

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

good that has ever been attempted by the dental practitioners.

I am, dear Sir, yours truly,

To James S. Turner, Esq., Hon. Secretary, ALFRED COLEMAN.
Dental Reform Committee.

Clauses proposed by the Dental Reform Committee.—1. That those persons only who possess the licentiateship of the Royal College of Surgeons shall be entitled to use the designation of dental surgeon, surgeon-dentist, or dental practitioner, or dentist. 2. That any person using either of the foregoing designations, unless entitled to do so, shall, on conviction before a County Court, be fined in a sum not exceeding for the first offence, &c. 3. That a special schedule be added to the Medical Act for the registration of qualified dental surgeons as such only, subject to such general conditions as apply to the registration of qualified medical practitioners in respect to fees, conduct, &c. 4. That the qualified dental practitioners alone shall be capable of recovering fees for dental operations, but that the mere making of artificial teeth shall not be considered a dental operation. 5. That nothing in this Act shall apply to the prejudice or hindrance of persons in practice before the passing of the Act, but in case of the question being raised it will be for the individual to prove the date of his entrance on practice.

MEDICAL FEES, AS PROPOSED IN THE NEW FACTORIES BILL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I send you the following extract from Clause 67 of the new Factories Bill, introduced by the Home Secretary:—

"Fees for Certifying Surgeons for Examination of Children and Young Persons.—In the absence of any agreement, the fees shall be those named in the following scale:—When the examination is at a factory or workshop not exceeding one mile from surgeon's residence, 2s. 6d. for each visit, and 6d. for each person after the first five examined at that visit. When the examination is at a factory or workshop more than one mile from the surgeon's residence, the above fees, and an additional 6d. for each complete half-mile over and above the mile. When the examination is not at the factory or workshop, but at the residence of the surgeon, or at some place, day, or hour appointed by the surgeon for the purpose, and published in the prescribed manner, 6d. for each person examined."

I make no comment, but simply ask if these fees are such as ought to be offered to members of the medical profession? A late Home Secretary is said to have remarked that "It is like a base lawyer's fee." I should rather say, it is a base medical fee, on which I hope you will take an early opportunity of freely commenting in your widely circulated journal.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

April 26th, 1877.

FACTORY SURGEON.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

THE ordinary meeting of the Council was held on Thursday last, instead of on the 10th inst., in consequence of the meeting of the General Medical Council next week. After the transaction of routine business, the Jacksonian Prize was awarded to Mr. Harrison Cripps for the best essay "On the Treatment of Cancer of the Rectum, particularly as regards the possibility of curing or relieving the patient by excision of the affected part." After some conversation it was determined a special meeting of the Council shall be convened for Monday next to discuss fully the Conjoint Scheme, preparatory to its being laid before the General Medical Council. The draft of the amended regulations relating to the Fellowship was, like its predecessors, referred to a Special Committee. A proposal by Mr. John Marshall that the Council should reconsider the decision arrived at in October, 1872, by which it was determined to be inexpedient to give effect to Section 5 of the Charter, 15 Vict., with respect to the election in each year of two members of twenty years' standing to the Fellowship, was agreed to, subject to certain conditions to be defined at an early date.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS.

At a meeting of the College of Physicians on April 26th, the following bye-law was passed:—"Any candidate for the College licence who shall have obtained a degree in medicine or surgery at a British, colonial, or foreign university recognised by the College, after a course of study and an examination satisfactory to the College, shall be exempt from re-examination on such subjects as shall in each case be considered unnecessary."

A resolution was passed asking the Council to draw up a report on the subject of exemptions, to be submitted to a future meeting.

The following is a list of the new Fellows of the College elected:—Dr. William John Little, Dr. William Henry Parsey, Dr. Charles Rooke France, Dr. Christian Godfried Heinrich Baümler, Dr. George Vivian Poirer, Dr. William Jelly, Dr. Evan Buchanan Baxter, Dr. Frederick Thomas Roberts, Dr. Robert Farquharson, Dr. David Ferrier, Dr. Norman Moore.

PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Monday, April 16th.

LONDONDERRY LUNATIC ASYLUM.

In reply to Mr. R. Smith, Sir M. HICKS-BEACH said: The Board of Governors of the District Lunatic Asylum of Londonderry proposed some little time ago to erect a new asylum, their existing asylum being very much overcrowded. They have, however, lately rescinded that decision, and the Lord-Lieutenant does not at present propose to recommend to the Privy Council to sanction the erection of a new asylum for Derry, but to inquire whether the present asylum might not be enlarged.

VIVISECTION.

Mr. HOLT moved the second reading of the Cruelty to Animals Bill, the object of which, he said, was to remedy a defect in "Martin's Act," by rendering punishable the performance of any cruel experiment on any vertebrate animal, whether domestic or not. The 4th section forbids all cruel operations, even with anaesthetics, except for the purpose of alleviating pain or curing the injured animal. Disclaiming any intention to attack scientific men, he contended that the Act of last year was not efficient.—Dr. CAMERON moved the rejection of the Bill, which, he said, would repeal the Act of last year, and this, he showed at some length, was strong enough to prevent the infliction of wanton cruelty.—Mr. HARDCASTLE supported the Bill because he believed it unsafe to trust scientific men, and to show to what lengths they were ready to go, he read to the House revolting details of cruel experiments performed by French surgeons and at St. Bartholomew's Hospital. He denied altogether the right of man to inflict such torture.—Mr. McLAREN, who also supported the Bill, did not desire entire prohibition, but thought there was too much latitude allowed at present, and cited the testimony of Sir W. Ferguson, that no important discovery had been made through vivisection.—Mr. FORSYTH thought the Bill went too far, as, by prohibiting all vivisection, although the animal might have been reduced to a complete state of insensibility, we should deprive ourselves or one of the most useful sources of knowledge for the alleviation of human suffering.—Mr. COWPER TEMPLE contended that the Act of last year was not effective for its purpose, and Sir G. JENKINSON also spoke in favour of the Bill.—Sir H. SELWIN-IBBETSON pointed out that all the cruelties referred to belonged to a past state of things, and were dealt with by the Act of last year. This Act, he asserted, was a sufficient protection against cruelty, and in carrying it out, both in letter and spirit, the Home Secretary had met with no difficulty from scientific men.—Mr. HOLT replied; and, after some observations from Mr. BROMLEY-DAVENPORT, the Bill was thrown out, on a division, by 222 to 83.

THE Governors of the Glamorganshire and Monmouthshire Infirmary have resolved to appoint three additional medical officers to attend to the out-patients.