

Englishmen which has never been exposed to the malarial influence.

Shifting his ground, Mr. Eder says: "There is nothing to suggest that the parasite that once flourished here was different from that now existing in other countries." Then why does he suggest it? As a matter of fact, it is a suggestion well worth our consideration, judging from the analogies presented by proved and established conclusions as to the effects of different environments upon the *causæ causantes* of other parasitic diseases. It is quite conceivable that the malaria parasite in this country was as modified in its relation to the malaria parasite of the West Coast as the red grouse of Scotland is modified from the willow grouse of the continent.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
June 19th, 1905. W. GEORGE CRESWELL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I observe that Mr. Eder (in his letter on the above subject published in THE LANCET of June 17th, p. 1675) repudiates the principle of natural selection, denies that heredity has any influence in the causation of tuberculosis, and even doubts whether it plays a part in causing insanity. May I ask his reasons?—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Wimpole-street, W., June 19th, 1905. HARRY CAMPBELL.

THE CENTRAL MIDWIVES BOARD AND THE BELFAST UNION MATERNITY HOSPITAL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have read with much interest and appreciation your very just and well-deserved strictures on the action of the Central Midwives Board towards the Belfast Maternity Hospital in refusing to recognise the nurses who have been trained there. Allow me to bring to your notice what seems to me its equally unjust and harsh action in regard to the nurses trained in the Belfast Union Maternity Hospital.

This hospital has been recognised by the Central Midwives Board as a training school for the future as the conditions existing there fulfil all its requirements, but it has refused to enrol any of the nurses trained in this hospital prior to March 31st of this year, except those who were in *bonâ-fide* practice for one year prior to the passing of the Act and (this is what makes it so absurd) who had exactly the same training as those who were refused. The Central Midwives Board has taken this action notwithstanding that it was pointed out to it: (1) that no change has been made in the conditions of training in this hospital for the past ten years, except that formerly the period of training was six months instead of three as required by the Central Midwives Board; (2) that all these nurses before obtaining certificates had to pass the very severe examination of the Ulster Examining Board of Midwifery, a board composed of such eminent men as Professor J. W. Byers, Dr. John Campbell, Dr. Brice Smyth, Dr. Alexander Dempsey, Mr. Andrew McConnell, Mr. Robert Hall, and Dr. J. Lynass, all of them, except the last three, being unconnected with the hospital; (3) that all these nurses prior to beginning their obstetrical course had had two years' medical and surgical training and passed a searching examination in these subjects; and (4) that many of the nurses go each year to England to follow their profession.

It seems to me that no nurses could undergo a more thorough preparation, that this is the class of nurse the Midwives Act was intended to encourage, and that a great injustice has been done by the Central Midwives Board in refusing to place these thoroughly trained and experienced nurses on its roll of certified midwives.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

JOHN MCLIESH, M.B., D.P.H. R.C.P.S. Irel.,
Physician in Charge of Belfast Union Maternity Hospital.
Belfast, June 17th, 1905.

DEATH CERTIFICATION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—All who correctly appreciate the national value of accurate and uniform certification of causes of death to public health and sanitary progress must feel grateful to "A Provincial Surgeon" for his timely and useful suggestion, in THE LANCET of June 17th, p. 1677, that every medical

student should receive, before completing his curriculum, systematic instruction as to the manner of filling up death certificates and for calling the attention of medical practitioners to the gravity of their responsibilities to the public, imposed upon them by statute, to certify "to the best of their knowledge and belief" the cause of death of each patient attended by them during his or her last illness. There can be no doubt that this responsibility has recently been rendered increasingly onerous, among other causes, by the phenomenal development of industrial insurance, which has to a great extent degenerated into a most dangerous form of gambling. It is an open secret that medical practitioners are now frequently urged by relations or friends of deceased patients to certify the cause of death in such a way as not to endanger the payment of insurance money or even to alter a certificate accurately filled up in order to facilitate the payment of such money. This and other unpleasant and inconvenient consequences of the responsibilities to which "A Provincial Surgeon" calls attention appear to have borne fruit in the deliberate and startling suggestion to eliminate the Cause of Death column from the death register. That such a fatal blow to sanitary progress would ever be sanctioned by statute it seems impossible to believe. It would, however, be well for those who have favoured this suggestion to consider seriously what its effect would be on public health administration.

While fully recognising the value of your correspondent's letter it is impossible to endorse his opinion that the present system of death certification, governed by the Births and Deaths Registration Act, 1874, "would be absolutely perfect" if the medical practitioner, the legal informant of the death, and the registrar were to carry out their respective duties in strict accordance with that Act. It has long been urged and fully admitted by all those interested in public health and in the value of mortality statistics that the Act referred to urgently requires amendment, at any rate, in the following directions: (1) to secure the due certification of the cause of death of any person dying without the attendance during his or her last illness of a registered medical practitioner, if an inquest is not held concerning such death; and (2) to secure the more satisfactory certification and record of all alleged cases of stillbirth.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Surbiton, June 20th, 1905. NOEL A. HUMPHREYS.

MEDICAL CERTIFICATES IN RESPECT OF SCHOOL ATTENDANCE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of May 27th, p. 1442, you have an annotation with the above title upon the fees offered by the Kent education committee to medical men for supplying certificates of sickness to parents whose children are unable to attend school. I should like to state that I am in entire agreement with the remarks you have made on the subject and to point out that the fee which this division of the British Medical Association proposed as suitable for acceptance by medical men was 2s. 6d. for examination and certificate at the house of the medical man and 5s. if a visit were necessary to the child's home. I am induced to publish our conclusions in the hope that further action by education committees in the future may be met in a similar way in other parts of the kingdom to prevent the evils you have pointed out.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

OSBORNE D. MARRIOTT, M.D. Glasg.
Sevenoaks, June 19th, 1905.

A NEW ELECTRO-CYSTOSCOPE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Under this title Dr. W. K. Otis of New York describes his new cystoscope in THE LANCET of June 10th. He claims that the area visible with his cystoscope is as large as the ring A (diameter 75 millimetres) and with a Nitze-Leiter cystoscope as small as the ring B (diameter 43 millimetres). As far as the instruments made by Leiter are concerned this is a mistake, as the diameter of the area seen is 65 millimetres, while the prism is at a distance of 40 millimetres from the object. Dr. Otis's instrument does, therefore, not give a field four times as large, as he claims; it is only 1.3 times as large.

The diameter of the field has been altered twice in the Nitze-Leiter cystoscopes. When they were first brought out