

pure consultant he must inquire from his family medical adviser; this is strict etiquette. The pure consultant is he attached to the staff of one of the 11 London teaching schools of medicine. Or it may apply to Edinburgh, Dublin, or any city of the United Kingdom or Great Britain beyond the Seas where there are also teaching schools of medicine. His fee is usually £2 2s. or £3 3s. at his house in Harley-street or Cavendish-square or elsewhere. How often are discussions of this kind brought forward and the iron kindled to red heat and then allowed to cool. Cannot something, however, on this occasion be done to prove the exception to the usual termination of such discussions? Something really tangible to lead to fruit by waking up the apathy of those who have had their day, yet sit in the highest chamber of the profession in idle contentment of worn-out rules and college regulations?

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Feb. 24th, 1908.

VIRTUTEM SEQUOR.

WEST AFRICAN MEDICAL SERVICE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have heard from two sources that my name has appeared in your paper as having resigned, or been retired from, the colonial service. Will you please have this contradicted at once. I have neither resigned nor been retired. On the 28th inst. I return to my duties in West Africa.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

March 17th, 1908.

CHAS. R. CHICHESTER.

* * We insert Dr. Chichester's letter with pleasure. The notice of his retirement, which we published in THE LANCET of Feb. 8th, p. 473, was sent to us in an official document from the Colonial Office dated Jan. 24th.—ED. L.

"AN OFFENCE UNDER THE LUNACY ACT, 1890."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I notice that you only give in your issue relating to this case the statements of the prosecution. There was no question of "suggested defence of ignorance." I maintain that on Feb. 26th, 1907, Ethel May Davies was, in my opinion, not a certifiable lunatic according to the Act. When I saw her two days after this her condition had changed and at my request the person in charge communicated with the mother of patient to that effect, instructing her to place the case in an asylum. No attention was paid, and I here emphatically state that all my responsibility ceased. I did not see the patient for six weeks after this time.

The reason I was found guilty of a "technical breach of the law" is as follows. The original summons was for aiding and abetting and procuring some one to take care of, in an unlicensed house, an alleged lunatic. When the prosecutors became aware that I had a complete answer to such a charge by doing my best to get the Act complied with by the mother the summons was amended and made "continuous"—in other words, the fact that the patient *ultimately* became insane and remained in the home to which I advised her being placed made me responsible of a "technical breach of the lunacy law." It was not a question of ignorance, as I do not admit this in any way, and I must ask you to contradict this. As I was informed at the commencement of the case as to the decision on this technical point there was absolutely no use in any defence being set up. The case was decided *ex parte*; my evidence would have shown conclusively that the patient was not insane on Feb. 26th, 1907, that the lady who had care of the case did not make the statements which are alleged against her and to which great prominence is given in your issue. That she held the highest testimonials from official visitors as to her capability to take care of patients, having held the position of committee of several Chancery patients. Also the fact that from first to last I had no interest in the patient or home in any way financially and never received, directly or indirectly, any payment, gratuitous services being given.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Burwood-place, W., March 18th, 1908.

FORBES WINSLOW.

THE VENTILATION OF THE HOUSE OF COMMONS AND INFLUENZA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have read the article in THE LANCET of Feb. 29th, p. 652, upon the above important question, and also have in mind complaints of the bad condition of the atmosphere of other buildings—the Law Courts, Old Bailey, &c.—by all who have to be in these buildings, even for a part of the day only, and these complaints and your very practical remarks confirm an opinion I have long held, in that all the systems that have up to the present been adopted fail because they are not sufficiently automatic, so that when the atmosphere becomes unpleasant it shall be quickly purified without causing a reverse, the result of which is often as bad as, or worse than, the cause of the original, and the incoming air is injected with too much force, or too hot, or too cold.

Of course, one has to consider constructional difficulties engineers have to encounter, especially from the architectural point of view; it ought not, however, to be impossible to ventilate buildings by a system such as I venture to suggest. In my humble opinion the remedy will never be accomplished all the time reliance is made upon velocity or quantity of air injected or ejected. With respect to your query could the House meet in the open air, I think members would suffer almost as badly when the atmosphere was abnormal either way if they occupied the area of paved ground.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Ebury-street, London, S.W., March 10th, 1908. D. T. BOSTEL.

THE CRITIC ON THE HEARTH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A movement is being organised in London with the object of persuading urban authorities throughout the kingdom to penalise the emission of smoke from domestic as well as industrial chimneys. The use of smokeless fuel is already enforced in New York and nearly all the great cities of America. The adoption of a similar regulation in this country, although long desired by sanitary reformers, has been prevented hitherto by the Englishman's devotion to the open hearth. It is urged that this obstacle has now been overcome not only by the improvements in gas and electric fires both for cooking and heating, but by the successful adaptation of open grates to the smokeless consumption of anthracite and other varieties of hard coal, and by the introduction of coalite, a fuel consisting of soft coal purged of the products which ordinarily hinder combustion and pass up the chimney as smoke.

Mr. Ollis, chief officer of the public control committee of the London County Council, in a report which he has just submitted to that body, says: "If it is not practicable to wean the Englishman from his love of the open fire, it does appear possible for him to be supplied with a fuel the use of which will not foul the atmosphere." It is probable that the Council will take some steps in the direction of encouraging the use of smokeless fuels in domestic grates, but a number of sanitary reformers are pleading for a compulsory ordinance which, they aver, could now be enforced to the great benefit alike of the urban community and the individual consumer; and to this end a vigorous campaign is to be undertaken in London and the other great cities of the kingdom.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

March 9th, 1908.

M.D.

SMALL-POX AND DISINFECTION ON BOARD SHIP.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—An epidemic of small-pox occurred recently on a ship of which I happened to be medical officer. We were detained for some days at the quarantine station and during this time the whole boat was very thoroughly disinfected with formaldehyde. Can you or any of your readers refer me to articles or records of experiments which indicate the value of this agent used in such circumstances? I am led to ask because of the following somewhat curious fact. The ship was infested with large numbers of cockroaches (not the ordinary one seen in our kitchens but a smaller,