

occupied to have only two-thirds of the patients previously admitted. This had the desired effect, and for many years, with some slight occasional exceptions, the hospital remained in a very satisfactory state. At length it was deemed requisite to construct some additional surgical wards in connexion with the old ones; and as they were ventilated on a most improper system, their opening was almost immediately followed by most formidable indications of insalubrity, which extended to the adjoining wards, so that now the whole establishment has been condemned, and is about to be replaced by a new hospital. It will be seen from this history that wards newly constructed, and perfectly free from the poisonous agency of tainted walls, prove extremely unhealthy merely from the effect of overcrowding and bad ventilation.

But the overcrowding of healthy persons does not give rise to the effects in question, since, as I have seen, so many men may sleep in a military barrack-room that there is no space whatever left between the beds, and no one can leave the apartment at night without walking over the bodies of his comrades, with what breach of propriety in a moral point of view I need not say, but certainly without any appreciable injury of a physical kind. It is only when the fetid discharges of suppurating and putrefying sores exert their influence on raw surfaces that unhealthy action, erysipelas, and pyæmia are produced. There can consequently be no doubt that the salubrity of an hospital will depend upon such sources of mischief being prevented from exercising their injurious influence. This can be done only either by such a perfect system of ventilation as will maintain the air in a state of perfect purity, or by altogether preventing the noxious exhalations. The former plan is, I fear, hardly practicable; but Professor Lister has adopted the latter by employing the antiseptic treatment, which renders any noxious emanation impossible, and has thus converted into perfectly healthy wards those that were previously hotbeds of disease. But if this most important principle be admitted, and no one acquainted with the subject can deny it, architects will be relieved from the difficulty and uncertainty which at present attend the construction of hospitals. They will no longer be required to fritter away their plans into separate buildings, but will be at liberty to provide for any number of patients under the same roof. They will also no longer be restricted to two stories of wards, but may have three or more, if the limited extent of ground renders this desirable, and due regard is paid to ventilation, with ample space and convenient arrangements. The advantages of hospitals will thus be fully attained, without any of the evils that have hitherto interfered with their usefulness.

But for obtaining this desirable result, it will be necessary that all the surgeons and their subordinates should thoroughly understand, and carefully employ, the antiseptic measures; turning a deaf ear to the cavils of ignorance, and placing their confidence in the unquestionable evidence of experience. That such will ere long be the case I cannot doubt, from what has fallen under my own observation.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Edinburgh, Sept. 1869.

JAMES SYME.

## MR. SIMON AND THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the recently published Report of the Medical Officer of the Privy Council, I much regret to find him expressing an opinion so decidedly adverse to what I believe to be a most important sanitary movement—namely, the extension of the Contagious Diseases Act of 1866 to the civil population, and the institution in this country of a systematic sanitary supervision of prostitutes. Fortunately, as you remark in your excellent article last week, Mr. Simon gives his reasons, many of which you have very effectually disposed of. I venture, however, to offer a few additional observations in the same direction which have occurred to me on the perusal of the Report.

Mr. Simon divides venereal disease into three classes:—1. Gonorrhœa. 2. Pseudo-syphilis,\* or simple chancre. 3.

\* It is to be hoped that this most objectionable term will not again come into general use, even on the authority of the medical officer of the Privy Council.

True syphilis, or hard chancre, and the various secondary affections. The two former he looks upon as comparatively unimportant, and of little or no permanent interest to the community. And one of his arguments against the extension of repressive measures is, that the reduction of disease likely to be obtained would be mainly in those two classes, and would "least of all affect those sorts of disease in which society is incomparably most interested," for the reason that "the various local states which most habitually spread the infection of true syphilis are apt to be in themselves such slight and painless affections as almost, or entirely, to escape the patient's notice."

If these statements could be admitted as correct, they would undoubtedly go a long way to establish the inexpediency of extending the present Act to the civil population, and I should myself be disposed to allow that the game was not worth the candle. But it is here that I wish to join issue with Mr. Simon; for I contend that his views as above expressed are entirely at variance with the experience obtained by the working of the present Act, and that the most marked result of that measure has been the diminution of precisely those forms of disease which do infect the constitution, and which Mr. Simon considers least likely to be influenced by legislative supervision, and this notwithstanding the partial and local application of the Act, and the imperfect manner in which, till recently, it has been possible to carry out the necessary periodical inspection. The diminution in the soft or alleged non-infecting forms of venereal ulcerations has been, perhaps, less marked as to quantity, but has been very striking as to the quality of the complaint, the ulcers having been notably smaller, and of shorter duration, and suppurating buboes comparatively rare. The class of disease in which the least diminution has been observed has been, and I believe is always likely to be, that of gonorrhœal affections.

