

signs of abortiveness, of a *φροντίς ἐξημθλωμένη*, it is too "deep-contemplative" to have any practical bearing on assurance business.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Welbeck-street, Nov. 5th, 1902.

GEORGE OGILVIE.

WHO SHOULD ADMINISTER THE COMING VACCINATION ACT?

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—It is to be hoped that in speaking of a "coming" Vaccination Act¹ you are not counting your chickens before they are hatched, for it is quite on the cards that, in their desire to escape the discussion of a thorny question for which it is to be feared they are but ill prepared in the matter of a satisfactory *corpus* of evidence on the various debateable subjects with which they would have to deal, the Government will be tempted, under the plea of insufficient time, to relegate the Vaccination Act of 1898 to the slumberous arms of the Expiring Laws Continuance Act, and if it once finds its way there Heaven only knows when it will emerge from them.

But assuming that I am wrong in this hypothetical forecast the question to which you invite attention is one of the numerous matters connected with the administration of vaccination which eminently calls for discussion by those who can throw light upon it. With your own opinion that the Poor-law authorities, as such, are, for various reasons, unfitted to act as vaccination authorities and that, for equally good reasons, it is impracticable that the Local Government Board should undertake the detailed administration of the Vaccination Acts, there will, I think, be a general consensus on the part of those who have given the subject any consideration. But I am not so sure that in separating county councils and district councils, as you have done, as alternative administrations, you are justified by any necessity. Why should not the administration of the Vaccination Acts be carried out by district councils under the supervision, in all cases except in county boroughs, of the council in each county? The chief difficulty in such an arrangement lies in carrying out the penal clause of the Vaccination Acts. But now that it is established that the vaccination officer is bound to carry out the law independently of any instructions from the vaccination authority this difficulty should disappear.

It is not easy to see how county councils alone could carry out the administration of the Vaccination Acts. They are appropriate bodies to undertake the supervision of local authorities in this and other departments of sanitary work, but they have not the machinery for detailed administration.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Gloucester, Nov. 4th, 1902. FRANCIS T. BOND, M.D. Lond.

** We quite recognise the danger to which Dr. Bond refers and for this reason we advocated in our leading article of Oct. 25th, p. 1138, that an influential deputation should wait upon the President of the Local Government Board with the object of pressing upon him the necessity for legislation in the sense suggested. If the catastrophe to which Dr. Bond alludes is to be averted, the pressure of professional and public opinion must be put upon Mr. Long. He is the Cabinet Minister responsible for the public health of the country and the more this fact is brought home the better for sanitary administration generally. If his power in the Cabinet has not the weight of a Secretary of State and public health measures are in consequence relegated to a secondary position it is in the interest of the country as a whole to remedy the defect. In our leading article we set forth certain considerations which led us to select county councils as the most suitable bodies to administer the Vaccination Act. Briefly recapitulated such reasons were: 1. That county councils are further removed from the disturbing influences of party faction than are district councils. 2. That such councils would be in a better position than district councils to provide laboratories for the preparation of calf lymph; indeed, several county councils have already provided laboratories in which such work can be conveniently carried on. 3. That as the education authority,

county councils would be in a favourable position to administer the revaccination clauses which it is sincerely to be hoped will be embodied in any future Act. 4. That by this arrangement the district councils would not suffer deterioration from the influx of the anti-vaccinationist element. 5. That administration by county councils would mean a reduction in the number of administering units, whereas administration by district councils would mean an enormous multiplication of such units.—ED. L.

DRINK AND INSANITY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have been much interested in the criticism of my paper upon Mental Dissolution the Result of Alcohol published in THE LANCET of Oct. 25th (p. 1118) by Mr. Charles L. Rothera, coroner for Nottingham, and find difficulty in replying to his somewhat discursive questionings. I fear that to his "Alas for logic! Well-a-day for consistency," I must exclaim, "Alas for rhetoric! Well-a-day for clearness." In my reference to the wide diffusion of alcohol in nature I merely state a well-known scientific fact and I neither suggest that alcohol exists in harmful or even estimable quantities nor that it is a "good creature of God" or other euphuism. To quote from my paper: "Ordinary cases of intemperance do not come under my care. My knowledge is derived from those in whom the vice of intemperance has become a disease, manifested by a craving over which a normal will has no control and resulting in acts which do not recognise submission to authority and which are judged to be irresponsible." The cases to which my paper refers are, for practical purposes, those of the ordinary population (from 5 to 10 per cent.) who suffer from a psychopathic taint and consequently break down mentally under, to them, the excessive use of alcohol. Others of the population such as Mr. Rothera refers to have also their "point of least resistance," and "the large army of persons who are engaged in the retail liquor traffic and who, as a class, notoriously die young," doubtless form a category of cases who break down in other ways, developing hepatic, renal, and cardio-vascular troubles with all their essential and fatal consequences.

I consider, in view of the practical impossibility of determining without experiment what particular individuals will succumb to the excessive use of alcohol, "that the best working hypothesis for the prevention and cure of all forms of alcoholic disorders, whether mental or physical, must be based upon the practice of total abstinence." This being impracticable, I acknowledge that the hypothesis is a counsel of perfection and I fail to see, upon these grounds, how my conclusion can be inferred to mean that all men should necessarily be total abstainers. I have often feared that the intemperate temperance and intolerant tolerance shown by extreme persons do much to damage the good cause they advocate and if these persons could only avoid the "fallacy of extremes" their example would be more encouraging and their arguments more convincing to society as at present constituted. There are still a few rational beings in the world who, though they do not belong to the class of "the wise and tolerant total abstainers," can trust themselves to use, and not to abuse, alcohol as well as a large series of other potent drugs.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Claybury Asylum, Nov. 10th, 1902.

ROBERT JONES.

THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON AND THE ENGLISH ROYAL COLLEGES OF PHYSICIANS AND SURGEONS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I think all will agree with Sir Arthur Rücker in his desire to lessen the number of examinations inflicted at present upon students of medicine. If part or whole of the examinations held by the Royal Colleges could be accepted by the University of London it would do more to make the degrees of the University popular than anything that has yet been done with that view.

There is one point which I think ought to receive very careful consideration, and that is whether the time has not now come when the regulations with regard to the University degrees might be placed upon the same lines as the

¹ THE LANCET, Oct. 25th, p. 1138.