact with him are those who miss him most, and among the whole group there is probably not one who will be more missed. The character