

practical difficulties lie in the way of organising such a system of schools. Suppose it were to be applied to London there are at the present moment 759,920 children upon the rolls of the elementary schools with about another 100,000 who ought to be, so that there would have to be just under 20,000 separate schools. These schools, though small, could not be worked with less than three teachers, since there would have to be an infants' department as well as the usual seven standards; this would mean 45,790 new teachers. There is already quite sufficient difficulty in finding the 12,000 now required, nor would the low salaries that it would be necessary to give make it possible to get the right class of men and women. One hardly dares contemplate the additional cost in sites, buildings, school-keepers, inspectors, clerks, and office expenditure of such a stupendous scheme. The further suggestion of stringent laws to prevent movement from infected areas on the lines of the Diseases of Animals Acts would mean an intolerable interference with individual liberty and great hardship in cases of people moving in search of work. It seems a pity that in an enthusiastic desire to bring about sweeping reforms expert advisers are so apt to lose all sense of proportion and to make suggestions so impracticable that even those most in sympathy with their object feel bound to oppose them. It is this whole or nothing policy which, aiming at an ideal unattainable at the moment, prevents more moderate reform which, though it may not cure, will at all events alleviate the evil. May I quote a sentence from Mr. Roosevelt's recent speech? "Insistence upon the impossible means delay in the achievement of the possible."

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Dec. 8th, 1902.

FELIX CLAY.

THE TREATMENT OF THE SUMMER DIARRHŒA OF INFANTS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The excellent letter from Dr. Gordon Sharp on the above subject published in THE LANCET of Nov. 8th, p. 1284, leaves little to be desired. His advice on the treatment of the mouth and the administration of water both internally and externally is especially practical and useful. If there is ever any difficulty in getting an infant to drink water, either warm or cold, that difficulty is easily avoided by sweetening the water sufficiently to make it pleasant to the infantile taste. Also, I have found it useful to cut off the administration of unaltered milk, even if diluted, entirely until the flux ceases. As a substitute additional to those recommended by Dr. Gordon Sharp, I often use the white of a fresh egg beaten up in four or five ounces of water, then strained and sweetened. These two last points of "straining and sweetening" are "little things" which are nevertheless important as insuring that the child will not refuse the unaccustomed drink.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

H. M. SPEECHLY, M.R.C.S. Eng., L.R.C.P. Lond.

Manitoba, Canada.

MEDICAL OFFICERS IN THE MERCHANT SERVICE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have read with interest the annotation in THE LANCET of Dec 13th (p. 1642) on Medical Officers in the Merchant Service, and believe it lends force to a contention expressed more than once by me in your columns of the advisability of having a medical expert at the Board of Trade from whom all instructions as to the duties and responsibilities of these medical officers should emanate. The position of the surgeon in the mercantile marine is still shadowy. I am not a "sorehead," because I resigned the sea-going life many years ago with honour and emolument, while every reform I advocated when surgeon of the s.s. *Russia*—Cunard service—was carried with success, including the testing of sailors' vision for colour defects and short sight. This case of Dr. Patersons and the elasticity of the law as regards tramp steamers and their surgeons, with all that this implies, demand the attention of the leading medical journal, and the expense of a medical adviser at the Board of Trade—not such a large order—would be money well invested. There is a large field of unreaped knowledge by failing to winnow the experiences of medical men who voyage to foreign ports.

I know that if the log book of marine surgeons was kept and the facts were properly sifted and tabulated great good would accrue to those who go to sea as well as the dwellers on land. It may seem, Sirs, that these observations are somewhat apart from Dr Paterson's case, whose treatment appears to have been unwarrantable and somewhat slavish in intent. Still, I think there is a link of important connexion in my suggestions. I do not go into details, knowing the value of your space, merely indicating a point that might well be elaborated by the potent advocacy of THE LANCET.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Cavendish-square, W., Dec. 14th, 1902.

R. A. CALDWELL.

THE DUTIES OF THE SANITARY INSPECTOR.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In August last a case of scarlet fever was reported by my partner to the sanitary authority. The patient was seen both by my partner and myself but not till the rash had disappeared. We both told the mother of the patient what the case was. We were informed on the day following the notification that the sanitary inspector had visited the house and after a few inquiries said that he "would now go and see the patient," and he accordingly did so. I wrote to the medical officer of health informing him of what I had heard and asking him where the Act gave power to the sanitary inspector to visit patients whose cases were notified under the Act. The medical officer replied and said that the mother of the patient informed the inspector that she had not been told what was the matter, and then asked him to go up and see the patient, and that it was at her request he did so. This was reported to the mother, who denied having acted as the inspector said, and she persisted in saying that the inspector had said he would go upstairs and see the patient.

