

When a resident physician was required for the institution, some two years since, I applied for the office, stating that I had been hon. surgeon to one provincial hospital, hon. physician to another, that I held three illuminated testimonials, and had received two public subscription-gifts.

I was not deemed good enough to fill the office.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

M.D., M.R.C.P.E., M.R.C.S., L.S.A.

ON THE DIAGNOSIS OF HYDROPHOBIA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a letter on the diagnosis of hydrophobia, which appeared in THE LANCET of January 17th, it is suggested that, in cases where the diagnosis is obscure, a crucial test may be applied by ascertaining whether the saliva of the patient is capable of communicating the disease to one of the lower animals, the rabbit being chosen for this purpose, as being readily inoculable, and the period of incubation being in that animal of very short duration.

In a case which was lately under treatment in the Manchester Royal Infirmary, this test was applied, not with a view of establishing a diagnosis, for of this there was no doubt, but merely with the object of verifying the results which had recently been obtained by M. Raynaud, in Paris.

In this instance the patient, a boy, aged six years, bitten by a dog about seven weeks previously, was admitted into the hospital on October 2nd, 1879, with well-marked symptoms of hydrophobia, which had made their appearance about thirty-six hours previously. In spite of treatment the case terminated fatally about five hours after admission.

Shortly before death a rabbit was obtained, and an incision having been made through the skin of the dorsal region, some of the saliva (of which there had been a copious discharge) was removed with a spatula from the patient's mouth, and immediately introduced into the cellular tissue beneath the skin. In order to make the inoculation more sure, a needle was also moistened with the saliva, and several times introduced through the wound into the muscles and subcutaneous tissue in its immediate neighbourhood.

No effect was, however, produced upon the rabbit; the wound on its back readily healed without any signs of irritation, and the rabbit is still living in perfect health, having never presented any morbid symptoms of any kind, though it has been closely observed.

I write these few lines in order to show that this proposed crucial test cannot be safely relied upon, for in this case, where the disease was well-established, and where the inoculation was carefully performed, the results were absolutely negative.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

F. A. SOUTHAM, M.A. Oxon., F.R.C.S.,
Resident Surgical Officer.

Royal Infirmary, Manchester, Jan. 18th, 1880.

"ERRONEOUS IMPRESSIONS OF PROFESSIONAL WORK."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your issue of to-day contains a leading article entitled "Erroneous Impressions of Professional Work," the text of which is an extract by one of your contemporaries from my published Report of this Hospital for 1879. The words quoted are these:—"Owing chiefly to the application of electricity being troublesome and tedious, and requiring patience and sacrifice of time, the belief in its efficacy is theoretical rather than practical with the great majority of the medical profession; and it may be confidently affirmed that in England its medical value has never yet been fairly and exhaustively tested." You state that you should not have alluded to the matter had not this assertion with respect to electricity been "*an aspersion on the work of every practitioner in the land.*" I emphatically deny this, and I hope that upon consideration you will withdraw it. I see no reason to modify my opinion. As I have stated elsewhere—and I am confident I shall be supported by the experience of all physicians who see much of diseases of the

nervous system,—a theoretical belief in the benefit to be derived from judicious electrization is widely diffused, while comparatively very few medical men have a practical knowledge of the subject; and hence it is still too common (as was the complaint of Golding Bird thirty years ago) for the medical practitioner to consider that when his fiat has gone forth, "Let the patient be electrified," he has done all that is necessary, while the patient usually carries out this mandate by the purchase of a rotary magneto-electric machine, and by using it according to the directions of its maker.

You seem to assume in your article that the medical profession includes only hospital physicians, and you ignore the general practitioner, who most assuredly in the vast majority of cases possesses no electrical apparatus whatever, so that his knowledge is perforce "theoretical;" while of hospital physicians themselves the greater proportion are similarly situated. You write that at "every hospital in the kingdom electricity is had recourse to *in each and every one of its forms.*" Although in this very number of THE LANCET you have published a letter from Dr. Allison, advocating the use of static electricity in carcinoma, you will not find a dozen (perhaps not half a dozen) hospitals in Great Britain and Ireland which even possess a static machine; and this being so, surely it is ungenerous and unfair to characterise my opinion as to the medical value of electricity not having been exhaustively tested, in the anything but courteous tone you have adopted; and I am the more sensitive perhaps to being thus pilloried as I am conscious of having for years past, as my published works and correspondence in your own columns testify, earnestly endeavoured to induce the general practitioner to use electricity himself rather than to send his patients to an expert for advice. I send you our Hospital Report, and trust to your sense of justice to accord as prominent a position to this letter as was occupied by your article.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

HERBERT TIBBITS, M.D., F.R.C.P. Edin.,

Hon. Medical Superintendent.

The West End Hospital for Diseases of the Nervous System,
73, Welbeck-street, W., January 10th, 1880.

* * We were not, of course, aware that the paragraph in a lay contemporary of the 2nd instant was written by Dr. Herbert Tibbits, or that he was responsible for the statement, concerning electricity, to which we particularly took exception—namely, that "owing chiefly to its application being *troublesome and tedious*, and *requiring patience and sacrifice of time*, the belief in its efficacy is theoretical rather than practical with the great majority of the medical profession"! The italics are ours.—ED. L.

ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I trust you will permit me to trespass on your space in reply to "Y.'s" criticisms on my letter, that appeared in your issue of the 3rd instant.

"Y.," in his efforts to show that my letter "is not a model of close reasoning,"—which it never pretended to be, by the way—deals with six of the seven points I enumerated as some of the advantages the Army Medical Service gains by the recent Warrant. The seventh—viz., the restoration of forage—he admits is an undoubted grievance remedied.

"Y" also acknowledges that pay and pensions have been solidly increased, and there he is certainly correct; but parenthetically he remarks that increase of pay was not asked for. The parenthesis is not accurate, for increase of pay was recommended by more than one Medical College and School in the United Kingdom, when their governing bodies were requested, by Lord Cranbrook's Committee, to state the causes of the unpopularity of the Service with young medical graduates. Besides, reference has only to be made to your columns to see that many writers, as well as the profession generally, did ask for higher pay for army surgeons. The point is conceded by the new Warrant, and it is probable that most medical officers regard an addition to their emoluments, of about £45 per annum in the majority of instances, as not only worth having but also worth suitably acknowledging without going the length of the "gushing gratitude" that "Y." speaks of.

The increase of pension is most notable af'er twenty years'