

THE BORDERLAND OF QUACKERY.

THE field which the profession of medicine offers—apart from the scientific interest it possesses—as a means of ordinary livelihood is a question of serious and practical interest, not only for those who are bearing the burden of the present day in ministering to the requirements of the sick and the prevention of disease, but also for that large army of young men who are destined to carry on the traditions and work of the healing art. It has a personal application for all who have devoted their lives to medicine, and to many who are considering whether their experience of the rewards which have followed keen and undivided attention to the career they have chosen are sufficiently encouraging to warrant them in calling upon their sons to follow in their footsteps. It is all very well for the scientific enthusiast to preach that medicine is not a money-making profession, and that those who enter its service have no right to anticipate much more than the recompense that comes from work done for work's sake; but this theory, however admirable, is not one which quite covers the area of most men's calculation when considering the utilitarian aspects of life as applied to themselves or their sons, and may therefore, from the point of view of professional inducement, be looked upon as a negligible quantity, except in the case of a quite inconsiderable minority. Nor is it wrong that this should be so; after all, doctors must live like other men, and the reputation they possess for inadequate business capacity is probably not altogether unconnected with a Quixotic sentiment possessed by many that their lives shall be devoted to the cure of disease for the sake of the satisfaction which such work carries with it, and entirely apart from bread-and-butter considerations. This is not a commendable attitude from the point of view either of domestic or political economy. Medicine is not, and never can be, except to a favoured and small minority, a road to wealth, but it ought to provide to all its worthy disciples the means whereby they can maintain themselves in comfort and make reasonable provision for their families.

The question is one of such superlative importance, so far as the future of medicine is concerned, that we feel justified in calling attention to one very active excrescence which derives most, if not all, its sustenance at the expense of what ought to be professional revenue. The word "quackery" bears about it an unpleasant suggestiveness, but no other term expresses so comprehensively the character of the work carried on in that wide field of operations which is beyond the scope of legitimate and scientific practice. With unadulterated quackery our present strictures have nothing to do; it may be left to itself to stew in the juice of its own hollow pretensions; and ultimately to perish as soon as the credulity of its victims has awakened to the fact that they have been duped. Our animadversions are confined to methods of management and systems of practice, many of which cannot be boldly designated quackery, but all of which are more or less questionable, and occupy a sort of no-man's-land, fringed on one boundary by methods unimpeachably orthodox, and on the other by systems of procedure which cannot be too severely censured or too opprobriously denounced. This borderland constitutes a happy hunting-ground for the man of questionable business morality—sometimes, alas! a duly qualified member of the profession—who for the sake of gain is not unwilling even to cast in his lot with the vulgar charlatan, and, if he be a registered practitioner, is not afraid to run the risk of the possibility of penal action by the General Medical Council.

There are many modern methods of treatment which, though no doubt possessed of good and encouraging elements of usefulness in the cure of disease, are as yet so little understood and so imperfectly developed that they afford a deplorably wide margin for the full expansion of the town crier's methods, which are all persuasive in the attractions they offer to those who are likely to lend a willing ear.

ELECTRICAL "CURES."

For the purposes of the borderland practitioner, no therapeutic measure is more useful or more widely adopted than electricity; it is possessed of powers which seem to be well-nigh illimitable; it has already achieved curative credit in connexion with almost every disease under the sun; and it

can be so handled as to appeal with all the strong conviction of that insidious suggestion which temporarily benefits those whose nervous decrepitude is oblivious of the stern logic of fact. Such persons rejoice in, and are ready blindly to believe themselves assisted by, a plan of treatment which, no matter how vague and incomprehensible, possesses enough of "the material" to appeal to their receptive sense organs. Thus they find confirmation of the sheafs of unsolicited testimonials from previous grateful recipients of the benefits promised, and ungrudgingly accept from the evidence of their own senses the truth of the assertion that the ozone-scented atmosphere they breathe, the vacuum tubes which immediately become illuminated when approached to their bodies, the coloured lights which play upon the seat of their disease at a becoming distance; the gently soothing tappings of the electric-driven hammers, which are devised to cure their neuralgic miseries; and the crowning glory of the terminal eau-de-cologne spray and luxurious Turkish divan, where the fatigues of the electrical applications are comfortably recovered from, are a well-ordered dispensation of Providence by means of which, under the guiding hand of the borderland specialist, to whom their precious lives have been trusted, they hope to be restored to that fullness of vigour for which they have been panting and perspiring all the days of their lives.

