

32 cwt., will accommodate six wounded soldiers, and is furnished with india-rubber tyres and curtains.

#### THE SOUTH AFRICAN ARMY AND ITS CASUALTIES.

From a War Office return recently published we learn that from first to last the number of officers and men sent out to, or raised in, South Africa nearly reached the very large total of 450,000. The garrison in South Africa prior to the outbreak of the war numbered 12,546, and from its commencement on Oct. 11th, 1899, to May 31st last there were in addition 435,889, so that a total of 448,435 altogether were engaged in the military operations. Although the exact number of deaths to May 31st, 1902, is uncertain the losses in killed in action and the deaths from wounds, disease, and accidental injuries amounted to 21,942 (officers and men). Altogether 22,829 were wounded, including those who died from their wounds, and on the cessation of hostilities there were 291 officers and 9422 men in hospital in South Africa.

## Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

### SOME RECENT CHICANERY IN SCIENCE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have carefully studied the paper on the Life-history of *Filaria Bancrofti* and *Filaria Immitis* by Dr. L. W. Sambon in your issue of August 16th, p. 422, and should like to say that I for one fully concur in his criticism of the work which Professor G. B. Grassi and Dr. G. Noè claim to have done in connexion with *filaria Bancrofti* and *filaria immitis*. The experiments said by these authors to have been made by them with a view to infect dogs by the bites of mosquitoes previously infected by the latter parasite were, on their own showing, badly designed and performed without due safeguards against error and were evidently rushed through and reported in haste, probably in order to forestall other observers. The observation to the effect that a number of filariated mosquitoes lost all their filariæ after a single feeding on a dog is so improbable as to suggest that it is entirely apocryphal; and, as Dr. Sambon clearly proves, the rest of the work is equally worthless as a proof of the inoculation hypothesis of filariasis—an honour which the authors have had the assurance to claim for it.

Very little examination, however, suffices to show that the work is not a serious effort of science, but only an attempt to peg out a fresh claim for priority by, or on behalf of, Professor Grassi. One notes at once that he adopts in his new enterprise precisely the same devices as he used previously in connexion with the mosquito theory of malaria. The moment Dr. Low's work was published, he hastily issued with Dr. Noè a "preliminary note" in which he began by implying (but without giving details) that he himself had independently made the same discovery—a thing which I have reasons for disbelieving; and then proceeded to depreciate Dr. Low's work by inventing imaginary faults in it—an artifice which he consistently adopts in regard to my own work. Having thus shifted the merit of the inoculation hypothesis of filariasis to his own credit, he permits his pupil, Dr. Noè, to draft the entire subject into his account by saying that "the Italian discovery now at last enables us to place the prophylaxis of filariasis upon a solid basis." Needless to say, neither he nor his pupil has ever made a single new observation on filariasis; while, even as regards *filaria immitis* of dogs, the mode of propagation was discovered, not by them, but by Calandruccio guided by Manson's previous work. And now, when the actual experiments which we were told would support this extravagant claim are published they turn out to be worth nothing at all.

I have long had a very familiar acquaintance with a certain order of Italian literature on cognate subjects and may take the present opportunity to warn others against accepting too readily, as some appear to do, the claims of priority or even many of the observations contained therein. Whenever a new discovery is announced the authors of these works are pretty sure to attempt to obtain the principal credit of it by publishing hasty "preliminary notes" suggesting that they had already made it, followed by endless

monographs disparaging their predecessors, distorting the whole history of the discovery, and recording observations which turn out to be for the most part either easy confirmatory work or else entirely wrong. Take, for instance, the whole history of our knowledge of malaria—the invention of the bacillus malariae by Crudeli and Klebs; the efforts of Marchiafava, Celli, and Bignami upon Laveran's discovery (so well exposed by him in his "Traité du Paludisme," p. 42); the *ameba guttula* of Grassi and his colleagues; the "proof" of the mosquito theory of malaria by Bignami; and the "discovery" of the "*anopheles malariferi*" by the epidemiological studies of Grassi, to name only a few, and by no means the worst examples. The very peculiar methods adopted by Grassi, especially for securing scientific distinction for himself, have already been publicly commented upon by Parona,<sup>1</sup> Calandruccio,<sup>2</sup> and myself,<sup>3</sup> and are now ably scrutinised by Dr. Sambon. The skill, subtlety, and audacity of the chicanery employed in the efforts referred to deceive easily the cursory reader; but really the more careful student is beginning to be somewhat sceptical when he sees the announcement of a new "Italian discovery." I refer, of course, only to this particular school of Italian writers.

It is a question how to deal with such efforts. In my humble opinion science is too great a thing to be made a field for tricks like those of a pettifogging village attorney and we have every right to resent their introduction. Moreover, absolute honesty is the first qualification in all scientific work and the man who attempts to deceive his readers on questions of priority can hardly complain if we refuse to believe in his researches—a person who will deceive in one respect will deceive in another. Others may do as they please, but for my own part (as I have already publicly stated) I fear I cannot do myself the honour of including the labours of Professor G. B. Grassi in any future writings of my own and I think that science will not lose much if the papers by him and Dr. Noè on filariasis are similarly excluded from monographs on that subject.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Sept. 6th.

RONALD ROSS.

PS.—Two other instances of the same kind have just been brought to my notice. Early last year Nuttall published a note announcing the important observation that *anopheles* can exist where there is no malaria. Some time later Celli published similar observations but stated that Nuttall's work "confirmed" his—implying, quite erroneously, that Nuttall's observations were secondary to his. Again, in 1899 Grassi<sup>4</sup> published a note stating that he had found *piroplasma bigeminum*, a parasite of cattle previously known to be inoculated by the bites of ticks, in the salivary glands of those arthropods, and promising to publish the full account of the discovery later. Needless to say, the full account has never appeared. It will be interesting to note what happens when someone really does make the discovery.

### INSANITY AND LONG SEA VOYAGES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—At a period of the year when people in delicate health are already making their plans to escape from the drawbacks of an English winter, and medical men are constantly being consulted as to the advisability of this or that course, a note of warning in respect to some cases may not be out of place. It is especially to those cases which exhibit a tendency to melancholia that I wish to refer—those who, from worry, bereavement, or overwork, have become chronically run down and who at last seek in change and travel the necessary stimulus to enable them to weather the storm. With such, change is often beneficial, but long sea voyages are quite a different matter. To allow such patients to undertake unattended, as is too often done, long runs even on fast liners is a grave mistake. It is thought that the pleasant companionships and the facilities for social intercourse, which are the most charming characteristics of life on board those floating hotels, combined with the exhilarating influence of the sea air and the uneventful restfulness of

<sup>1</sup> Parona: Sulla Questione del *Bothriocephalus latus*, Gazzetta Medica Italiana-Lombardia, 1887, 1888 (three papers).

<sup>2</sup> Calandruccio: Unicumque Suum, Professor G. B. Grassi! C. Mariani et Cie., Rome.

<sup>3</sup> Ross: Le Scoperte del Professor G. B. Grassi sulla Malaria—Policlinico, 1900 and 1901.

<sup>4</sup> Grassi: Rendiconti della R. Accademia dei Lincei 1899.