I can speak confidently from my own observation on these points as regards the women, having had a large share in their treatment at the Lock Hospital, both under the present and former Acts, since 1864; while all the testimony which I have been able to meet with from various sources as to the effect on the men in the garrison and seaport towns in which the Act has been in force, has been precisely similar in character.

But I am especially surprised to find Mr. Simon alleging as an objection to further legislation, that the local states which communicate true syphilis, are slight and painless, and often unnoticed by the sufferers. Surely, if this is really the case (and I believe it to be so to a very considerable extent, though not universally), it is the strongest possible argument in favour of systematic inspection, in order that those women whose disease is the most mischievous, and at the same time the least likely to lead them to desist from their occupation, and to seek medical relief, should be discovered and secluded at the earliest possible period. It is, I have no doubt, the very reason why this particular class of disease has been influenced so beneficially by the present Act.

Practically, I believe it to be impossible to distinguish at the outset the sores which will from those which will not infect the constitution, and therefore it would be absolutely necessary, in order to obtain the desired result of diminishing constitutional disease, to deal with all kinds of venereal ulceration on the female genitals (whether hard or soft, primary or secondary) in the same way, by sending them into hospital for treatment.

But with respect to gonorrhœal affections, the case is somewhat different, and I am not sure that it might not be expedient to make some exception with regard to them. Under the present system, two-thirds of the women detained for treatment are suffering only from uterine and vaginal discharges, uncomplicated by any contagious ulceration, or by any evidence of syphilitic infection. These women would be capable only of communicating gonorrhœa, and should it be considered that gonorrhœa and its consequences are not of sufficient importance to warrant legislative interference, two-thirds of the expense attending the extension of the Act would be saved by allowing them to remain at large, and the expense is the only really important obstacle in the way. Under competent and experienced medical inspectors there would be no difficulty in distinguishing these cases, and I will undertake to say that mistakes in diagnosis would be of quite exceptional occurrence;

but of course these women must be subjected to regular periodical supervision, in case they should contract any more serious form of disease.

One word in conclusion respecting the increase of charitable institutions for the treatment of diseased prostitutes, in favour of which Mr. Simon expresses an opinion in preference to State supervision. I believe it would be quite hopeless to expect to enlist the sympathy of the public to any useful extent in this direction; in support of which opinion I would refer to the struggling condition of the Lock Hospital, the only special institution in the metropolis, which, in spite of the prestige of its 120 years' existence, and of much aristocratic and influential support, is only able by charitable contributions to maintain with great difficulty thirty beds for female, and fifteen for male patients.

But it cannot be too strongly insisted upon that Lock hospitals for the treatment of women on the voluntary principle, though they may be works of the truest charity, are nearly, if not quite, useless, from the sanitary point of view, in effecting any diminution in the amount of venereal disease in the general population. Diseased prostitutes will never, as a rule, seek admission till they have done all the mischief of which they are capable, and till the increasing severity of their symptoms compels them to do so; while their treatment as out-patients is a positive injury to the public health, by enabling them to continue their pernicious career for a longer period with comparative impunity to themselves.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES R. LANE.

Berkeley-street, Piccadilly, September 20th, 1869.

## ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I beg to return you my best thanks for your article of last week. I wish I could think myself deserving of even a small part of what you say of me. My claim on your readers' sympathy is a very small one. The action of the House Committee has not caused me the slightest inconvenience, inasmuch as I had reckoned upon it beforehand; while I have had the great pleasure of discovering that I have more kind friends than I thought. To all these, and to the many gentlemen previously unknown to me who have written to express their approval, my best thanks are due. There is little credit in being a Smithfield martyr on such terms. It is chiefly, however, on public grounds that I thank you for taking the matter up. The real matter in dispute is not my case—that is insignificant enough,—but the question whether the endowments of St. Bartholomew's are properly administered. I affirm that they are not, and that the only effectual remedy is to remove these public funds from the hands of those who have shown themselves incompetent to manage them, and to entrust them to a small body of persons responsible to Government, and selected with a view to their fitness for such a duty. The combined action of all who are interested in such a reform will surely succeed in gaining the attention of the Legislature. With a view to facilitate such a combination, it is intended to occupy the time which would have been taken up by the usual inaugural address on the 1st of October, in holding a meeting of old and present students of St. Bartholomew's, outside the walls, at which these questions will be discussed.