So long as human nature remains what it is, a certain proportion of mankind will continue to flock to any booth whose showman beats the drum and blares the trumpet loudly enough to attract their attention. By extravagant promises he induces them, for a ridiculously small admission fee, to walk in and judge for themselves of the value of the cures which are his possession alone, and which for efficacy and certainty are unsurpassed in all the rest of quackery fair. This is common knowledge, but outside the fair grounds we pass on our way to the sedate abodes of strict professional decorum and etiquette, an intermediate zone—this very borderland with which we are dealing—where booths give way to pretentious houses, and the big drum is replaced by more refined, though more insidious, devices for captivating the credulous. Here, in a neighbourhood associated in the public mind with the practice of medicine, is to be found an elaborate establishment for the cure of "rheumatism, sciatica, neurasthenia, dyspepsia, etc., etc., by high frequency currents, actinic light baths, and nascent ozone." A large capital has been sunk in the foundation of the institution, and it is under the direction of an energetic and enterprising non-medical managing secretary, with an expert electrician as his second in command. It advertises extensively in such medical and other journals as are open to receive its custom, and illustrates the up-to-datedness of its methods by embellishing its advertisements with indifferently executed drawings of a variety of weird-looking instruments which are presumably vacuum electrodes.

It asserts that patients are only received on the authority of their medical attendants, and invites the fullest investigation of its premises by any one who will take the trouble to call. It offers in addition a free supply of its patented unipolar vacuum electrodes to hospitals and public institutions. Now at first sight this all looks very plausible and free from objection, but when it is considered that, up to the present time, little or nothing is definitely known as to the exact value of high frequency currents, and still less—at least among the members of the profession in this country—of the various methods of application of this form of electricity, it is difficult to recognize as quite orthodox a system that boldly professes its singular applicability "for the treatment of rheumatic and gouty conditions," and of various other pathological states too numerous to mention. Moreover, it is hard to understand how, in the present professional lack of knowledge of the subject, medical men can be found who are competent to supervise the treatment or to regulate either the number or duration of the sittings to which it is wise for their patients to subject themselves.

The institution gives, however, a general hint as to this latter point in its scale of charges, which are stated to be one guinea for a single treatment—presumably an experimental trial—or for a course as follows: "Six treatments £5 5s., twelve £10 10s., paid in advance." The same observations apply to the department of this institution's treatment which is concerned with "subjecting the body of the patient to

powerful actinic rays of light" and providing for him "transpiration of ozonized air through the 'pores' of the skin and by inhalation through the lungs." Comparatively little is yet known as to the positive value, except in their local application, of either ozone or light as curative agents, but both the public and the profession are invited to trust blindly to the elaborate promises of this institution that by their combined agency rebellious diseases may be cured and metabolism so influenced as to "bring about the most rapid restoration to health and vigour."

We do not wish to be understood as contending that high frequency currents, or light rays, or ozone are inert and useless in the cure of disease. The excellent work of d'Arsonval, Finsen, and others has clearly indicated that so far as high frequency currents and light rays are concerned we are probably on the threshold of therapeutic measures which will prove of considerable value; but the fringe of quackery is touched when the initial experimental and practical work of such scientists is seized upon by a commercial syndicate and run for the money value that can be got out of the routine or haphazard application of the methods which these eminent men have devised. We doubt whether many men in practice recommend their patients to treatment such as is here offered; if they do they place themselves on the horns of an awkward dilemma, because either they are professing a knowledge which they do not possess by accepting, in accordance with the terms of the institution, the responsibility of controlling a system of cure which is still in its infancy and almost wholly unproved; or they are trusting their patient to the care of a managing secretary and an expert electrician, neither of whom can be expected to have much experience in clinical investigation or to have much practical knowledge of therapeutic reaction. To accept the risks of such a dilemma is as hazardous as it is unnecessary, because well within the pale of professional orthodoxy there dwell many well-known specialists who are devoting their lives to the elucidation and elaboration of the problems which these new agencies of high potential electricity and light rays have brought prominently forward, and to whose charge any practitioner may confidently entrust his patient with the full assurance that every scientific care will be taken to guide the treatment and register the results. Not only so, but from the point of view of worldly self-interest, the fees that must necessarily be paid are retained within the confines of the legitimate profession, and are of valuable consideration to those who are endeavouring, in the proper spirit and on strictly professional lines, to penetrate the secrets of Nature and bring her forces within the scope of practical application as helpful agencies in the cure of disease.

THE VIBRATION "CURE."

