

the comparative neglect of other important indications. They assume, on the other hand, that those who deny the exclusive dogma of septicæmia are stricken with therapeutical impotence. "The doctrine of autogenesis," exclaims Parvin, "is a confession of ignorance, the creed of fatalism, the cry of despair..... the very pessimism of obstetric medicine." Big words, full of sound, and little else! The truth is that those who take a broad, comprehensive, catholic view of the many factors in the etiology and constitution of puerperal fevers, take also a broader, more philosophical, and more rational grasp of the principles of treatment, and especially of prophylaxis. I hope I may be pardoned for saying that in no textbook of obstetrics is antiseptic treatment more carefully described than in that which bears my name.

I may fitly conclude with citing from a paper on "Antiseptic Midwifery and Septicæmia in Midwifery."¹ "So far as antiseptic appliances are concerned, they can strictly only be regarded as subsidiary means in the carrying out of the great principle that lies at the bottom of all good obstetric practice—namely, to screen the lying-in woman from those poisons and other noxious influences which threaten her from within and from without. It is not, therefore, desirable to devote special or separate attention to what, after all, is only a part of a great therapeutical scheme. The essential thing is to take such a large view of the physiological and pathological processes as will give the right indications to call upon each and all of the therapeutical agents at our command. To fix the mind too intently upon any one of these agents is to incur the danger of neglecting others, and of losing sight of the principle which ought to guide the application of all, as one force directed to one end."—I am, etc.,

Harley Street, March 9th.

ROBERT BARNES, M.D.

MR. STANHOPE AND THE ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT

SIR,—Although Mr. Stanhope did not refer to the Medical Department in his speech the other night, he might reasonably enough have taken credit for the lines of policy laid down in his memorandum. Discontent is now so rife in the service, grumbling has become so general and well founded, grievances are so continually under discussion, that something must be done, and done quickly, and a full and comprehensive inquiry will, at all events, bring out facts, if it does not suggest appropriate remedies.

Some of the more advanced politicians of the economical school would have preferred, I believe, to apply the pruning-knife at once to the medical vote, and fight out the resulting difficulties in a spirit of no compromise with the medical schools. This has been tried before, and it has invariably ended in one way; the flow of candidates has been cut off at its source, and an ignominious surrender on the part of the authorities has shown how complete and disastrous their failure has been. The terms offered must be good enough to direct the attention of senior students from a civil to a military career, and the supply of an essential and highly-finished article must be equalised to the demand by means which commend themselves to the judgment of those who hold the key of the situation. The Government have taken the prudent resolution of carefully looking round every side of the question before they attempt to carry out organic changes, and I congratulate them on a step which is both wise and conciliating.

But something more than actual pay and position are needed. Faith must be kept, promises must not be broken, and benefits given to-day with an apparently free hand must not be taken away to-morrow with the other. Unrest and uncertainty have ever been the lot of the Department since they obtained their Magna Charta in 1858, and although the result of change has often been for good, the lingering fear has never been far distant, that benefits may be short-lived, that new warrants may supersede old, and that the last state of those men may be worse than the first. I sincerely hope that the result of this investigation may be to establish something like finality, and a condition of things which may induce the flower of our medical schools to embrace a career which will be stable and dependable, and in which such alterations as time renders necessary will be made to their advantage.

May I express a strong personal hope that some means may be found to justify a partial return to the old regimental system? The comfort of the medical officer's life has been so diminished, and his social position so seriously impaired by the scrambling

kind of existence he is too often compelled to lead, that some concession in the way of fixity of tenure seems to be urgently needed, and the necessity is now becoming recognised. The pleasant home life of a good regiment, the warm friendships, and the social brotherhood which used to be the rule, have now become so exceptional as to be practically non-existent, and the establishment here and there of departmental messes has hardly filled the gap. I believe that the advantages of the old and the economy of the new could be easily combined by the medical officer seeing the men reporting themselves sick regimentally in the early morning, and then following them up for treatment at the station hospital attached to the district where he is doing duty.

One word on the composition of the Committee. Proper respect has been shown to the leading corporations, by the appointment of Mr. Macnamara and Dr. Balfour, who are both able and experienced, and Sir William Crossman, who has also consented to serve, holds advanced views on medical matters. But I hope that the Court is not to be packed with old men, high in departmental position, and with War Office officials. What we want is some sufficient representation of the rank and file, of those who are now serving as surgeons-major and surgeons, and who are practically familiar with the requirements of the service in all parts of the world. They will be better able than anyone else to direct the inquiry into the needed channels, and their presence will be an encouragement to their younger brethren to come forward, boldly and freely, to state their case and suggest the proper treatment.

There is no doubt that the Medical Department of the Guards is doomed to extinction; and, as a matter of fact, I believe that appointments under the new system have already been made, and that one or more surgeons are now serving out a three years' tour of London duty. After the report of Lord Randolph Churchill's Committee, this change was inevitable; but, apart from questions of pure sentiment, I doubt whether it is judicious. The old arrangement has worked economically and well, and no real reason for its supersession has been given, save the desire for a dull and dead level uniformity, and the wish to give young medical men the opportunities for professional culture which the metropolis affords.

I fear that they may be doomed to disappointment. Unless things have changed very much since my day, I can tell them that they will find their routine official work so hard that it will be difficult for them to get away in time for hospital attendance; and I fear that the absorbing social charms of London life may turn the scale in the end. In my humble judgment, it would have been far better to arrange short occasional spells of study, to be spent in some definite way, and duly authenticated by certificates of ward and other work. In any case, something of the kind must come sooner or later, and I have no doubt that this and other important questions will be duly considered by the Committee.—I am, etc.,

ROBERT FARQUHARSON.

THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS AND ITS MEMBERS.

SIR,—While fully sympathising with the aspirations of the Members of the Royal College of Surgeons for due recognition within that body, a dispassionate consideration of all the circumstances leads me to the conclusion that the Bill drafted by the Members' Association, and published in the JOURNAL of March 9th, must be modified if it is to become law; it is right that Members should regain their former privileges in their College, that its laws and by-laws should not be altered without their sanction, and that they should approve, reject, or amend the annual report of the Council; further, a certain proportion of Members should have seats on the Council; all this seems just and fair. But the fact cannot be overlooked that the College was established to promote and encourage the study and practice of the art and science of surgery, and for the furtherance of this object the order of Fellows was instituted. The Fellowship of the College is open to all Members who choose by prolonged hard study to raise themselves to the standard of surgical knowledge which the gaining of the Fellowship implies. For many years past the College has recognised this means of promoting a higher knowledge of the study and practice of surgery; many Members have become Fellows, and this number is increasing every year. It is, therefore, hardly reasonable, because the Members were disfranchised in 1843, that the Fellows, who under existing laws have honourably gained certain rights and privileges, should be stamped out in 1889. There is plenty of room for all in the College, and although the stream is turning in favour of the Members,

¹ *American Journal of Obstetrics*, 1882.