

acting through the Ambassador, has officially appointed the London Committee of the French Red Cross, under the presidency of the Vicomtesse de la Panouse, to represent these three societies, which have in their charge practically the whole of the voluntary care of the wounded French. It provides surgeons, nurses, orderlies, and stores of all kinds for the French voluntary hospitals. It assists in a great many similar ways the British hospital units which have been established by private generosity in France. Most of these, unless actually under the control of the British Red Cross Society, have found it to their advantage to become affiliated to the above London Committee of these three great French societies and to work through it.

This committee has also elaborated a system whereby British surgeons who are good enough to volunteer their services for a month or more can be found suitable posts. Further, the London Committee of the French Red Cross being in intimate official relations with the French Government will be able to make the best arrangements for hospitals and new centres when the movement of the armies we all hope for takes place. It is therefore evident that as far as the French wounded are concerned there is absolutely no need for further societies, and it is certainly inadvisable to distribute subscriptions amongst new organisations for hospitals which may or may not continue, or be allowed to continue, to exist. Such a course, in addition to the inconveniences already mentioned, can only lead to waste of time, energy, and money.

I therefore venture to appeal to intending subscribers wishful to help in the most certain and efficient manner the wounded of the French armies, who have so gallantly held more than 250 miles of the Western battle line, to concentrate their efforts and contributions in favour of the London Committee of the French Red Cross (of which the honorary secretary is Mr. P. A. Wilkins, 25, Knightsbridge, London, S.W.), which is in a position to send the help to the points where it is most needed.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

JAMES DONELAN,

Medical Referee to the Committee.

Manchester-square, W., Feb. 15th, 1915.

THE ETIOLOGY OF POLIOMYELITIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Dr. J. T. C. Nash in THE LANCET of Jan. 16th asks for further information regarding the cases of poliomyelitis at West Kirby. In the first place, he wishes to know the distance of each infected house from the nearest stable. I am sorry I am not in a position now to give the exact distance, but in no case, I believe, was a stable situated near, or what one usually considers near. With regard to the second point, I understand the same horse and cart took round the milk, so that there is nothing here incompatible with Dr. Nash's theory that stomoxys calcitrans may be carried considerable distances, following or resting on a horse. When investigating the cases, however, I was more impressed by the possibilities and probabilities of human carriers being concerned, and even that one of the distributors of milk was the likely source of infection.

The first case in the last outbreak at West Kirby was the son of a medical man who had attended cases of the previous year. It is interesting to recall that when the late Dr. R. Burnet, of Cornwall, was investigating the outbreak of polio-

myelitis in that county four years ago his only son fell a victim to the disease, probably being infected by his father. There is, I think, a growing body of evidence in favour of the theory of poliomyelitis being spread by the agency of human carriers.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Hartlepool, Feb. 15th, 1915. GEORGE JUBB, M.D., D.P.H.

FAITH AND ASTIGMATISM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—If it should ever be my misfortune to be tried for my life at the Old Bailey or elsewhere I shall not attempt to obtain the services of Mr. Reginald Evershed as my advocate, for if I did there can be little doubt my state of suspense would very soon end in one of suspension.

Mr. Evershed, in THE LANCET of Feb. 6th, is particularly unfortunate in the case he quotes to support the views of the refraction extremists. Which idea does he hold: that the discovery of the extra 1/4 diopter of astigmatism in the one eye cured the patient? or the mysticism of Prey's letters, &c., and the probable reassurance given him that the glasses would do so? Is not Mr. Evershed between two horns of a dilemma? A dignified silence is a useful thing to maintain when you cannot maintain anything else, and the attitude shown by the two original contributors to the subject may well be commended to Mr. Evershed, at least until he is on surer ground.

Now, Sir, I did not write my first letter with a view to depreciating the shares of the Langham Hotel or of the railways converging upon Harrogate. Far from it. My intention was to disclaim—for myself at any rate—the extreme views held by some members of my specialty in this country which tend to bring the holders and the specialty into ridicule at the hands of the more moderate members of the profession who, fortunately, are in a great majority. Extremists are deficient in the sense of proportion, and specialists are apt to suffer from the same disorder, especially if they specialise too early. My own opinion is that no one should take up any specialty until he or she has had ten years' experience of general practice. Such a practitioner gets out of the way of looking at things and people through the same pair of spectacles. Refraction extremists are by no means confined to this country, and across the herring pond is one of their archpriests, who is so extreme that I quite look forward to his asserting some day that St. Paul's thorn in the flesh was really a refraction error, and that if only the German Emperor had paid a visit to his "office" this horrible war would certainly have been prevented. And though prevention is better than cure, yet since it is claimed by some that a tendency to insanity can be cured by suitable correcting lenses, would it not be well to appoint one of these gentlemen ophthalmic surgeon to Bedlam? Who knows how many of the unfortunate inmates thereof might be cured or relieved by a pair of spectacles? *Quis dubitat?*

We see extremes and extremists everywhere—e.g., in politics the advanced Radical thinks nothing good can come from the opposite party and *vice versa*; in the Church, the extreme High Church cleric, who plays croquet on Sunday afternoon, would shrink from burying a Dissenter in his churchyard, whilst another would be only too pleased to bury the whole of them there; or the eugenist crank who insists upon our marrying Mary when we feel we can only be happy with

Jane in spite of the small strawberry mark on her arm; and so on, and so on. Extremists, of course, have their place in the sun and do some good. They tend to develop the antibodies of moderation and make us challenge and prove all things, holding fast to that which is true, which, in the long run, is invariably found to be moderate. But, Sir, even in the length of one's epistles to the Editor of THE LANCET one must study the science and practise the art of moderation, and to escape the opposite soft impeachment I will at once subscribe myself

Yours faithfully,

Norwich, Feb. 13th, 1915.