After several letters had passed on both sides without any definite result I wrote to the Local Government Board and gave a plain statement of the case and asked for their decision. They replied, sending me a copy of the inspector's report, which was a repetition of what I had already heard, and they further said that they did not think it advisable to interfere further in the matter. I read the inspector's report to the mother, when she said that his statements were untrue, and she wrote out an account of the case from her point of view in which she flatly contradicted the inspector on the two points—viz., that she was not informed of the nature of the illness—she stated that both doctors had told her that it was a case of scarlet fever; and that she had not asked the inspector to visit the patient—she stated that he said he would do so, and that she allowed him, as she thought that he was entitled to do so.

I sent a copy of her statement to the Local Government Board, but after some days I was informed that they declined to discuss the matter further and referred me to the town council. I have known this family for many years and I have no reason whatever for doubting the statement of the mother, as I have always found her a most straightforward woman. The matter is therefore in this position, that the Local Government Board will not consider a statement made by any person which contradicts that of a sanitary official even when that official is the accused person.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Richmond, Surrey, Dec. 16th, 1902.

M. H. TAYLOR.

* * The sanitary inspector and the mother of the patient appear to be at flat variance with each other in their account of what happened, though doubtless both intend to be accurate. Anyhow it is no business of the sanitary inspector to visit the sick, which is the point that Mr. M. H. Taylor wishes to establish.—ED. L.

COMPLETE EXCISION OF THE MALE URINARY BLADDER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the report of my case of complete excision of the male urinary bladder for papillomatous growth, published in THE LANCET of Dec. 13th, p. 1624, a slight correction is necessary. The bladder is shown laid open in Fig. 2 and the extent of the growth is the white portion; the

description should read "Bladder laid open, showing growth in the upper portion."

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

HERBERT LUND, F.R.C.S. Eng.

Manchester, Dec. 16th, 1902.

THE USE OF BUTTERMILK AS A LOCAL APPLICATION IN THE ACNE-LIKE ERUPTION PRODUCED BY THE INTERNAL ADMINISTRATION OF THE BROMIDES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Patients who are obliged to take the bromides for a long period frequently complain bitterly of the disfiguring rash produced on the face by their administration. The complaint may appear a trivial one, but women do not regard it in this light. I have known cases of epilepsy in which the patients have refused to continue the bromides on this account. As is well known, the addition of small doses of arsenic frequently lessens the amount of the rash but not in all cases; besides, the continual administration of small doses of arsenic has, I need hardly say, obvious risks. Many local applications have been recommended and I have tried a large number of them without any material benefit. For some time I have suggested to these patients the washing of the face night and morning in buttermilk in place of water, and I have been surprised at the good this simple application has effected in nearly all the cases. Buttermilk is a very old, popular application for improving the skin of the face and probably it has been used as suggested before by others.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

ANTONY ROCHE, M.R.C.P.I.,

Professor of Medical Jurisprudence and Public Health,
Dec. 16th, 1902. Catholic University Medical School, Dublin.

SCOTCH BEEF AND THE ABERDEEN SLAUGHTER-HOUSES.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL SANITARY COMMISSIONER.)

ABERDEEN is the principal centre for the Scotch beef trade and a great part of the Scotch beef sold at Smithfield to the London butchers comes from Aberdeen. Therefore the manner in which cattle are slaughtered and meat is inspected at Aberdeen is a matter of importance not only to the inhabitants of that town but also to the consumers of Scotch beef who live in London and elsewhere. Considering that there is thus a double responsibility weighing on those who control the meat trade of Aberdeen it was to be expected that special attention would be devoted to this matter. At first it would seem as if the local authorities had realised that they had special duties to perform, for so far back as 32 years ago the town council bought some land for the purpose of erecting a model public slaughter-house? In 1870 the need of such institutions was not so fully appreciated as it is to-day, and by its action at that date the town of Aberdeen placed itself well in the vanguard of progress. But what can be said now when it is generally known that though the land has been at the disposal of the town council for 32 years nothing has been done except to allow difficulties and obstacles to accumulate? When purchased the site situated in the Kittybrewster district, now known as the Central Park site, was well away from the town in an uninhabited open country. No one would have complained if a public slaughter-house had been built there at that time. But since then the population of Aberdeen has increased and to meet the growing demand for house accommodation some fairly good houses have been built on the Clifton-road near to the site selected for the slaughter-house. There is also a school near at hand frequented by some 1200 pupils, as well as a park where football and other games are played. In a word, a residential suburb is growing up and the owners of land and houses in this district are bitterly opposed to the proposal that the original idea of building an abattoir there should be carried out. On the one side, the land and house owners, it is urged, knew all along that the site was reserved for this purpose, and, on the other, the house owners retort that

