

reasons in favour of the tenant system, that the War Office has been driven to adopt the wise course of leaving the matter in the hands of the local military authorities.

#### PARTURIUNT MONTES.

It is a very curious circumstance which cannot have escaped observation that whenever there is any unusual talk of military reform the more immediate, and sometimes the only apparent, result is some alteration or other in the officer's or soldier's dress. The ugly flat pancake cap to be seen on the heads of Guardsmen is closely followed by a question as to whether a white collar is allowable or not in uniform, and if so, the exact amount of it permitted to be visible. It can scarcely be said that these changes were necessary or desirable in a hygienic or artistic point of view.

#### ROYAL NAVY MEDICAL SERVICE.

We are extremely glad to notice that Staff-Surgeons E. B. Townsend and P. B. Handyside have been recently promoted to be fleet-surgeons for conspicuous professional merit. It is an official recognition of a sound principle on the part of the Admiralty authorities and we congratulate the officers in question.

## Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

### METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL SUNDAY FUND.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—The deplorable weather on "Hospital Sunday" prevented so many people from going to their places of worship that the collections on that day have been half ruined. It will be a lasting pity if when the needs of the hospitals are so especially pressing and when our generous benefactor, Mr. George Herring, is again offering to add a quarter to all the church and chapel offertories sent in, the result of the Fund this year should be so lamentably below the average.

In these circumstances I venture to appeal to the clergy-men and ministers to state these facts to their congregations next Sunday and to invite those who were absent on Hospital Sunday to remit their customary contributions either to them or to me. It would, I suppose, be too much to ask that the offertory at one of the services at least should be dedicated to the Hospital Sunday Fund?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,  
MARCUS SAMUEL, Lord Mayor.  
The Mansion House, London, E.C., June 17th, 1903.

### ASSOCIATION OF MIDLAND RAILWAY SURGEONS.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—The first annual general meeting of the above association will be held at the Wyvern Hotel, Leicester, on Thursday, June 25th, at 3.30 P.M. As important business is to be transacted it is desirable that all the surgeons to the Midland Railway Friendly Society should make an effort to attend, and, Sirs, if you will kindly give prominence to this announcement in your valuable journal it will greatly assist by enabling those Midland railway surgeons whose names are still unknown to the association to attend the meeting or to communicate with me so that if they wish their names may be added to the existing list of members.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,  
A. E. PAYNE,  
Honorary Secretary, *pro. tem.*  
2, Melbourne-street, Leicester, June 16th, 1903.

### A NEW METHOD OF DETECTING PLAGUE BACILLI IN BLOOD.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—The difficulty in detecting plague bacilli in the blood is so well known that we venture to bring to your notice a method which has hitherto given us very good results in all cases, both early and late. It will be found

very useful to those in charge of general hospitals where it is difficult to keep out plague cases and where one is anxious to come to a diagnosis as early as possible. The blood film should be taken by Ross's method, making the film a little larger and thinner than for malaria; decolourise and stain, when plague bacilli will invariably be found. All our last cases have been diagnosed in this way and the diagnosis confirmed at the infectious hospital.

We are, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. BELL,

Superintendent;

E. A. R. LAING,

Assistant Superintendent.

Government Civil Hospital, Hong-Kong, May 14th, 1903.

### BLOOD PRESSURE.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—May I ask Dr. Oliver why, in his address entitled "A Few Jottings in Physiological Medicine," he estimates blood pressure in terms of *cubic* millimetres of mercury? I thought at first that the word "cubic" must be a misprint, but as it occurs throughout the address it is apparently intentional. Pressure is measured by the height of a column of mercury (or other fluid) and not by its volume. With regard to the rise of blood pressure at high altitudes, will not this be explained by a diminution of the partial pressure of the oxygen? The pulse-rate has been found, in balloon ascents, to increase with the height up to 24,000 feet.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

CHARLES POWELL WHITE.

St. Thomas's Hospital, S.E., June 16th, 1903.

### THE UNRESTRICTED OUTPUT OF INFLAMMABLE COMBS.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—You have, I think, several times called attention to the danger of using dressing combs prepared from xylonite or other analogues of gun-cotton. The risk appeared to me to be very trifling, but that view has been modified by the case of a young girl who was lately brought to me suffering from cellulitis of the scalp. It seems that she was in the habit of wearing a comb in her hair and one Sunday, whilst preparing her father's dinner, she held down her head in front of the fire. Suddenly the comb became ignited and burned up with a flash, setting fire to her hair. She fell on the ground in a faint, but luckily her brother had the presence of mind to wrap a coat around her head and to extinguish the flames, leaving her, however, in a state of collapse and with other effects of the accident from which she did not recover for weeks.

I understand that the original patent for making combs from xylonite has expired and that now the markets are flooded with imitations which are much more liable to ignition than the original. Surely, then, some restriction ought to be placed on their sale or at least the purchaser ought to have fair warning of the risk.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. C. MCWALTER, M.D. Brux., D.P.H.

Dublin, June 13th, 1903.

### ASEPTIC AND ANTISEPTIC SURGERY.

*To the Editors of THE LANCET.*

SIRS,—I have read with great interest Mr. Henderson's remarks in THE LANCET of June 13th, p. 1697, and entirely agree with him. By strictly adhering to aseptic and antiseptic methods it is quite possible for a general practitioner to undertake some of the major operations of surgery with most gratifying results. During the last three years I have performed three laparotomies for ectopic pregnancy, suppurating ovarian cyst, and a cyst of the right broad ligament, and removed a retained testis in the inguinal canal. In every case I obtained primary union, although these operations were performed at the patient's home. I also amputated two breasts for carcinoma and did a good many minor operations with good results.

In addition to the carrying out of strict asepsis and antiseptics as regards instruments, sutures, and dressings, I invariably see that the room is thoroughly disinfected and stripped of carpets, mats, dirty curtains, &c., prior to the operation. With these precautions my experience is that