

need at this juncture is that the profession should accept cheerfully the olive leaf held out, and set about electing its representatives without waiting for details, which can only be forthcoming when the two parties meet. The idea is a new one and I believe the friendly societies are simply asking us in all good faith to send men with whom they can have a talk in order to consider the possibility of a *modus vivendi*. To ask for further particulars is to insinuate that the societies have some deep-laid scheme up their sleeve.

Considering the novelty and importance of the idea, very little interest has been shown in the proposed Board by the profession. If we as members of the British Medical Association do our duty, and our Council does its share, we ought to have our men ready not later than the annual meeting this year. After that I am sure Dr. Glover, who has already taken a great deal of trouble in this matter, would willingly make the arrangements for the first meeting of the Conciliation Board.—I am, etc.,

Gateshead, March 5th.

ALFRED COX.

BORAX AND BORACIC ACID AS FOOD PRESERVATIVES.

SIR,—The author of a review of my paper on The Effects of Borax and Boracic Acid on the Human System, which appeared in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of February 17th, alludes to me in a very flattering manner, but says "it is difficult to avoid a suspicion that this paper is intended to be used and quoted by the defence in any prosecutions which may be instituted." I should like to do away with this suspicion by frankly admitting that my investigations were intended to correct the many false and unscientific attacks which have been made upon a substance whose proper use is of the greatest importance for the welfare of the people. I should be glad if the value of the results I have obtained were recognised not only by scientists but by the legislature and the courts of law. I trust that my paper will be an incentive to further scientific investigation, in which I shall always be ready to take part.—I am, etc.,

Berlin, N.W., March 4th.

OSCAR LIEBREICH.

COLLIERY SURGEONS IN THE MIDLANDS.

SIR,—At last there is a cry raised by a colliery surgeon in the Midlands for an increase of remuneration from the miners. Months ago I urged that other counties should follow our example, and so make it easier for all, but there was hardly any response.

If "Colliery Surgeon" will write to me, I will try and find time to give him some help to carry out his idea to a good and happy issue.—I am, etc.,

EDWARD JEPSON,

President, County of Durham Medical Union.

42, Old Elvet, Durham, March 4th.

INSTRUCTION OF MEDICAL STUDENTS IN MIDWIFERY.

SIR,—In the review of my *Practical Textbooks of Midwifery for Nurses and Students*, which appeared in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of March 3rd, the following statement is made: "We believe that in no well-regulated medical school or lying-in hospital are students now allowed to attend women in labour before they have received systematic instruction in midwifery." Allow me to point out the fact that a large number of the Glasgow students do take their cases out before they have attended lectures on the subject. The same practice existed in Edinburgh in my student days, and I understand it is still not uncommon there. Both these universities are generally supposed to be "well-regulated medical schools."

I am at one with your reviewer in disapproval of the practice, but as it actually exists I have endeavoured to supply what appeared to be a felt want by giving to the students a clear and concise statement of our methods of work. Of course a student who has not had lectures is not allowed to attend cases until he has passed an oral examination. The house-surgeon attends the first three cases along with the men. I have never known of any patient suffering from the ignorance of the men, but, as regards the students themselves, it seems to me the proceeding is to be deprecated as involving a great waste of time.

The teaching of midwifery from the practical side certainly calls for reform. It appears to me that, over and above personal attendance of twelve or twenty labours, a course of at least three months' clinical instruction should be made compulsory.—I am, etc.,

Glasgow, March 5th.

ROBERT JARDINE.

MEDICO-LEGAL AND MEDICO-ETHICAL.

AN INQUEST AT EASTBOURNE.

THE VIAVI TREATMENT.

