

THE SMALL-POX EPIDEMIC.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am afraid the hopeful tone of your comments on the apparent decline of the small-pox epidemic will prove somewhat premature; for, although the number of cases admitted into the hospitals has somewhat diminished, I regret to say that among the more recent admissions there is a large proportion of cases of the very worst type, with a corresponding mortality. This, as you well know, indicates that the decline in numbers is probably only temporary, and that an increase may be expected to follow. It may therefore be said that, although the epidemic has existed in the metropolis for about nine months, and notwithstanding sufficient hospital accommodation has been provided for the poorer class of victims, the disease practically remains, if not unchecked, at any rate unsubdued. Is it not time that positive measures were taken to stamp it out, or how long will a supine public be content to allow it to remain in their midst? Undoubtedly, it *could* be put an end to, and in a very few weeks, were proper means used for the purpose. Who is to direct and enforce such measures? As has so often been urged in your columns, there is no central sanitary authority capable of acting. One simple measure may be mentioned, which, if properly adopted, would undoubtedly soon check the epidemic—viz., a house-to-house visitation for the discovery and vaccination of every unvaccinated person without distinction of age or sex. The local authorities would, I am persuaded, readily carry out, so far as their powers permit, any such measure that was recommended to them by competent authority. But to whom are they to look for guidance? To the Local Government Board? But this Board appears to want either the ability or the desire, or both, to act in the matter. Weeks ago you published the report of the Managers of the Metropolitan Asylums Board, urging the Local Government Board to this effect, and their appeal has been largely endorsed by the vestries and district boards of the metropolis. This report was duly presented by the managers to the Local Government Board, but this Board have taken no notice of the communication—they have not even acknowledged its receipt! Is there not one among the metropolitan representatives in Parliament able and willing to take up this question—a question of literally vital importance? Hundreds of people are dying around us needlessly; thousands more are suffering equally needlessly; and many thousands of pounds are being spent unnecessarily; and as yet not a word on the subject has been heard from anyone in power or authority.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

WILLIAM S. CORTIS, M.D.

Kennington-park-road, S.E., May 1st, 1877.

CONSULTATION OR CO-OPERATION WITH HOMŒOPATHS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—With reference to the question as to how far a surgeon may co-operate with a homœopathic practitioner in a case of emergency, I think an incident which occurred to myself may afford an answer. Some time ago an old friend of mine, who had been originally in our own ranks, and had latterly been converted to homœopathy, called on me for the purpose of performing an operation for strangulated hernia upon one of his patients. I informed him that I could not meet him in consultation, but as the case was urgent I would give my services. I drove with him to the house, and suggested that he had better inform the patient as to the position of affairs, and then allow me to go up stairs and do what was necessary. To this suggestion my friend acceded at once, and whilst I was examining the patient he remained below. I found that an operation was not required, and I took my departure. Had an operation been needful I should have performed it at once, and certainly should not have objected to the presence of the practitioner in such urgency, but I should have insisted upon the whole conduct of the case subsequently.

I am, &c.,

Wimpole-street.

HENRY SMITH.

DENTAL REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg leave to express my obligations to Mr. Turner for giving that which purports to be the text of the resolution as amended by Mr. Tomes, of which I gave the spirit in a former communication. In the manuscript which I forwarded to you, the inverted commas were only placed before the title “dental surgeon, surgeon dentist, or dental practitioner, or dentist,” and not at the head of the sentence referred to—a slight printer’s error of which I acquainted Mr. Turner immediately, also correcting it in your journal of last week. A careful reading of the resolution, as now presented to you, shows that my interpretation was correct in each particular. The second resolution, which Mr. Turner quotes, does not alter its character in the slightest degree, as in the event of its ever being possible to register the special licence by legislative enactment, future qualified practitioners—that is to say, those holding surgical diplomas—would find themselves debarred from using the title “Dental Surgeon or Surgeon Dentist,” whereas persons with no claim to call themselves surgeons would be permitted to adopt that title. The paradox is transparent. The two memorials presented to the College of Surgeons in 1857, and referred to in Mr. Turner’s letter, are quite beyond the question. My objection, as well as that of others, to the proceedings of the Dental Reform Committee at its last meeting was the attack made upon the many qualified surgeons who have devoted themselves exclusively to the practice of dental surgery.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

May 2nd.

S. CARTWRIGHT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have read with the utmost surprise the statement of my friend Mr. Turner in your last number—viz., “that the Dental Reform Committee do not propose to interfere with vested interests.” Mr. Turner must surely have forgotten what took place at the last meeting, and which has necessitated my sending him my resignation as a member of that Committee, and of which the following, though shortened, is otherwise a correct copy. I also append the clauses referred to in full.

I remain, Sir, yours, &c.,

ALFRED COLEMAN.

Savile-row, April 30th, 1877.

DEAR SIR,—I regret I can no longer consistently remain a member of the Dental Reform Committee. My ground for resigning is the following—viz.: At a meeting of the Executive Committee, held the 3rd November last, certain clauses were submitted which contemplated, unintentionally I was sure, the depriving of certain corporate bodies of privileges they at present possessed, and I urged how fatal to the cause in hand would be the opposition which would most assuredly be raised by those bodies to any measures purposing a restriction of their legal rights. The Executive Committee admitted the force of the reasoning, and adopted as an amendment the insertion of the words “with the exception of those by law already permitted to do so” in Clause 1 line 2, after the words “Royal College of Surgeons.” This, to my mind, prudent and just course of proceeding, the General Committee, at their meeting of the 7th inst., rejected, and avowedly on the grounds, as distinctly stated by the proposer of the rejection, that it was desirable those corporate bodies should be deprived of such rights. Being a fellow of one such corporation and a licentiate of another, and having bound myself to uphold the honour and maintain the privileges of each, I can no longer remain the promoter of a movement which now has avowedly as one of its objects the deprivation of those bodies of certain of their legal rights. I cannot and do not believe that the dental reform movement, as it originated in Manchester, had other than pure and disinterested motives, and I most deeply regret this action of its committee, which, if persevered in, must prove suicidal to that I have elsewhere characterised as the most important movement for