

only way in which any of them differed from the rest in a hygienic sense was that in Damietta and Rosetta the people drank cistern water, stored while the Nile was still pure, because the river became brackish as its level fell. This being so, I naturally ascribed the comparative summer healthiness of the inhabitants of these two towns to the fact that they were unable to use Low Nile water, whereas in the other ten towns the only supply available came either from river or canal. No attempt, that I am aware of, has been made to disprove my facts, and I consequently still maintain that my case is thereby fully proved. As if, however, to make assurance doubly sure, I can adduce a proof of the evil quality of Low Nile water that is even yet stronger. In 1891 the Rosetta people had to drink the water from a new canal on a higher level than the river, and therefore not brackish, the cisterns having been left empty. Mark the consequences. As soon as the customary rise commenced in the other deltaic towns the deaths began to increase in Rosetta also, till they far surpassed the births, a thing never before known to have happened. At Damietta the cisterns had been filled as usual, and the death-rate maintained its normal level. I do not argue on theories or ratios, but simply on facts. These facts have never been disproved, and till that is accomplished I respectfully maintain that the construction of a river-bed reservoir for the retention of Low Nile water must be a sanitary crime.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Knaphill, April 21st, 1894.

H. R. GREENE.

P.S. I will be happy to send copies of my Tables A. and B. to anyone interested in the subject.

"THE INFECTIOUS DISEASES (NOTIFICATION) ACT."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—You have paid me the compliment of noticing in your columns a letter of mine which appeared under the above heading in *The Times* of April 16th. I have no complaint to make of the spirit which animates your remarks; one never expects other than courteous treatment at the hands of those who wield THE LANCET. But there are a few sentences which need remodelling before I can accept them as just representing the position which I, in common with many others, have taken up. In the first place, you say that my statistics, published from time to time, have been put forward "in order to prove the disastrous effect of the notification of infectious disease." Unless "dual system" be inserted or understood, this is a complete misrepresentation of our case. At the International Congress of Hygiene and Demography in 1891 my friends and I voted with the majority in favour of notification *per se*. Our sole objection was to making the medical man responsible for a duty which properly belonged to the householder. And I may remind you that THE LANCET called it "putting the saddle on the wrong horse" and an interference with the relation of a private practitioner to his patients. But this was in 1888, and *tempora mutantur*. So far from pronouncing any opinion adverse to notification, taken broadly, I speak (even in the letter to which you refer) of Nottingham as showing what can be done by the single or householder system and go on to mention that this was the system originally advocated by the Local Government Board, "who might reasonably return to their former faith." But I do profess to show that towns under the dual system fare worse than those under no system at all, and, what is still more cogent, worse than they themselves did before they came under the system. I prove this by reference not so much to increased death-rates as to a marked change in the rate of decline, which is so invariable a consequence of the enforcement of the dual system as to amount almost to a law of nature. The decline in the death-rates—general, zymotic, and notifiable zymotic—instead of being accelerated, is checked on the advent of the system embodied in the Notification Act. I have been a close student of the subject for six years and have carried my investigations into the several death-rates as far back as 1871, so as to note the behaviour of the large towns under the different conditions. I have not depended upon towns taken singly, or upon years taken singly, but have taken averages extending over periods of four years each and to populations numbering millions. The investigation, of which I gave the result in the letter to which you

refer, comprised three such periods and 10,000,000 of the population. If this is not enough to show in what direction the wind blows, perhaps you will kindly let me know what will satisfy you; 1893 was a test year, just as 1887 was, capable of showing what dependence could be placed upon notification, and the dual system failed lamentably in both. But my argument is founded upon *averages*, so that your theory as to climatic and other occasional influences cannot be held against it. I do not quite see the force of your argument as to London having had abundant means of isolation and a consequent low death-rate before the Notification Act was introduced, unless it be to show that the means are no longer adequate owing to the greater number of cases; but ought not the cases to have diminished? If preventable, why not prevented?—if I may be allowed to re-echo the dictum of an illustrious personage (none more pertinent was uttered at the Congress of which it formed part of the opening address). In conclusion I beg to express regret at the loss your office has sustained in the death of Mr. Beckett, who took a most kindly interest in my work, and with whom I had several friendly chats when I called there in the early days of the contest. I like that favourite verse of his, and, with your permission, will quote it as a fitting commentary on the present question:

"Truth, crushed to earth, shall rise again,
The eternal years of God are hers;
Whilst error, wounded, writhes in pain,
And dies amidst her worshippers."