The following passages from letters which have reached me within the last few days are so much to the point that I venture to quote them:—

From a Governor of the Hospital:—"I am convinced that of late years the administration of the hospital affairs has been left too much in the hands of a few, and is more and more removed from the general supervision of the governors, who are such only in name."

From a Fellow of the Royal Society:—"I have long felt the grievous unreality of the out-patient system, which in fact amounts to a mockery of God and man both.....Every good and sensible man must wish you God speed."

From a gentleman of large experience in the question:—"I have always maintained that the indiscriminate administration of medical relief at the general hospitals, as now

carried on, is a great abuse of the charities, and a delusion and snare to the public."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

10, Staples-inn, W.C., Sept. 22nd, 1869.

CHARLES MAYO.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—All who have ever been connected with St. Bartholomew's Hospital must feel regret at the frequent complaints that have appeared in THE LANCET. These complaints uniformly expose the want of administrative tact displayed by the Managing Committee, recently culminating by the dismissal of Dr. Mayo for daring to complain that he was unable to prescribe in a satisfactory manner for an unlimited number of patients in the limited time at his disposal.

This Committee have systematically treated with supercilious indifference every suggestion which might benefit the hard-working members of the school—the resident medical staff,—and this, too, while they been spending thousands in gilding their banqueting hall for the reception of royalty.

This state of things ought not to be permitted to last without a Government inquiry, to prevent, if possible, money left for a charitable purpose being diverted and spent in frivolous extravagance.

It is to be hoped that Mr. Gladstone may be able to spare time next session to appoint a Commission to inquire into, and, if necessary, to devise some plan to control, the funds now vested in the hands of governors who are at best only irresponsible trustees.

Last year the medical casualty department at St. Bartholomew's Hospital was conducted in a slipshod manner; many cases that required more than ordinary attention, or a more careful diagnosis, were passed over or escaped the notice of the house-physicians, no doubt from the great number they had to prescribe for in the limited time at their disposal; otherwise it would be inconceivable that a case of syphilis with a primary sore should have been treated with "haustus ammoniæ acetatis" by one of them for three weeks, when the patient, failing to improve and growing tired of the treatment, went over to the dresser for the day, by whom the real nature of the complaint was for the first time discovered. An urgent case of pleurisy with effusion, sent up by a medical practitioner of good standing and an old pupil of the hospital, was playfully treated with a little linctus. Many other cases could be given which received similar treatment, but it would be taking up too much of your valuable space to give the long list of blunders committed last year. These blunders would not have been brought to light had not the House Committee vaunted that the house-physicians last year prescribed in a satisfactory manner for a number of patients with which their successors profess themselves unable to cope.

Far better would it be for the reputation of the hospital to return to the ancient mode by which the medical casualty patients were seen, than to entrust the lives of patients to the tender mercies of inexperienced and newly-fledged M.B.s, to be seen by them at the rate of thirty seconds a patient.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

Sept. 15th, 1869.

AN OLD BARTHOLOMEW STUDENT.

## SURGEONS AND INSTRUMENT-MAKERS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Not being a constant reader of THE LANCET, the letter of Mr. Christopher Heath escaped my notice, until a friend accidentally directed my attention to it; hence the delay in my reply. As the incidents related in that letter seem to reflect questionably upon my behaviour, I ask in common fairness that you will grant me the space to give my version of the transaction, that you and your readers may judge the same upon its true merits, and see how far it will "elucidate the question" of "the relation of medical men and the public to instrument-makers or surgical mechanicians."

Towards the end of April a gentleman, say Mr. A., applied to me for a pair of crutches, and seeing that he had lost his leg, I inquired into the cause of his not wearing an artificial limb, when I learnt that his stump was slightly