

## ALLEGED OFFICIAL NEGLECT OF SMALL-POX.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—That some notable reform in the sanitary arrangements of the metropolis may evolve out of my troubles is most devoutly to be wished. That those arrangements are inexplicably confusing to the uninitiated is, with the story of my recent experiences, a pretty patent fact. Why, may I ask, should a vaccination officer be an officer who does not vaccinate? Why should the Local Government Board itself be unable to enlighten inquirers as to whether certain "rural sanitary authorities"—the West Ham Union to wit—are provided with means for isolating small-pox patients? Why should it be at all doubtful whether the Home of this institution, situate in the West Ham Union, is within the area covered by the Metropolitan Asylums Board? Why should four public officers refer an inquirer from one to the other—living no mean distances apart—and the fourth flee from him, as it were, to take refuge in the authority of a board of guardians? The girls certainly were not paupers in the sense of being in receipt of parochial relief, but they were in almost every case maintained in the Home by charitable contributions, which barely sufficed for their maintenance. From the relieving officer's point of view, the hand of that beneficent Providence which had aided them hitherto (so helpful at the same time in mitigating poor-rates) now slammed the doors of the Metropolitan Asylums Board hospitals in their poor ravaged faces. It was no such thing. Poor-law and Local Government officials must be held responsible for this; for in 1877, on a similar outbreak occurring, the then relieving officer at once removed the patients—three in number—and there was no spread of the disease. Why should he not have done so on this occasion, and with a like result? In the present instance every possible effort was ineffectually made to obtain the removal of the first three cases; and as a result thirteen poor girls had to be sent to the Pay Hospital, Highgate. Neither was the delay attributable to any lack of power, as surmised, on the part of the sanitary authorities; for, ultimately, the medical officer of health handed to the sanitary inspector an order for their removal (so the latter official himself informed me some days after), but could not recall what he had done with the order. Referring to the memorandum of the Local Government Board, I should have said, in my letters to the press, it was handed to me with a message that "they could do nothing to assist" (not that the memorandum itself conveyed this intimation); but that I would find in the memorandum suggestions as to what steps I should take, and that an official reply should be sent me in the morning. The memorandum was as follows:—

"Local Government Board, Whitehall.

"Mem. of steps advisable.—Immediate vaccination of every inmate. (Best apply to public vaccinator of district.) Small-pox Hospital at Highgate-hill receives patients on payment. Official letter to-morrow.

"May 8th, 1884."

(Signed) H. P. THOMAS.

On the 10th I received the official letter referred to, of exactly the same purport as the memorandum, with this additional suggestion, and this only—that such of the inmates as were attacked with small-pox should be isolated. This amplification of the memorandum was spread over two sides of a sheet of paper having a superficial area of 450 in. The letter and memorandum are enclosed. You refer to the outbreak at this Home as being extra-metropolitan. Is not this a mistake? or how is it an order is given for removal of the cases to one of the metropolitan hospitals? "We are told," you say, "that the authorities at Highgate possessed no ambulance." Neither, Sir, did the authorities at the Homerton Hospital, though I am informed it has since been made an ambulance station. When in search of this hospital, I observed, as I approached the locality to which I had been directed, a very spacious public-looking institution, and I inquired of a milkman going his rounds whether this was the Small-pox Hospital. "No, sir," he said; "there it stands on the other side of the road, where the hearse is." "What, then, is this?" I inquired. "This," he replied, "is a college, where from three to four hundred young people receive their training; that college, sir, has been there for over one hundred years, and I think it a great shame the Small-pox Hospital should have been placed where you see it. With regard to the later cases showing themselves at

the Home, I may say there was great difficulty in obtaining the requisite supply of lymph for so large a number. Revaccination was proceeded with day after day as lymph was obtained. The officers of the institution were the first to submit themselves to it as an encouragement to the girls, and the writer submitted himself to it a second time, the first not having taken, to satisfy himself the failure was not in any way attributable to the character of the lymph used. This, however, had the same negative effect as the first. I cannot speak in too high terms of the behaviour of the girls throughout this trying ordeal; there was not one faint heart among them. The patients attacked with small-pox were at once isolated in the infirmary of the institution, communications between it and the residential part of the Home being maintained by speaking-tubes, and disinfectants were used freely throughout the house. Indeed the very perfect sanitary arrangements of the Home constituted the great stumbling-block in the way of the officer of health giving an order for the removal of the patients. Immediately on the outbreak occurring, Dr. Harvey J. Philpot, L.R.C.P., a member of the committee, visited the Home, and saw the patients, and the medical officer of the Home. He made a minute inspection of the premises from garret to cellar, and satisfied himself as to the satisfactory sanitary condition of the Home, and as to the precautions taken to prevent further spread of infection.

I am, Sir, very faithfully yours,

ALFRED M. GILLHAM, Secretary.

Princess Louise Home, National Society for the  
Protection of Young Girls, 32, Sackville-street.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I am pleased to state that the Princess Louise Home, Wanstead, is now free from disease, the small-pox having so far passed away. There is not one case of illness throughout the Home. All children, immediately on the outbreak, were revaccinated, and in some few cases it was found necessary to repeat the operation, the first having proved unsuccessful.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Stratford, E., June 5th, 1884.

THOS. G. WHITEHOUSE.

## LIVERPOOL.

*(From our own Correspondent.)*

### HOSPITAL SATURDAY.

THE sum realised by the Hospital Saturday boxes amounts already to £2700, and is expected to reach £2800. It is not generally known that Liverpool was one of the first places, if not the first, where Hospital Saturday became an institution. It was begun in 1871, on the Saturday after the first Hospital Sunday. The arrangements being hurried and very incomplete, the amount realised was but a little over £100. It is a proof of the growth of good works when honestly persevered in that the proceeds of Hospital Saturday here have for some years exceeded £2000, and are now closely approaching £3000. It is however, urged, and with much reason, that a completely organised movement among the working men extending throughout the year and culminating in Hospital Saturday would produce a greatly increased amount. And seeing that sums of £5000 have been raised among the working men of Birmingham and Glasgow for the local hospitals, surely an equal, if not increased, amount might be expected in Liverpool.

### THE SCHOOL OF MEDICINE.

A great advance in recent years has been made in the establishment of an anatomical class with regular dissections during the summer session. Twenty years ago there was none except for such students as had been so unfortunate as to be rejected during the spring examinations at the College, and who purposed going up in the following July. Now there are fifty students attending in the dissecting-room and dissecting diligently; the supply of subjects is very good, and the atmosphere wonderful considering the time of the year and the recent hot weather. The advantages of students being able to keep up their anatomical studies throughout the academical year are too obvious to need discussion.

### CASES OF TRIPLETS.

Mrs. Evans, a midwife of the Ladies' Charity, has had two cases of triplets within twenty-seven days of each other. In