We learn from the *Eastbourne Chronicle* that Mr. G. Vere Benson, coroner, held an inquest at Eastbourne on February 27th touching the death of Elizabeth Mary Lake. The deceased's husband stated that she had been out of health for over a year, but had refused to see a medical man. She had seen Miss O'Dowda, who was agent to the British Viavi Company in Eastbourne. On the Monday before her death the deceased was confined to bed, and subsequently, at his request, Miss O'Dowda came to see her every day until Saturday, about four times altogether. He understood that his wife was suffering from an obstruction of the passage of the bowels. The treatment comprised an ointment rubbed down the spine, which it was explained was to feed the nerves running from the spine. The Viavi treatment was commenced a little previous to Lady Day, 1899, and in the summer about July she was decidedly better. She became worse about Christmas, which, however, she attributed to a visit to Reading, where she said the air did not agree with her. Miss O'Dowda gave his wife advice, and gave him to understand that she was suffering from a tumorous condition of the intestines. He noticed a change come over his wife on February 25th, and he immediately went for a doctor, but she died before he arrived.

Miss Mary Josephine O'Dowda stated she was branch house manager of the British Viavi Company, which was a health treatment company for home treatment. It did not give medical aid, but medical treatment, for which it charged. It was a commercial company which distributed certain remedies to the patients who came under treatment.

The Coroner observed that a company could hardly have a patient; it must be some individual of the company.

The witness replied that each office had its own representative. The business of the agent was to give instructions with regard to the remedies to the people who wished to buy them, as to their application, and to put them in touch with the Hygiene Department in London, which was controlled by medical advisers, and corresponded with the patients. It was part of the witness's business to advise or give instruction as to the application of the remedies, but she did not give medical or surgical advice, and had no diploma. Witness's connection with the deceased began through a friend; the deceased came to see witness at her office last March. She came first as a friend, and continued to come simply as a friend for some time until she came under treatment.

Coroner: How was it she came under treatment?

Witness: She complained of nervous exhaustion, indigestion, and other trouble.

The Coroner: To whom did she complain?

Witness: She explained her symptoms to me.

The Coroner: As a friend?

Witness: As a prospective patient.

In reply to further questions, witness said that deceased came under treatment, which meant that she purchased some of the remedies for application, and the witness told her what she required.

The Coroner: If you were a doctor you would call it prescribing.

The Witness: I am not a doctor, and I prefer the term treatment.

Witness then pointed out the remedies which she recommended to Mrs. Lake, and said that they were composed of vegetable ingredients, the names of which she did not know. She believed the remedies to be efficacious because the health of very many of the patients improved. Witness further stated that none of the Viavi remedies contained poison. She stated that she had not examined the deceased further than asking her her symptoms, and on that she formed an opinion as to what was the matter with her. The deceased had visited her frequently.

The Coroner then questioned the witness further as to the ingredients of Viavi, but the witness did not make any statement beyond that they were vegetable ingredients, perfectly pure and harmless, and had proved efficacious all over the world. She did not know the names of the plants from which the remedies were extracted. Each box containing medicine also contained a paper of questions, which was filled up by the patient explaining what was the matter with her; that was sent to the Hygiene Department in London, and the questions were replied to by medical men of the department. Mrs. Lake was so advised, but it was a long time ago, and witness did not remember whether she had seen the advice or not. The Hygiene Department in London was under medical superintendence; the medical supervisor was Dr. Woodward; he was a registered medical practitioner.

Dr. Woodward, who was present, here stated that he desired to correct the witness's statement. He was not registered; his qualification was from the University of Pennsylvania.

The Coroner: That is an important correction.

Questions were then put with regard to the charges, when it was stated that the prices were as follows: Box of ointment, 36s.; box of 84 capsules, 36s.; bottle of Viavi liquid, 36s.; box of tablets, to last three months, 36s.

Answering further questions, witness said she was called to see Mrs. Lake on Tuesday or Wednesday, and she went to her regularly after that. Before that time deceased visited witness.

The Coroner: Has anyone else attended deceased?

Witness: Sometimes she has been seen by Mrs. Brown, my agent.

When was that?—Some weeks ago.

When did you see deceased last before you were called to see her?—About a fortnight ago.

Did you do anything for her?—I saw and spoke to her, and told her to use the remedies. The ointment was to be rubbed on the spine in order