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

D. BIDDLE.

Kingston-on-Thames, April 20th, 1894.

"THE SURREY DISPENSARY AND ITS STAFF."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In reference to the annotation upon the above subject in THE LANCET of April 21st, will you kindly allow me, as a member of the sub-committee which drafted the revised rules commented upon, to make a few explanatory remarks? As to the apparent stringency of the new rules relating to the staff, you judiciously admit that peculiar circumstances may justify them, and in this case, Sirs, such peculiar circumstances do unhappily exist. Some of the members of the staff have been attached to the dispensary from twenty-five to forty years. As to the out-patients, many complaints as to irregularity of attendance have from time to time been received by the committee of management, and the attendance book of the staff fully sustained them. Patients have been kept waiting as much as from two to three hours, and when the medical officers have arrived the patients have been rapidly disposed of at the rate of from fifty to seventy an hour; sometimes five or six being in the consulting room at the same time, and in one case a female patient complained of being obliged to expose her chest for examination in the presence of others. As to the home patients, those unable to attend as out-patients, the subscribers are led by the rules to expect that these patients shall be visited by the physicians and surgeons, and in former years this was so, but of late this duty has been transferred to the resident medical officer. An official return before me shows that, for the years 1892 and 1893, the visits of the physicians and surgeons amounted to an average of only 2.63 per cent. of the whole number, the remaining 97.37 having been paid by the resident medical officer. Then, as to the lying-in department of the charity, the rules require that "all difficult labours" should be attended by the surgeon-accoucheurs; but during the years 1892 and 1893 they only attended about 10 per cent. of them, the remaining 90 per cent. having been left to the care of the resident medical officer. The truth is, that under the old rules the committee have no due authority over the staff, a state of things which cannot surely be defended. All that the committee demand of the governors under the proposed new rules is, that in the interests of the charity they should be endowed with proper authority over the medical staff. The new rules are intended as a rod, not necessarily for frequent use, but as a symbol always.

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

JOHN INCE, M.D.,

Retired Surgeon H.M.'s Indian Army; Resident Surgeon, Surrey Dispensary, 1854-1856.

Swanley, Kent, April 25th, 1894.

HOSPITALS IN THE EAST.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In connexion with Bishop Blyth's Mission to Jerusalem and the East a hospital and dispensary have been established at Haifa. The dispensary has during the past year relieved upwards of 9,000 natives. The hospital at present numbers only six beds, but funds have been collected, and it is hoped that shortly it may expand to twenty-six and include a ward for women. A competent Syrian practitioner is in charge, and an English lady practitioner is leaving England shortly to superintend the female ward. All creeds and nationalities are received, and already one of the beds has been occupied by an English sailor. The funds are scanty, and the most pressing want is that of surgical instruments. I venture, Sirs, to make an appeal in your journal to any members of the medical profession who may have any spare instruments, and to the families of deceased medical men who perhaps may be in possession of instruments. Even those considered out of date in England would be invaluable at this small struggling hospital at Haifa. Any parcel would be gratefully received, acknowledged, and forwarded to Palestine by—

April 22nd.

Yours faithfully,

EVELYN GRENFELL.

P.S.—Please address Lady Grenfell, 16, Stratford-place, London, W.

INJUDICIOUS GOVERNORS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Will you kindly inform all those whom it may concern that the consulting medical staff of the Linen and Woollen Drapers' Institution, of 43, Finsbury-square, have resigned the positions they have held for upwards of twenty-five years, on account of the discourteous treatment they have received from its governing body, who not only appointed as a consulting officer a young man recently qualified without any consultative action with the members of the staff, but who persisted in making the appointment after representations had been made by some of the consulting staff as to the feeling that the appointment had raised. We think this information is due to such members of the profession as may, in ignorance of what has passed, be invited to fill the posts thus rendered vacant.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

ONE OF THE LATE CONSULTANT STAFF.

April 25th, 1894.

MANCHESTER.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Condition of the Irwell and the Ship Canal.

