

does not use his foot as a hand. Did hair exist on the unguis phalanges of his foot it would not be worn down any more than it is on the terminal phalanges of most other mammals—e.g., the dog and the cat. Yet man has lost the hair and the monkey retains it. Clearly then the loss of hair is not due to wearing down. It is merely part of the general phenomena to which I drew attention. Dr. Kidd asks, "Has he not the courage of his convictions?" If a resolution to repudiate opinions which I do not hold and which are quite contrary to those I have published¹ indicates lack of courage then undoubtedly I am extremely lacking in it. However, these personal matters can be of little interest to the readers of THE LANCET. It would be better if Dr. Kidd turned his attention to the statements which originated this discussion. On the one hand, it was asserted that "temperance reform" does not reform, but the reverse; on the other hand, it was asserted that there is no evidence that parental drinking in any way affects offspring subsequently born. Both assertions remain as yet uncontroverted.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Southsea, Sept. 15th, 1901.

G. ARCHDALL REID.

SENDING PHTHISICAL PATIENTS TO NEW ZEALAND.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have several times during the last 30 years made use of your columns to warn medical men against sending phtthisical patients here unless they can afford to maintain themselves entirely and pay for such medicines and medical attendance as they may require. Yet they still come. Are medical men at home so absolutely destitute of all common sense that they cannot see the cruelty of sending an unhappy man with tuberculous lungs to compete in the battle of life with able-bodied men? Do they suppose that employment is any easier to obtain in New Zealand than in England? It is far more difficult. The climate—oh, the climate. As the Yankee said: "You hain't got a climate; you've weather and all sorts of samples of it, but no climate." The weather in Auckland is so capricious and changes so rapidly, often four or five times in a day, as to be most unsuitable for phtthisical patients, while the houses are built without the slightest regard to hygienic rules. And within the last week I have had two new chums consulting me. My advice is, Go back as soon as you can.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

R. H. BAKEWELL, M.D. St. And.

Auckland, New Zealand, August 15th, 1901.

"THE CONTAGION OF TUBERCULOSIS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Since Professor Koch's recent pronouncement at the British Congress on Tuberculosis my mind has been much occupied with a phase of the question in dispute that seems not to have occurred to bacteriologists. It is this. If milk containing tubercle bacilli be spilled on the streets, at railway stations, in private houses, and other places that milk is often spilled in, and if this milk is allowed to dry, will not the dried tubercle bacilli from it taken into the lungs by means of the air we breathe develop tuberculosis? Bacilli that may be harmless when taken into the system by means of the stomach may be harmful when taken through the lungs. A series of investigations based on the foregoing suggestion might yield valuable results.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. NUGENT HARRIS,

Chemist and Dairy Expert to the Agricultural Organisation Society.

Victoria-street, London, S.W., Sept. 7th, 1901.

NOTES FROM INDIA.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

Plague Mortality in India again rising.—Appalling Mortality in Madras.—Increase of Officers in the Indian Medical Service.—The Government of Bengal and its Plague Policy.

DURING the past fortnight there has been a considerable rise in the plague mortality. This has almost entirely

¹ The Present Evolution, pp. 339-49; THE LANCET, Oct. 14th, 1899, p. 1006.

occurred in the Bombay Presidency, and especially in the Dharwar district. In the week ending August 24th 3404 deaths were returned, as against 3152 for the week previous and 2618 a fortnight ago. Nearly 3000 of the total occurred in the Bombay districts and 211 in Bombay city. In Calcutta there were 22 deaths and in Bengal district 11. In the Mysore State plague is increasing, the deaths having risen from 180 to 234. In the corresponding week last year there were only 629 deaths from plague in all India. Apart from the recrudescence in certain districts the disease has almost died out. A few cases, however, continue in Sind (Karachi), in the Punjab, in certain Madras districts, and in Bengal. This lingering character at so many infected centres is not hopeful for the future, as experience shows that after a more or less definite interval the disease bursts out again.

The death-rate in Madras has been rapidly mounting up week after week. A short time ago there was a very heavy rainfall and the death-rate seems to have increased since then. For the week ending August 23rd it was no less than 119·8 per 1000 and in one division of the city actually 181·8 per 1000. The published returns do not satisfactorily explain the great mortality, because cholera is credited with only 125 deaths out of the total of 1043, fevers with 288, dysentery with 198, and diarrhoea with 44. This leaves a considerable balance for other diseases. In Bombay city also the mortality is very high, the total deaths for the week ending August 27th being 887, giving a rate of over 50 per 1000 per annum. Of the total 203 deaths are returned as due to plague. Calcutta, on the other hand, is exceptionally healthy, but it is curious to note that the mortality of the suburban areas continues as usual—i.e., about half as high again as the district of the city proper. These suburban areas are only partially drained and are not completely supplied with filtered drinking-water; otherwise the conditions of life are the same.

It is rumoured that the India Office is likely to accept the proposal of the Government of India to increase the cadre of the Indian Medical Service by 52 officers. If this be true the prospects of officers in the Indian Medical Service are likely to be considerably improved and it would render the service in many directions more attractive.

A resolution of the Bengal Government with regard to plague has just been published. It declares that there is increased evidence as to the immediate benefit from disinfection and considers that precautionary measures may be taken over a less period, but that the disinfection should, if possible, be of a more thorough character than heretofore. It admits the doubt, held by many, as to the value of the wholesale disinfection which was carried out during the autumn of 1900, but states that the quiet and patient application of disinfection accustomed the people to its use and that they consequently accepted with goodwill the rapid expansion of operations when the epidemic did arrive. It may be concluded from this resolution that disinfection of the premises where cases of plague occur is practically the only measure which will be carried out for the future. There is absolutely no reference to anything else, so that the vigorous plague policy of the early days has been resolved by various stages into the same precautions as are adopted for cholera and small-pox.

August 31st.

LIVERPOOL.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Liverpool Corporation Hospitals: Annual Inspection.

THE annual inspection of the corporation hospitals by the members of the Hospitals and Port Sanitary Committee took place on Sept. 10th. The party assembled at the municipal offices and under the direction of Alderman Dr. Thomas Clarke, the chairman of the committee, proceeded first to the new hospital at Fazakerley. The visitors were received by the matron and were shown over the fine and expansive estate. A feature of particular interest was the filter-beds which have been laid down for the drainage of the buildings, the process of purification being explained by Professor Boyce, bacteriologist to the Corporation, and Dr. E. W. Hope, the medical officer of health. The City Hospital North was next inspected, after which the party drove to the City Hospital East. Here very extensive building operations are going on, which when completed will afford accommodation for 130 patients. The new pavilions were objects of general approval. The Parkhill Hospital at the south