as the scheme had been abandoned for so long they were justified in concluding that it would never be carried out.

It does, indeed, seem strange that a project which was partially executed should have remained in suspense for more than 30 years. One explanation is that in Aberdeen there is a survival of the old guilds of the Middle Ages. Among these guilds the Fleshers' Incorporation is a powerful institution. All the master butchers belong to this guild and they agreed to construct a large slaughter-house for their joint use. Consequently there are not so many small slaughter-houses at Aberdeen as might otherwise have been the case. There are only seven small private slaughter-houses and three of considerable size where several butchers are accommodated on the same premises. The large slaughter-house belonging to the Fleshers' Incorporation brings in some profit after the working expenses have been paid and this is employed in support of a widows' fund instituted by the guild. But if a corporation slaughter-house is built and consequently all the private slaughter-houses are closed the Fleshers' Incorporation would lose a source of income which has served a very laudable purpose. This is a grievance which appeals to others than the members of the trade. Besides, the Fleshers' Incorporation is associated with the other trades that are also incorporated, and together they possess a hall near Union Bridge where they hold meetings, and have dinners and other gatherings. Thus, if one trade is assailed it can command the influence of other trades to help in defending its particular interests. Consequently, whenever an effort was made to move in the matter of the public slaughter-house all manner of difficulties were raised and opposition was systematically offered so that these projects were defeated time after time. Year after year the medical officer of health and many other competent authorities on questions of hygiene have urged the need of a public slaughter-house, yet nothing was done. In his annual report for the year 1900 Dr. Matthew Hay, the medical officer of health, says it is obvious that "the arrangements for slaughtering and for inspection in Aberdeen are, to put it plainly, disgracefully out of date and unsatisfactory and that the one remedy is centralised slaughtering, with complete and systematic inspection, as is now the practice in almost every town of importance and even in many towns with not a fourth part of the slaughtering done in Aberdeen." In his report for the year 1901 Dr. Hay says: "A public slaughter-house is the most pressing sanitary requirement of the city and its absence is the chief defect in our sanitary administration as compared with that of the principal towns of the kingdom."

At last the town council has revived the old scheme. The borough surveyor was called upon to draw up a plan for building a corporation slaughter-house on the Central Park site. This site consists of a part of the ground acquired by the Police Commissioners in 1870 for the erection of a public slaughter-house for the city. The plan has been completed and exclusive of a hide market, offices, and workmen's cottages, the slaughter-house, it is estimated, will cost £22,000. Therefore the town council was called upon to approve this scheme and to raise a loan of £30,000 to carry it out. Deputations, protests, and eloquent speeches in opposition were, as on previous occasions, forthcoming, but this time the opposition was defeated and last October the town council approved in a general sense of the proposal; but it was carried by only 16 votes against 12 for one amendment and 2 votes for another antagonistic amendment. Therefore the advantage gained does not rest on a very solid basis and there is many a slip between the cup and the lip. In these circumstances it is necessary to show the imperative need of the proposed reform and this cannot be better demonstrated than by visiting the slaughter-houses actually in existence.

The most important of these is that of the Fleshers' Incorporation. This is situated in a street, and is overlooked by inhabited houses, not far from the centre of the town and in a poor, populous district. Whatever objections may be raised to the site for the proposed municipal slaughter-house similar objections apply with greater force to this and other private slaughter-houses, for they are surrounded by a much larger number of inhabited houses and there are more numerous and larger schools. The Fleshers' Incorporation slaughter-house with a hide market adjoining occupies for a considerable distance one side of a street, and on the other side at a distance of but a few feet are ordinary small dwelling-houses. Entering by the main gate, I found to my right a large oblong ill-paved courtyard, with slaughter-houses