

supports for spinal cases, and I am constantly engaged in undoing the evil done in such cases, which evil admits of easy demonstration.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

H. E. DEANE, Lieut.-Col., R.A.M.C. (retired).

Weymouth-street, W., Nov. 29th, 1909.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I read with great interest an article in THE LANCET of Nov. 13th, entitled, "Civilisation in Relation to the Abdominal Viscera," which opens up a subject of wide and ever-increasing importance. During the last year I have made a careful observation of a large number of cases varying in age from 15 to 50 years, having regard to those conditions which are said to result from chronic intestinal stasis, and I am bound to confess the existence of those conditions is confirmed by systematic examination. In hospital work we are able more accurately to estimate the severity and chronicity of constipation, and I should like very briefly to repeat some of the points which have been recorded in your columns and which have struck me most forcibly.

The worn and haggard appearance, the absence of muscular tone, the pigmentation of the skin in definite places, and the peculiar odour of auto-intoxication are most characteristic. Pigmentation is an early symptom and this staining may be very marked at a time when signs of degeneration are only just beginning to appear. Most constant and remarkable are the changes in the breasts, which at first feel lumpy and later show cystic degeneration.

There is a point in connexion with this which arrests attention, and that is that this cystic degeneration does not take place in married women who are having habitual intercourse. A striking illustration of this presented itself to me a short time ago. A married woman, who had one child, 15 years old, was admitted, having received a slight injury to the right breast a few days before. The patient, who had for many years been subject to chronic constipation, showed extensive cystic changes in both breasts. On inquiry it transpired that she had had no intercourse with her husband for 14 years.

Pregnancy has a beneficial effect on constipation; the enlargement of the uterus so alters the mechanics of the abdomen that the bowel can more easily empty itself. Recently I had a typical instance of this. A woman, aged 39 years, was the mother of 14 children. She had been subject all her life to chronic constipation, except during her pregnancies when there was a daily evacuation and a consequent general improvement in health. The almost universal wasting that follows a long history of stasis is a prominent feature. Frequently these patients will say that up to the age of 19 or 20 they were stout, but that afterwards they gradually began to lose flesh until at the age of 35 to 40 they become very thin and wasted.

Enfeebled circulation with cold hands and cold feet is a source of great discomfort to the habitually constipated. Pain is always present, though it varies in position and severity and there are periodical remissions. These people are admitted into a hospital for various reasons. Loss of flesh, loss of appetite, indigestion, abdominal pain, vomiting, displacements of the uterus from loss of fat, sleeplessness, nervous depression are some of the numerous symptoms complained of. With painful monotony it is found that a long history of chronic constipation is given. They show some temporary improvement from treatment in bed, due in a slight measure to a daily purging, but chiefly to the assumption of the recumbent posture. It is surely not difficult to believe that a system whose resisting power is so lowered by auto-intoxication becomes an easy prey to the tubercle bacillus and other organisms.

These are some of the effects briefly enumerated which cannot fail to be noticed on methodical examination.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Lewisham, Nov. 18th, 1909.

H. M. M. WOODWARD.

THE JUBILEE OF THE DENTAL CHARTER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The dental surgeons have shown themselves desirous of commemorating the Jubilee of their Charter, and the Royal College of Surgeons of England, as the first examining body to grant degrees in dental surgery, has endeavoured to show its interest in this branch of the profession, first, by accepting the trust of the Odontological Museum, which is

now accommodated in a room adjacent to the Hunterian collection; and, secondly, by entertaining the leading members of the profession at a dinner within the precincts of the College. I would venture to suggest that this movement might well be directed towards a more permanent memorial of the Jubilee of the Dental Charter by establishing a research scholarship and demonstratorship in connexion with the Dental Museum. There are already two small endowed prizes, the Tomes and Cartwright prizes, administered by the College, the one awarded every third and the other every fifth year; but the dental profession is deserving of something of a much wider scope than these for the stimulation of research and for the higher teaching of its scientific branches. My own view favours a far more ambitious scheme than anything in the form of a mere prize, whether awarded after examination or conferred in recognition of original work completed. I would ask for the modest sum of £10,000 to endow a research and teaching demonstratorship in connection with the Dental Museum. In this way not only would a scientific worker be secured, but he would by his demonstrations attract the students from the various dental hospitals to study in the Dental Museum. Such a sum could, I am sure, be easily collected from among the dental surgeons alone; but if they were to impress upon their patients the necessity of endowing dental research there need be no hesitation in raising the sum I have suggested to £50,000, whereby not only research and teaching demonstratorships might be established, but travelling scholarships might be founded which would be of great advantage in keeping English dentistry in touch with that of foreign countries.

It is some 25 years ago since I first began to advocate the bringing of the dental surgeons back within the pale of the profession and giving them the same opportunities as ophthalmic, aural, and other specialists. One could scarcely have anticipated so encouraging a development as has occurred within so short a period. The dental surgeons have not been slow of late to seize the occasions for better recognition, and by placing the Odontological Society under the ægis of the Royal Society of Medicine, and by handing over their superb museum to the care of the Royal College of Surgeons they have shown their desire to be associated with the general body of the medical profession. Now I think the time has come for the further development of the scientific side of the branch, in which direction several members have already gained great eminence.

Should my suggestion find favour with the dental section of our profession, I should be pleased to coöperate with any interested in this project; but it must be distinctly understood that I write quite unofficially, though I have little doubt that the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons would give its consent to the administration of such a research demonstratorship as that proposed if the money were forthcoming for its endowment.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

London, W., Nov. 27th, 1909.

R. CLEMENT LUCAS.

THE TREATMENT OF MORPHINISM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have been much interested in the letters of Dr. C. J. Douglas and Dr. Oscar Jennings which have appeared in your columns under the above heading. The subject is in reality much larger than the heading might lead one to infer, for the treatment of morphinism is but a chapter in the volume on the treatment of habit, and accordingly the question raised in respect of one drug—the proper method of treatment of its abuse—is of fundamental importance and applicable in the main to all forms of drug abuse, if not to every form of acquired evil custom.

Dr. Douglas suppresses the habit, breaks its custom, by the help of hypnotic remedies; for him "sleep solves the problem of the painless withdrawal of morphine" when the patient "awakes the painful period is passed and all desire for morphine is gone."¹

Dr. Oscar Jennings also suppresses the habit, breaks its custom, but by the help of the patient's own good will, in arduous operation; his method stepping in to reinforce and encourage the operation of the will during the withdrawal of the drug, and, at the same time, to lessen the arduousness of

¹ THE LANCET, Oct. 2nd, 1909.