

stomach smelt just like green tobacco, and all the usual tests for nicotine being resorted to proved the poisonous plant to be the cause of death.

For some time past investigations have been made into the nature of coccidiosis. The coccidium oviforme causes irregular lumps in the livers of rabbits, varying in size, some being as large as a pea. They have not been discovered in any other animal, and in Victoria one investigator inclines to the belief that it is an embryonic stage in the life-history of the intestinal worm of some animal.

Up till now the only satisfactory treatment of tick in animals has been submersion in oil. Dr. A. A. Brown has discovered that a watery solution of sulphuretted hydrogen readily kills any of the ixodidæ. This discovery is valuable from an economic point of view.

Owing to the large export of our meat, special efforts are being made to prove the efficacy of tuberculin as a diagnostic agent in tuberculosis of cattle. But so far, experiments only confirm what is remarked of the tuberculin in other parts of the globe, that it is unreliable in many instances. Recent applications made with every precaution, where reactions indicated disease, proved *post mortem* that no tuberculous lesions existed.

A great heat wave is extending itself over the country districts. Telegrams report 115° F. in the shade, birds falling dead from trees, bush fires in all directions. The weather in the city is sultry, but a change is expected within twenty-four hours.

Dr. Fiaschi, whose report on the mutilated and eviscerated of Adowa appeared a short while ago in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, has read a paper on Medical and Ethnological Observations in Somaliland and Erythrea. "No white man," he says, "resides in all the big triangle from Cham Sir to Obbia, and the only knowledge the natives have of civilisation is from the occasional visit of a gunboat." Dr. Fiaschi attended gratuitously crowds of Somali. Three things particularly struck him: first, the absence of any disease which he had not seen in Europe or Australia; secondly, the great prevalence of tuberculosis in all its forms; and thirdly, the absence of cancer. Of other diseases were the sequelæ of malarial fevers, psoriasis, and leucoderma. Of venereal diseases, syphilis was frequent near the coast. A great demand exists for iodoform, a handful of which will purchase a sheep. The Abyssinian prostitutes are subject to medical examination twice a week. They attach no disgrace to the profession, and easily find a husband afterwards. In the discussion following Dr. Fiaschi's very interesting paper Dr. Spencer observed that leucoderma was most marked amongst people of mixed blood. In Simu, where the inhabitants are of very mixed blood, one sees persons whose faces are spotted, piebald, and even with one side white, the other black or brown. Dr. Sydney Jones believed the absence of cancer from among the Somali was due to their abstinence from meat, and he had an impression that the increase of cancer in Australia was in great measure owing to the large consumption of meat.

At the annual meeting of the Victorian Branch Dr. M. U. O'Sullivan delivered a very interesting address in which he expressed the great loss to all branches of science due to the death of Baron von Mueller. He dwelt on the value of the Roentgen rays, on our indebtedness to bacteriology, on the etiology of malignant tumours, on heredity and disease, on the necessity for a hospital for infectious diseases, and on the injudicious use of the bicycle for ladies. The Hon. Librarian (Dr. Meyer) drew attention to the liberal gift of books made to the Branch by the kindness of Mr. Ernest Hart, which had now been catalogued and placed in suitable shelves. The following office-bearers were elected for the ensuing year. President, Dr. R. A. Stirling; Vice-President, Dr. R. S. McAdam; Hon. Secretary, Dr. W. Kent Hughes; Hon. Treasurer, Dr. J. R. M. Thomson; Hon. Librarian, Dr. F. H. Meyer; Local Editor, Dr. J. W. Springthorpe.

A SERO-THERAPEUTIC HOSPITAL IN PARIS.—With the help of funds supplied by Madame Lebaudy, a site in the neighbourhood of the Pasteur Institute in Paris has been purchased, on which will be built a private hospital, altogether independent of the Assistance Publique. It is intended for the treatment of infectious diseases by serumtherapy.

## CORRESPONDENCE.

### THE ASSOCIATION AND MEDICAL DEFENCE.

SIR,—The war is being waged in earnest over medical defence, and it is to be devoutly hoped the scheme will be thoroughly purged of its dross before it emerges from the fire. I believe every practitioner feels that no representative body is so well fitted to look after his interests as the British Medical Association; but no man would care to see its usefulness crippled by commitment to any hasty and ill-advised measure. Members need only study the first half dozen paragraphs of the final official draft to understand the *modus operandi* of the contemplated defence. These few lines involve the principles of compulsion or expulsion, of representation, and of finance—each of which requires the closest attention of members to rescue the Association from a position of possible ruin and collapse.