S. JOHNSON TAYLOR.

THE SUPPLY OF LOCUM TENENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—May I trespass on your space for a few remarks on this very vital question? When war broke out necessarily a large number of medical men who belonged to the Royal Army Medical Corps were immediately obliged to take up their duties, and many others have in ever-increasing numbers since loyally and patriotically in obedience to their country's call voluntarily thrown up lucrative practices and applied for commissions, and by no means a small number have enlisted in the fighting ranks.

Necessarily, therefore, a largely increased demand has arisen for locum tenents to safeguard the practices at home of those who have nobly offered their services and lives for England's honour. Owing to many of those who had hitherto been available as locum tenents also responding to the call it has become increasingly difficult to find enough reliable substitutes, and I regret to have to say that there is a tendency on the part of a few to take advantage of the shortage to demand fees quite incompatible with the services rendered. May I through your columns implore all who are in any way able to take up duty again to offer their services in the present crisis?

I am glad to say that many retired practitioners up to 70 years of age have loyally come forward and most satisfactorily filled some of the gaps, and some of our Belgian Allies who can speak English a little have been of great assistance for temporary work, but more are urgently needed if we are to ensure that the practices of those who have so nobly rallied round the flag shall not suffer. There is plenty of work for every available qualified man, especially if prepared to show his patriotism and loyalty to his profession by accepting fees in some measure proportionate to the size of the practice he is taking charge of.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Adam-street, Adelphi, Feb. 8th, 1915.

PERCIVAL TURNER.

SULPHUR AND RHEUMATISM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In reference to what Sir Lauder Brunton says about sulphur and rheumatism in your issue of Feb. 6th, I think the following case is to the point. A patient, aged 55 years, had suffered from joint pains, called rheumatism, since he was 19 fairly continuously, and no treatment did him any good. It happened that he took sulphur for the relief of an attack of lumbago and continued it for some four months as a prophylactic. His rheumatism was completely cured and has remained so for some six years, during which he

has continued to take two or three troch. sulph. two days a week. The essence of the treatment as a cure is that it should go on some months before the cure is likely to obtain.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Harley-street, W., Feb. 13th, 1915.

SHEFFIELD NEAVE.

THE SHORTAGE OF RESIDENT MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Dr. R. R. Rentoul's letter in your last issue, which somewhat severely comments on mine of Feb. 6th, has been the means of my discovering that in my letter the word "*voluntary*" is inserted before the word "*residence*," thereby giving the impression that we wished to get the doctors' services for nothing. Such is far from the case; we are quite ready to pay such doctors even more than the "lost dog's wage," which Dr. Rentoul mentioned as the ordinary rate of pay. If we cannot pay the princely salaries that Dr. Rentoul states obtain in Government services, it is our misfortune and not our fault. At the present time the difficulty we are experiencing is being felt by almost every hospital in London. To use a colloquialism, residents are hardly to be obtained for love or money.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

W. M. WILCOX,
Secretary.

East London Hospital for Children,
Shadwell, E., Feb. 16th, 1915.

* * * We regret the mistake. Voluntary help is being accorded to some hospitals in a similar dilemma, we understand, and medical men who are able to assist charitable work in this way are discharging a most valuable duty.—ED. L.

TYPHOID AND PARATYPHOID INFECTION IN RELATION TO ANTITYPHOID INOCULATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Owing to an error in the delivery of the "proof" of the paper which you so kindly published for us last week at very short notice, two small errors remained uncorrected. On p. 325, col. 1, the second line from the bottom should read: "In *non-inoculated* persons," &c. As it stands the statement is obviously nonsense. On the same page, col. 2, line 35 (about the middle of the page), the figure 700 should be 900, as can be seen from the chart on the following page.

We are, Sir, yours faithfully,

GEORGES DREYER,
E. W. AINLEY WALKER,
ALEX. G. GIBSON.

Department of Pathology, University of Oxford,
Feb. 16th, 1915.

"WOOLNER'S TIP" AND FAMILY RESEMBLANCES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Apropos of the informing annotation on this subject in THE LANCET of Feb. 13th it may interest your readers to know that Thomas Woolner was probably careful to reproduce the "tip," named after him, in his well-known bust of Darwin now at Cambridge. At least, one may infer that he did so, as it may be felt, when searched for *ad unguem*, to use the old Roman sculptors' phrase, in the left ear of the plaster replica of this bust recently