

such I will express myself differently, and ask, "How much from first to last did the Bloxam case cost the members of the Medical Defence Union?" I cannot say that I agree with the statement that the present financial state of the Union is flourishing. "Some hundreds," as the secretaries naïvely express it, does not appear a very large sum to supply the possible wants of a society which numbers over 3000 members, and which apparently considers its successful policy to spend "some hundreds" in a quarrel between two of its own members. It cannot be too widely known that the New Association is the only defence society which is forbidden by its rules to interfere in litigation between two registered medical men, and consequently the only society whose shareholders can be certain that their money will not be wasted in the encouragement of inter-professional quarrels. Drs. Bate-man and Masters will observe, if they refer to my letter of July 30th, that I did *not* state that the property of the New Association amounted to double that of the two older societies taken together.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. HENRY CHALDECOTT, Hon. Sec.

Old Kent-road, London, S.E., Aug. 14th, 1894.

"MENTAL THERAPEUTICS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—I should like to be permitted to add my humble testimony to that of Dr. Schofield's *re* "Mental Therapeutics." Unless an individual has his bump of self-esteem inordinately developed, he cannot practise long without realising that his success is sometimes attained and often augmented by accompanying his prescriptions with asseverative remarks. While the influence of the mind over the body is universally recognised, its employment as a therapeutic agent is purposely employed by but a few in the regular ranks of the profession. Dr. Gordon Sharp in his article on Therapeutic Progress in THE LANCET of June 23rd, 1894 (page 1559), says: "Much depends on the man himself, and the confidence which he can inspire into his patient." The same idea was conveyed in an annotation in THE LANCET on Sir Andrew Clark some time ago. This simply bears out the idea that suggestion, either verbal or through the personality of the physician, is frequently part or even all that is necessary to effect a cure. With your permission I will cite an instance in support of my contention.

About a year ago, while attending an Englishwoman aged forty-four, who was well advanced in convalescence from muscular rheumatism, she was suddenly attacked with asthma. She had never had it before (nor has she since). Her father had been a victim of it, and his sufferings had made a great and lasting impression upon her. One evening several loquacious old dames discussed the subject in her presence, and predicted that in her weak state she would surely develop asthma, because it ran in the family. She was terribly wrought up over it, and some hours later I was sent for, when I found her with orthopnea, bilateral sonorous and sibilant râles, and evidently much distressed. By exclusion I was led to regard the case as neurotic, gave a placebo, and assured her that her "friends" (?) had no foundation for their remarks, and that the condition would speedily pass away, which it did, and, as I have said, without any return. Another very marked case of mine was reported by Dr. Judson Daland in the *University Medical Magazine*, April, 1893.

A few days ago I gave a patient some three-grain quinine pills. This morning he volunteered the statement that his "bowels have not moved so well since he stopped taking the pills."

Without trespassing further on your space I will only add that, after one has had his attention directed to this matter, he will find such events of almost daily occurrence.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

W. E. ROBERTSON.

North Fourth-street, Philadelphia, July 29th, 1894.

"THE ADDRESS IN SURGERY AT THE BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS.—In this address, which is published in THE LANCET of Aug. 4th, the following appears: "What is a surgeon? A stranger looking at the doorplates of an English town

might reasonably infer that there was no lack of material on which to base an answer; but then the stranger does not know, as we do, that the title 'Surgeon' on an Englishman's doorplate usually means that the possessor thereof is prepared to practise any and every branch of the healing art save and excepting surgery." I write to protest against the statement that the title "Surgeon" on an Englishman's doorplate usually means that the possessor thereof is prepared to practise any and every branch of the healing art save and excepting surgery, and I maintain that the great majority of general practitioners practise surgery, and, what is more, practise it successfully under circumstances often adverse and without all those appliances which are of course within the reach of the surgeon in the hospital ward. Such a statement to the lay mind gives the idea that the science and art of surgery are excluded from the general practitioner's duties, whereas a greater portion of his work is surgical, and I maintain he is prepared and able to treat such cases as come before him. I have nothing whatever to say about any other portion of the address, but the above paragraph, as I read it, appears to be altogether unnecessary and untrue.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

M.R.C.S.

Aug. 11th, 1894.

MANCHESTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Condition of the Ship Canal.

CONSIDERABLE activity is manifested at present in the promotion of traffic on the canal, and at a meeting of shareholders on the 7th inst. Mr. Jacob Bright, M.P., who presided, spoke very confidently of its future. No mention apparently was made of the foul state of the water, though even in the interests of the shareholders it is worth attention. Fortunately the summer, with the exception of a few short periods of great heat, has been cool and comparatively wet, but notwithstanding this the stench to unacclimatised noses is at times vile beyond description and almost beyond endurance. I crossed it at the Old Trafford Bridge a few weeks ago, and can bear testimony to its being a nuisance difficult to exaggerate. It is, moreover, not confined to the neighbourhood of the docks, but extends for many miles down the canal. At the last meeting of the Warrington rural sanitary authority a letter was read from Mr. Gornall, the medical officer of health, enclosing one from a gentleman living in the neighbourhood of the canal, who complained of the unbearable stench and stated that some members of his family were complaining of sickness. Mr. Gornall bears witness to its truth and says: "The stink from that portion of the canal near to the Knutsford-road during the last fortnight has been a serious nuisance and prejudicial to health." It was decided to report the matter to the Mersey and Irwell Joint Committee. This body is credited with the best intentions, but is thought by lookers-on to be too easy and lenient with those who pollute the canal. The large population on it and in its neighbourhood is injuriously affected by this horrible nuisance, and it has surely become the duty of the committee to use to the utmost the none too drastic powers of the law.

Manchester Water.

At the last meeting of the council it was stated that the Thirlmere waterworks were completed, that the water could be supplied at once if necessary, but that there was no immediate need for it, as the Longdendale reservoirs contained enough good water for eighty days' consumption. One reason for not hastening its use is that the moment it is turned on the corporation will be in "beneficial occupation" and liable to rates and taxes of from £8000 to £10,000 a year. Complaints of the condition of the water now being supplied to one district of the city were made by several members of the council. It was said to smell badly and to have a fishy taste &c. The vice-chairman of the Waterworks Committee made the curious statement that "in certain conditions of the atmosphere water always smelt a little." The fishy taste was said to be due to there being too many fish in the Gorton reservoir, but it has been shown that it is rather caused by water snails and their ova, which in the absence of fish multiply with great rapidity. Some years ago the same complaint was made of one of the other reservoirs, but the introduction of trout was followed by the