For instance, take para. 1: "It *must* (implies *obligation*) be *obligatory* (implies *must*) upon all members of the Association *resident in Great Britain and Ireland.*" Now this much alone plainly means that the Association intends throwing in its lot to sink or swim by this scheme, that the question of medical defence can no longer be shelved by it, and that members must either join the union, or go; and yet, as will be seen later on, the Association is going to be no party to a subvention even, the working of the scheme must be from separate funds, and the poor members are to be further bled for its support. What I contend is that, if this scheme is to be so compulsory, it must constitute a part and parcel of the management and expenditure of the Association, and be as much the right of every guinea membership as is its present action with regard to Parliamentary Bills, Scientific Grants, and the other functions of its score of Committees. If this step were taken by the Association no one would or could complain, no more, at any rate, than he might to-day of the working of the other Committees. For the necessity of medical defence is admitted by all, and probably no body is so well able to establish and maintain it on an impregnable footing as the Association; but when this self-same Association turns round upon its members, and says in so many words "we are going to make a monopoly of medical defence and charge you each one guinea and a half for participation, and if you do not like it, well! you can throw up the JOURNAL, leave our meetings, and join another, or no, association," then I say it is time that one and all should fully face the consequences.

Again, take para. 3: Here compulsion, or obligatoriness, has been thrown overboard, and it is left optional for "members of the Association *resident abroad*" to do as they like. The framers of this scheme were bold in the extreme when dealing with members *at home*; but, when they came to apply it to those *abroad*, they must have felt timid, and thought it prudent to draw in their horns, lest the foreign worm might turn upon them. But surely if the Association is going to force defence down the throats of any, it should dispense the remedy to all alike; otherwise a compulsory organisation at home will be kept up at great expense, partly for the benefit of a few of the more keen-eyed ones abroad. Nay, let the Association be consistent all round, and make the thing compulsory or voluntary, and have no shilly-shallying.

So much, then, for home compulsion or expulsion, and foreign option. Let us now look at representation in para. 4; It is therein suggested that not less than *five* of the nine members on the Defence Committee shall be drawn from the Council of the Association, a body consisting of 64 home representatives and 25 officers; and that "not more than *four* (one? or two? or three?) *may* (not shall) be members of the Association who are not upon the Council." According to the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of December 19th, 1896, there were at the end of November 8,347 Branch members and 5,664 unattached members in Great Britain and Ireland; and if, from these 14,011, we deduct the 89, we have a possible representation of four for the remaining 13,922. Not only is such *misrepresentation* farcical, but it must be borne in mind that the favoured few, who are supposed to safeguard the interests of the Association above all things, are merely required to contribute like the despised many, while the pecuniary interests at least of the Association are to be in no sense touched by

this scheme. Such a constituted committee looks too much as if it were intended that the experiment should be in the hands of headquarters, and that if it failed, the loss should fall on the members, and not on the Association; if not so, the Committee is a puzzler, because it would be rash to assume that there are better brains in the Council than out of it.

Para. 4 also might make it clear that the Committee "be appointed" at the annual meeting of the Association (or at some other time and place) "to carry out," etc.; and it might fitly conclude, after the word "Council," with *and of whom three shall retire annually by rotation*. Why call the Medical Defence Committee, in this and following paragraphs, a "Standing Committee?" Are not all Committees standing till they fall? But for its irony, it might be more appropriately designated a Falling Committee; but whether standing or falling, such a qualification carries no meaning, whereas a "Defence Committee" is pregnant of significance.

Next let us touch upon the finance of Paras. 2 and 6. At the outset I protest against any extra charge whatever being compulsorily levied upon the members of the Association for any object, good or bad, unless that object be an integral part of the very life and work and burse of the Association. Other Committees, with diverse objects, are worked from the common fund, and so must the Defence Committee if the Association is to direct affairs. Once let the Association show its treasury to have been so far drained that it cannot carry on its noble mission without an increased subscription, then and not till then can it dictate with authority to its members what more they must contribute. Equally can the Association any day reduce its subscription to half-a-guinea as increase it to a guinea and a-half so long as its balance sheet justifies such change. But for the Association to issue a command to its members to contribute to an "entirely distinct" organisation, whilst itself cries hands off—see Paragraphs 12 and 13—would be as untenable and as illegal as it would be to compel one to invest in his neighbour's business, or in the Medical Sickness and Accident Society, or in any other desirable or undesirable concern. The Association, in fact, has no power in the matter other than running a Defence Committee on the lines of its other Committees, excepting of course advising the formation of a Defence Union or Society amongst its members.

