

Perhaps you will kindly print enclosed copy of a letter which I have published in the *Birmingham Daily Post*.—I am, etc.,
Birmingham, June 7, 1899. ROBERT SAUNDBY.

THE PROPOSED CONSULTATIVE INSTITUTE.
To the Editor of the "Daily Post."

SIR,—I trust I may not be misunderstood if I do not reply to Mr. Lawson Tait's attack, but it is better to run this risk than to degrade the discussion into a personal squabble.

I will only say that, with the assistance of my colleagues, I am doing my best to seek a satisfactory solution of the problem, and that it is yet too early to despair of success.
68, Hagley Road, May 28th.

ROBERT SAUNDBY, M.D., LL.D.

THE SOIL AS A NURSERY OF PATHOGENIC ORGANISMS.

SIR,—I must lose no time in apologising to Sir Charles Alexander Cameron, C.B., of Dublin, for having unwittingly confounded him with Sir Charles Cameron, Bart., M.P., a member of the Cremation Society and my cross-examiner-in-chief on a recent committee of the House of Commons on death certification. I will not, however, for the present trouble him with my reasons for insisting on the marked distinction which exists between *materies morbi* which find their way into the surface soil, to become comparatively harmless there, and the same *materies morbi* which are virulent only till they get there. The question, in fact, is a larger one and will have to be looked at from a larger point of view than the mere microscopist is at present prepared to enter upon, and it may be added by a class of observer which has yet to be created.—I am, etc.,

Woodcote, June 5th.

F. SEYMOUR HADEN.

SYPHILITIC DISEASES: THEIR PREVENTION, STUDY, AND TREATMENT.

SIR,—I read Mr. Marshall's letter of May 6th with all the care it deserved, and, in view of his statement in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of June 3rd that it was not his intention to cast any imputation on the London Lock Hospital, I have re-read it. I now reply that whatever his intentions may have been, he did undoubtedly cast the most grossly unjustifiable imputations on that institution, as anyone who understands the English language and who will take the trouble to read his letter will admit. These imputations I, as one of the senior surgeons to the institution, naturally resented, and, in Mr. Marshall's words, took up the cudgels on its behalf, not, as he states in somewhat confused metaphor, because a shoe pinched somewhere, but in order to contradict a statement which, if any weight were attached to it by your readers, could not fail to react injuriously upon an institution which does and has done the most valuable work both in the treatment of venereal disease, and in rescuing unfortunate women from the paths of vice.—I am, etc.,

Queen Anne Street, W., June 5th. J. ERNEST LANE, F.R.C.S.

REINFECTION IN SYPHILIS: PROFETA'S LAW.

SIR,—Two articles have recently appeared in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* which appear to me to prejudice the pathological issue in favour of the modification of syphilis mainly by treatment, as opposed to modification by natural causes.

On behalf of the latter view, already advocated by myself, I trust you will permit me at once to point out that whereas in the article on Reinfection in Syphilis in the *JOURNAL* of April 15th Ricord's clinical denial in 1858 of genuine reinfection is given, and Fournier's opinion in favour of relapsing genital sores is noted as opposed to the soft sores due to reinfection, no mention is made of Ricord's emphatic testimony in favour of "the indurated chancre being transmitted to previously infected subjects under the form of a chancre with a soft base, analogous in appearance to the simple chancre." Nor is reference made to the late Mr. Henry Lee's denial in 1854 of the teaching of the French school respecting "the occurrence of constitutional syphilis once only during the lifetime of each individual," nor to his examples of genuine and modified reinfection of previously infected subjects.

In the article on Profeta's Law, May 27th, while restriction to the secondary infectious period of disease in the mother is stated, no mention is made of the clinical relapse or reinfection of syphilis in women in succeeding pregnancies. Such repetitions of symptoms of a secondary nature are opposed to

an arbitrary restriction of the infectious period and immunity. While acquisition of syphilis in adult subjects of inherited syphilis is emphasised, no mention is made in either article of the generally admitted modified nature, with exceptions, of such acquired disease, nor of manifestations at puberty or later, in favour of a prolonged immunity. The proof of immunity is held to be wanting, but the belief that such is equivalent to previous contamination is founded on clinical observation and inoculation experiments. Wallace of Dublin (1837) interpreted the freedom of the mother as immunity "in consequence of her constitution being already contaminated," but he admitted exceptions. Conversely the freedom of the infant may be regarded as immunity, admitting of exceptions, and as opposed to the theory of absence of inoculable lesions.—I am, etc.,

Grosvenor Street, W., June 6th. JOHN A. SHAW-MACKENZIE.

THE VICE-PRESIDENCY OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF IRELAND.

SIR,—Inasmuch as there was no change in the offices of president or vice-president in this June election which took place to-day, I desire to inform the Fellows of the College that last year, when I expressed to the electors my determination to offer myself for the office of vice-president, I felt that my long service to the School and College as senior demonstrator, examiner and councillor, and my seniority as a surgical teacher and as a hospital surgeon, might reasonably deserve recognition by the Fellows, and that I might hope to be honoured with election to the office I then sought. Unhappily personal and domestic circumstances prevented me from giving prominence to my candidature until others had occupied the ground in some degree, and as a contest is extremely distasteful to me, and in my opinion is not to the advantage of the College, I thought it best to refrain from presenting myself for the vice-chair until the next legitimate vacancy occurs, in June, 1900. I desire, however, to assure the Fellows that under any circumstances I shall do so when that time arrives. With this intimation, I trust that my friends and supporters among the Fellows will not be induced to pledge their votes to any other candidate for the next vice-presidency.—I am, etc.,

Dublin, June 5th, 1899.

L. H. ORMSBY, M.D., F.R.C.S.I.

THE CASE OF DOCKRELL v. DOUGALL.

SIR,—A circular has been issued referring to the case of Dr. Dockrell, who has been unsuccessful in defending his right in the law courts. It is unfortunate that Dr. Dockrell was not a member of a medical defence association, as it is acknowledged that the defence of any member of the profession is much better maintained by a powerful body—such as the Medical Defence Union—than by individual effort. For not only has the injured member the moral support and prestige of the Union to sustain him, but also the special experience and advice of the able secretary and council of this body; and should the case go into the law courts the complainant's cause is conducted by those especially trained for the warfare.

In this case is it not possible, as has occurred in analogous instances, that Mr. Dougall would have withdrawn the objectionable use of Dr. Dockrell's name for advertising purposes, if the latter had been represented by the Defence Union?

It is to be hoped that as a result of this case hundreds may be induced to join a defence association. The most powerful of these bodies, the Medical Defence Union, has a membership of but 4,000; but if with this strength so much has been accomplished, what might we not hope for with a roll of 10,000?—I am, etc.

Maida Vale, W., June 6th.

H. HAVELOCK STURGE.

FORMALIN IN CONSUMPTION.

SIR,—In your note in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of May 27th, p. 1317, a Cure for Consumption, it is stated that formalin, otherwise formalina (which is a 40 per cent. solution of formic aldehyde), instead of being a new method of cure for consumption discovered by Professor Cervello, of Palermo, "it has been in use as a remedy for consumption in this country for two years or more."

Allow me to point out that in a report published in the *JOURNAL* of a paper read by me at a meeting of the Southern