

June 8th some of the Bath churches had collections for the home.

Sir Joseph Dalton Hooker, G.C.S.I., C.B., Surgeon R.N. (retired), late Director of the Royal Botanic Gardens, Kew, has been presented by the German Emperor with the Order Pour le Mérite for his distinguished research in science and art.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE DESTRUCTOR NUISANCE AT TORQUAY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—It might have been thought that the frequent appeals for the establishment of open-air sanatoriums would have gradually brought people to see that foul air is as great a menace to health as foul water or adulterated food. Here, however, in a "health resort," where the only industry, as the Duke of Argyll once said, is "the manufacture of health"; the breezes which used to make the summer climate on the higher levels delightful now carry with them and cause to impinge upon various parts of the town the fumes from a refuse destructor, and in spite of all the representations made to the authorities, including those of the Special Commissioner of THE LANCET, no intelligent efforts have been made to deal with the cause of the nuisance which has just now entered upon its fourth summer. Noxious matters issuing from the chimney of the destructor are weighed in the mental balance of the town councillors against noxious matters issuing from the kitchen chimney of a cottage and they find that the latter weigh the heavier. When we consider that a cottage chimney would burn only a few pounds of coal, whereas the destructor burns some tons of refuse, we see that such a state inverts the arithmetical relations.

If we look at the chimneys under varying conditions we shall find the same singular inversion of facts. On Sunday, for instance, the destructor does not work, whilst for the cottage chimney it is the busiest day of the week. Sunday, according to this proposition, ought to be the day when the air is foulest. As an actual fact, it is the day which brings complete relief from the nuisance. Again, when the destructor is working but the atmospheric conditions permit of the ascent of the fumes, we complain of no pollution of the air. This is notably the case in winter, the ascent being favoured by the greater difference which prevails at that season between the temperature of the fumes and that of the outside air. In winter the cottage chimneys are active, in summer they are less so. In winter the destructor gives but little annoyance; in summer it is an abomination. Here, again, then, the facts of the case are turned upside down in the proposition. I do not know what the chairman puts into the scale against this and other facts. We have seen in Torquay some very striking effects of coal smoke, but they came from the town council's electric station, and happily they have now been completely remedied by the adoption of smokeless coal.

It has been suggested that potassium cyanide or arsenical fumes are present in the destructor products in appreciable quantities, but whether they are or not, the evils caused by the gases, paraffins, and slags blown upon us produce effects which are unsatisfactory by-products for a place whose object is "to manufacture health." Many of the inhabitants, like myself, came down here to live as much as possible in the open air. But in the summer time it is often impossible for us to remain in the garden—rather we are compelled to take refuge in the house and shut the windows. In former times the summers here were particularly cool and enjoyable. Now we are glad to spend as much of the summer as we can away from Torquay, even in places where the natural advantages are incomparably less favourable. But all might be put right, as your Commissioner has clearly shown, and I feel that ultimately all must be put right. Should, however, the nuisance remain unmitigated through the present summer those interested in the great questions of the pollution of town air should not miss the opportunity of paying a visit to Torquay, when they will find an instructive object-lesson as to the results of

placing the top of a chimney of a refuse destructor in the wrong place.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

HENRY HUMPHREYS, M.A., M.D. Cantab.,
M.R.C.P. Lond.

Torquay, June 14th, 1902.

* * * Owing to the great length of Dr. Humphreys's letter we have been compelled to reduce it. The chemical considerations into which he enters in regard to kitchen chimney and destructor smoke are omitted. Obviously the two kinds of emanation show sharp differences in physical character and chemical composition which Dr. Humphreys points out.—ED. L.

THE MEDICAL SERVICE OF THE MERCHANT MARINE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I address to you this communication for the purpose of calling to the attention of my colleagues the present condition and prospects of seafaring physicians—ships' doctors of the merchant marine. In these days of keen competition and plethora of medical men, who must consequently see their field of opportunity and financial prospects lessened, it seems only rational and business-like that we should stand together and demand proper recognition and remuneration commensurate with the outlay of time and money which is necessary to fit us for professional duties. Physicians in private practice are repaid according to their skill and industry, and often by good fortune. Army and navy medical men receive fair recompense for their services, good social position, and prospects of advancement. Too many physicians, however, all qualified, are giving their valuable time to hospitals, sanatoriums, and asylums for the niggardly salary of £50 to £150 per annum, which institutions carry heavy financial burdens but do not enable their medical officers to support a family. The physicians, it must be admitted, have in some cases chance of advancement, which cannot be said of that most abject class of practitioners—steamship doctors.

Nearly every international passenger-carrying steamer of certain capacity is compelled to carry an officer, who is bluffed by the company into accepting for his services the pittance of £8 to £12 per month on English and American ships, £5 to £10 on German boats, and about the same amount when sailing under other flags, and as they are seldom allowed to charge a fee for their services their pay barely covers the cost of uniforms and other items of expense. On American ships their position is humiliating as the engineers, deck officers, as well as freight clerks receive better wages and are judged accordingly. Unfortunately most steam-ship companies, only wishing to comply with law, are satisfied with any so-called doctor and there are always numbers of professional "scabs" who rent themselves out for a flunkey's salary. It seems to me a disgrace that any qualified man should consider his services worth less than a guinea a day and I believe that if individuals and medical organisations would maintain their self-respect and assert their rights by demanding that no position in a steam-ship company, corporation, or institution of any kind be filled under £30 per month (which would support a family decently), they would soon gain their point and at the same time command the respect that educated physicians deserve. They would be received at their own estimate and not ranked with "unskilled labour." It is well known that many young men go to sea merely for travel, but they should not give their time away any more than in civil practice, for the physician's time, as well as actual services rendered, must be considered.

The Spanish-American doctors, although wanting in some respects, uphold their rights and refuse to accept less than £15 a month and a free hand in practice, and *get it*, because they hold together and are difficult to get at the price mentioned, as they realise that their salary should be £30 instead of one-half of that amount. I trust that this subject will receive from the profession the attention that it deserves.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

W. T. BURRES, M.D.

R.M.S. Peru, Panama, Colombia, May 1st, 1902.

TUMOURS OF THE STOMACH.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have read the brief account in THE LANCET of June 21st, p. 1763, of the case under the care of