IN consequence of the recent drought the Irwell is low, and, as one of the local papers says, "the stench from the Ship Canal at present is undoubtedly very bad." All who have inhaled it are agreed on this; but Manchester blames Salford while Salford blames Manchester. A correspondent of the *Manchester Guardian* who has travelled in a boat from New Bailey Bridge to Mode Wheel says that there was little or no "stink" down the river and at the Pomona Docks, but that at Mode Wheel it was overpowering, and he lays the blame on Salford, which covers one bank, while Manchester occupies the other. This is a little hard on the former, as the whole of its sewage, together with that of Pendleton and Broughton, is collected and treated at the Weaste sewage works and is afterwards discharged into the canal fully half a mile below the Mode Wheel locks. However Salford may have sinned as to sanitation—and neither she nor her neighbour can claim to be immaculate—it is scarcely fair to deal with her as the wolf dealt with the lamb in the fable. The watershed of the Irwell, Medlock, and Irk is still grossly polluted by manufacturers and by a vast population pouring their refuse and water-closet products into the nearest stream. These streams join others, and the foul water finds its way to Manchester and the Ship Canal, where the movement is so slow that deposit is constantly going on in the docks and above the Mode Wheel locks and sluices. This portion of the canal may be looked on as an enormous settling tank. Salford certainly deserves the credit of having tried to enforce the law—such as it is as to river pollution—against polluters higher up the watershed

before Manchester was roused to action. The crusade against pollution is now chiefly carried on by a joint committee of the county councils of Lancashire and Cheshire. Many think this body dilatory and indulgent to the polluters, giving too liberal and unnecessary extensions of time in which to make required alterations although it was known that the Ship Canal was approaching completion. But though this may be so, it should be remembered that the work of cleansing the watershed is enormous and difficult. The remedy, however, is now being applied steadily and systematically, and though its action is slow there is reason to hope that before long great improvement will be effected in the condition of the streams from the most remote parts of the watershed to the Irwell. Salford has been blamed because, while carrying on for several years most instructive and useful experimental inquiries into the treatment of sewage, she has not finally decided on the system to be adopted. Manchester is by no means free from blame, though she is engaged in the construction of a costly and elaborate system of sewers; till this is completed she must be held as one of the principal offenders. If the smell is bad now in the month of April, what may be expected as summer advances? It is alarming to think of the impression that may be made on the olfactory nerves at the approaching visit of royalty. No doubt the Ship Canal will prove a sanitary benefit to the district, from the stimulus it has given to the efforts for the purification of our streams, which have been for many long years past no better than foul-smelling open sewers, the receptacles of every abomination.

Habitual Drunkards.

An old woman was brought before the city magistrates last week charged with drunkenness for the 191st time, and was discharged—instead of, as usual, being sent to prison—on promising to go to the workhouse. In the neighbouring borough of Salford another old woman has been in gaol for drunkenness nearly as often. These poor wretches are said to go to the police-stations, not infrequently after being turned out of the public-houses, for the rest, shelter, and warmth they obtain there. In such well-known cases of chronic alcoholism as these the local publicans who supply the poor creatures with drink cannot claim ignorance as an excuse for serving them. The loss of a few of their licences would make publicans more careful if not more scrupulous. These extreme cases of habitual drunkenness seem more common in women than in men.

Wood Pavement.

This has hitherto been sparingly used here, but it was announced at the last meeting of the Council that several of the busy streets in the centre of the city are to be paved with wood. A street on one side of the Town Hall has been so paved for some time, and now the street on the opposite side of the building will be treated, much to the increase of the comfort of those who have to attend at the various committee rooms. The traffic here is great and much of it very heavy, so that the noise and jar caused by the granite blocks are much felt by sensitive people. It is difficult to prevent the pavement from becoming slippery in wet weather, and therefore trying and dangerous to horses. At the same time it is to be hoped that some method will be found for preventing its saturation with the urine of horses and consequent offensiveness.

Smoke.

Manchester still suffers from excessive smoke. During the brightest days of the bright spring we are having the haze of smoke and dust has never quite cleared off, and the outlines of buildings a few hundred yards away are blurred and indistinct. Manufacturing smoke, and that from small works especially, accounts for a large proportion of it—in summer for most—though the thousands of domestic fires contribute their share. It is difficult to deal with the latter by alterations of the fireplaces or by changing the present grates for those of better construction, as the cost would be severely felt both by tenants and landlords of cottage property. Hope for the future seems to lie in the increased use of gas for heating and cooking. There is now little or no excuse for the great production of manufacturing smoke. It may be enormously lessened by careful stoking, by the use of one or other of the non-producing or smoke-consuming appliances, by the use of gas-engines or of hydraulic power. In the near future electricity will do much more than at present. An immense improvement would result from the general adoption of gas for heating and cooking and from the substitution of gas engines for steam power, but the gas