Whether it would be wise of the Association to raise its present subscription in order to pursue defence with a vengeance, I know not; personally I would gladly submit to Paras. 1 and 5 of Mr. Butlin's scheme (Scheme B of the Appendix). The merits of this scheme have been sadly overlooked, inasmuch as Branch membership is voluntary, which fact alone would obviate the difficulties advanced by many of your correspondents, and leave them still free to receive their JOURNAL, to attend the meetings, and to aspire to office. If the Branches agree to this, their surplus revenues, like those of the Association, could be utilised to defend a just cause, and would be relieved of the degeneracy from an embarrass of riches.

Viewing the whole subject dispassionately, it has been a valient endeavour to solve a pressing problem, and the especial thanks of the profession are due to Mr. Horsley and Dr. Welsford for their convincing advocacy; nevertheless a discordant note might call forth renewed interest and wider enthusiasm, and help in presenting a practical and beneficent programme to the constituencies when the time comes for their voice and vote.—I am, etc.,

Langland Bay, March 6th.

A. LLOYD JONES.

SIR,—The recent meeting of the Metropolitan Counties Branch is eminently instructive. Last year the Branch passed resolutions in favour of the Association undertaking the individual and collective defence of the profession. This year the Branch refuses to pass a resolution of a like nature. The President of the Branch, and the Treasurer of the Association, himself proposes a scheme for carrying out the principle and then comes to a meeting and votes against the principle upon which his scheme rests. Last year the Branch held its meeting at a democratic hour, this year at an aristocratic hour, with the result that it comes to an opposite conclusion. Not only so—this year the representative of the Royal College of Surgeons on the General Medical Council

comes down and says that the principle of medical defence is opposed to the scientific and respectable constitution of the Association.

Now it will occur to most people who know anything of the ordinary principles of public business that this is a condition of affairs which is absurd. A principle is affirmed, then it is negated. A scheme is prepared, based upon the principle originally carried, the result of much deliberation and hard work. What are the grounds for all this waste of time and labour? First, let us take the question of respectability. We all know the great attribute of extreme respectability to be mediocrity. Surely it is to mediocrity that this question of respectability appeals. In no other profession or calling is the question of organisation neglected, but in no other profession but that of medicine and surgery are the claims of mediocrity so fully recognised. Is it to be conceded that the present managers of the Association are incapable of carrying out a large scheme for the organisation of the profession?

Next let us take the argument of science. Why should votaries of any scientific calling be debarred from the advantages of organisation? In political life organisation is found necessary, and as the result of this politicians turn a deaf ear to the appeals of those who are incapable of organisation. I will ask this: If organisation does not debase those who govern the country, why should it debase those who govern the medical profession? Further, if it does not debase those who elect politicians, why should it debase those who ought to have the power of electing the rulers of the medical profession? Now what is the reason of this clamour about science and respectability?

The College of Surgeons devotes 46 per cent. of the fees received from examinees to the pockets of the examiners, and 65.1 per cent. of the amount paid to 46 examiners to 10 gentlemen. Besides this it excludes from the body corporate a very large percentage of those who belong to it. This I may call the science of keeping power and treasure in the hands of the few, and a very pretty science it is. If this is the science of the College of Surgeons, it cannot be a matter of astonishment that its representative comes to a meeting and protests in the name of science against those who are excluded from any voice in the management of that body corporate forming a political organisation of their own. The members of the Association may be quite clear about this, that it is no use complaining of the mismanagement of their affairs if they are unwilling to form a political organisation when they have the chance, and that at small cost to themselves. The pow-wow of mere parochial politicians is very well in its way, no doubt, but it will not advance great interests; these can only be advanced by organisation.

The medical profession has a chance now of forming an organisation capable of dealing with matters connected with its internal machinery, and with matters which are connected with the interest of the general community as well as its own. If it decides that it does not desire organisation, it must not complain, as it is now doing, of want of attention to its interests. In connection with this conclusion, it must be remembered that no counter-scheme for organisation has been proposed. If there were, the profession could decide between the alternatives. As it is, the principle of organisation is at stake, and I write this in the hope that the members of Branches who have not yet voted will bear this in mind, and remove the stigma of being a mere disorganised rabble from the profession of which they are members.—I am, etc.,

Hatfield, March 7th.

LOVELL DRAGE.

#### EXPERT EVIDENCE.

SIR,—I have read with great interest the article in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of March 6th by "A Legal Correspondent" on this very important subject.

Touching his reference to the provisions of the Judicature Act, 1873, empowering the High Court to call in one or more assessors to assist the Court on scientific questions, it is true that such a procedure is authorised by the Act in question, but, apart from Admiralty cases, it is infrequently resorted to in practice. The reasons for this are not far to seek, and may be briefly summarised as follows: It has been clearly laid down by Cockburn, C.J., that one party cannot force a trial before assessors if the other party desires a jury, and it