

worked without fear or favour, and without prejudice to any doctor resident in the district. This done, I agree with Mrs. Garrett Anderson, to whom I have already done some little service in her able opposition to the Bill of 1898. It would be invidious and, indeed, intolerable to put on the shoulders of one medical man the supervising duties enumerated in the Bill of last year and this.

Again, as the Bill is to cover the practice of both midwives by "examination" and by "experience" only, the Gamp with a "character" would be as uncontrolled as she is at present, and I see nothing in the Bill to prevent these women from medically attending both the mothers and children during the lying-in period, and, if necessary, signing "death certificates." Clause 3, Subsection 4 is no prohibitive, not more than the Medical Acts prohibit quacks and other non-registered persons from granting certificates of death, which the registrar may use or not at his discretion. "Supervision and control" are the very essence of any Midwives Bill, and both of these were secured by my own and Sir Blundell Maple's Bill of 1898. No "rules"—no matter how stringent on paper—can control the midwife in the lying-in room unless they secure the presence of a registered practitioner either at or immediately after a confinement.—I am, etc.,

East Sheen, Jan. 8th.

ALEX. MCCOOK WEIR.

SIR,—It is more than probable that the great majority of practitioners will concur with Dr. E. Garrett Anderson in the opinion that the Bill of this year is a very different measure to that of last year, but the objection to the latter, I take it, was more than a mere dislike to "a scheme which threatened to create a class of very inferior practitioners who would have been in effect quite independent in their work" for while, if carried, it would have done so, it left the old evils untouched except in name. The practice of midwifery would have been just as open to any woman who imagined herself qualified to undertake the work as it has been in the past; in other words, midwifery would under its empty pretentiousness have been practised by three classes—the medical practitioner, the would-be created new practitioner, and the unregistered practising midwife or common howdie, the first class under the control of the General Medical Council, the second under some control of a Midwives Board, and the third under the control of nobody. Last year's measure was distinctly retrogressive, and naturally the profession strongly resented the idea of a new-fangled order being wedged in between them and the old-fashioned class which it made no attempt to abolish.

To have every practising midwife, as provided for in this year's measure, properly under control and enrolled is a conserving principle which no doubt the profession will ardently support, and so help to free one of the branches of professional work from the exploitations of unpenalised quackery.—I am, etc.,

Leeds, Jan 9th.

J. H. WIGHAM.

THE INTERPRETATION OF THE MEDICAL ACTS.

SIR,—Dr. Holman's suggestion seems to me an excellent one, and I hope when the Parliamentary Bills Committee meets that he and Mr. Victor Horsley will be able to agree on one (or may I suggest two?) Q.C.'s to whom this important question of the interpretation of the Medical Acts may be referred for their opinion and advice.

In corroboration of the first sentence of Dr. Holman's letter, I may mention that some twenty years ago I was associated with the late Mr. R. H. S. Carpenter, whom the senior members of our Association will remember as taking an active part at that time in the attempted suppression of quacks, and I had then many opportunities of discussing this question with him, as also with Dr. Lush, M.P., who introduced a Medical Act Amendment Bill in the House of Commons, and also with Mr. W. H. Michael, Q.C., who had been in medical practice before he became a barrister; and these three gentlemen, with the best desire possible to find power given in the Act of 1858 to suppress illegal practice, failed to do so, and Dr. Lush even went so far as to say that not only was there no such power given by the Act of 1858, but that the House of Commons would never consent to give such power, because it contained so many members who themselves consulted bone-setters and quacks. Now I am very far from saying that we

may not all have been mistaken, or that the Act of 1886 may not have altered matters; but I do say that Mr. Victor Horsley's speeches and letters do not seem at all convincing, and least of all his latest contribution, in which the question whether the Medical Acts are efficient or not is nearly lost sight of in the ardour of his attack on you and your contributor.

What we all want is an authoritative opinion on a stated case, in which both views of the law should be laid before counsel, and this I hope the Parliamentary Bills Committee will obtain for us.—I am, etc.,

Dulwich, Jan. 9th.

H. NELSON HARDY.

SIR,—Although I agree with Mr. Horsley's interpretation of the Medical Acts, yet I think it would be a great pity to defer the question of an amending Bill until, as Dr. Holman suggests, the High Courts have given an authoritative decision. The profession want it made perfectly plain that to practise medicine, surgery, or midwifery for gain is illegal. Moreover, it is most desirable that penalties for second or third offences should be much heavier than they are for the first offence. On this important issue let us be united, and there will be little chance of our failing to convince the Government of the real necessity of an amendment of the existing law.—I am, etc.,

Cardiff, Jan. 9th.

T. GARRETT HORDER.

SYPHILIS IN THE ARMY.

SIR,—In the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of December 31st, 1898, "Inquirer" specially addresses me on two interrogative sentences of my letter (December 3rd, 1898) importing a belief in the attenuating power of the Contagious Diseases Act on venereal disease, which I infer he receives in a spirit of criticism verging on scepticism. To his three queries I reply, as briefly as possible, as follows:

1. The malignant character of the venereal diseases at home which the first Contagious Diseases Act (1864 and its extension in 1866) demonstrated and eliminated. The prevalence and virulence of these in certain seaports, etc., and their ravages in the army and navy initiated this sanitary measure. The character of the demonstrated disease is referred to in Parkes's *Hygiene*, 6th ed., p. 493, and details are to be found in this JOURNAL, especially in 1867-68. The report of the 1870 Commission is very clear on the point of elimination, and corroboration is to be found in that of 1882. The reflex of this amelioration upon the army is officially recorded in 1869: "The protection afforded is demonstrated in respect to those forms of disease which infect the constitution;" and the reduction in the secondary disease is in the 1882 Committee report placed at 29 per cent.

2. Further reports substantiating attenuation of the syphilitic virus. In respect to the women, I would refer to the paper on the Lock Hospital by Mr. Lane,¹ in which the average stay in hospital for all forms of disease among the ordinary and Government protected patients in marked favour of the latter, with corresponding mildness of type in both primary and secondary disease, is brought forward; and also to his important letter in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of December 12th, 1874, in respect to the marked modification in syphilis in both stages in quantity and quality. The repeated conclusions of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL to the same effect is especially noteworthy, particularly that of November 7th, 1868, to the effect "that both as regards the women and men, not only the quantity of disease has been diminished, but its quality has been modified for the better in the most marked manner." And in respect to the army, premising that as criteria of virulence I include not merely "the average stay in hospital of the cases," but the prevalence of both forms and the ratios of deaths and invaliding, I would refer "Inquirer" beyond the report of 1866 and Dr. Balfour's reply in Committee, which he admits have no bearing on "virulence," to those from 1870 to 1884, for example, dealing with a lengthened experience of the Act. There, in respect to the protected and unprotected stations, it is apparent that, taking 14 stations under the Act, and a similar number not under, and commencing with the years preceding legislation with a ratio from syphilis of 130 per 1,000 of

¹ BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, February 15th, 1868.