In a street in this same neighbourhood is to be found another institute—this time an importation from Germany—which professes through the agency of vibrations produced at the rate of 2,000 or 3,000 a minute by small hammers propelled by an electric motor, to cure almost the whole gamut of disease. The promoters of this system of vibration cure claim "marvellous results in nervous diseases, heart diseases, liver, stomach, and kidney diseases, diabetes, deafness," and many more. They possess branches throughout Germany, France, and Austria, and have recently established institutes in London and New York. The London establishment is under the management of a German graduate in medicine who is prepared to receive and treat whoever comes to him, but who prefers that the patient should remain under the care and direction of his own family attendant. The difficulties in the case of this institution are not so great as in the one previously dealt with, because here a medical man is in charge who may be presumed to know the results obtainable by the system of cure which he practises and who may therefore be credited with the possession of sufficient scientific knowledge to enable him to gauge intelligently the effect of the treatment on each case which he handles. As to the value of the system itself we offer no opinion, but so much is claimed for it that the prudent may be excused if they suspend their judgement. It is, for instance, asserted that by its influence, the secretions of—among other organs—the pancreas and the testicle are markedly increased. How, we would gladly know, are these results ascertained and by what

proofs can they be demonstrated? That certain physiological results may be produced by the effect on the peripheral circulation of vibrations rapidly repeated over a period of fifteen or twenty minutes we are not prepared to deny, but that diseases of all kinds and of every organ can by such a process be cured or even modified we do not believe. In the case again of this institution the question may well be asked: why should the public be exploited by such a commercial enterprise at the expense of the profession; and why should doctors employ such agencies when, within the limits of their own profession, they can find opportunities for the application of the same method? Vibration treatment, whatever it may be worth, is available at several of our health resorts; and is also practised, with a full appreciation of its limitations, by those whose work is specially devoted to electro-therapeutics. There is a feature about this institution which is probably not meant to be so widely known as the wonderful cures it effects, but which has an important bearing upon its trustworthiness, and that is the system by which it carries on its operations. Its valuable discoveries are apparently in some way protected by patent, so that in order to practise the "Muschik System," as it is called, recourse must either be had to one of the many institutes it possesses, or a licence must be obtained from the company for the use of its apparatus. This licence is preferably given to medical men, though not confined to them, and an endeavour is being made to establish a vibration institute in every town where a licensee can be found. A moment's consideration will show how subtle a bribe this is to the younger members of our profession, who, in their zeal to get on in the world, may not always be fully alive to the risks they run in accepting such an inviting offer. They are assured that this system is in full operation all over the Continent, and that it is a method of treatment full of [endless possibilities, so that those who are fortunate enough to avail themselves of the present fleeting opportunity for obtaining the licence—for one only will be granted to each town or district of a certain population—have but to wait their time to step in, through the introduction it will give them to large and increasing practice. Even if it be admitted that the system has good in it, is this business method not of itself enough to put such an institution beyond the pale of professional acceptability, and to justify its relegation to the outer march line of the Borderland?

A NEW FORM OF "CLUB" PRACTICE.

Not far off another establishment, though performing most excellent and commendable service in the facilities it affords for physical culture, lays itself open to serious misinterpretation by the possession of what it is pleased to call a medical department.

This institution aspires to the dignity of a club, whose foreign title may be ascertained by those who are inquisitive on reference to the advertisement hoardings which beautify the various stations of the "Twopenny Tube." With its academy for physical development we are not concerned; indeed we are informed that the various exercises and gymnastics there taught are specially well devised, and that the muscular training provided is carefully regulated and admirably carried out. It may be contended, perhaps, that to undertake the cure of stammering is somewhat beyond the scope of an ordinary gymnasium, but even with that departure from the ordinary curriculum of such an establishment, we are not disposed to find serious fault. When however we discover that this club undertakes, under a separate medical department, "light treatment by electro-chemical light rays," "electro-vibratory treatment," and treatment by "Nauheim, Marienbad, and Karlsbad baths," we feel bound to record our protest, and to ask whether, in this department of its work, this club is not significantly similar to the others we have mentioned?

The light treatment which is practised is recommended "for the cure of rheumatism, lumbago, sciatica, swollen and stiff joints, water on the knee, sprains, golf elbows, tennis legs, etc.; gout, eczema, and all kinds of skin troubles; complexion, kidney, and liver troubles; insomnia, headache, ulcers, neuralgia." Truly a comprehensive list! The apparatus used for the electro-vibratory treatment is "the only one of its kind in the United Kingdom; it is most useful in accelerating results with light treatment in all

the above ailments." The Nauheim, Marienbad, and Karlsbad baths are "the only ones in this country," and "are specially suited for heart diseases and general debility." In addition to all this, the club imports Salso Maggiore waters direct from the springs in hermetically sealed vessels, and advertises them "for use in spraying for post-nasal and chronic throat troubles."

The variety of diseases which it undertakes to deal with is thus fairly extensive, and it would be interesting to know whether, in this case, patients are only admitted on the order of their medical attendant, or whether the two members of our profession whose names appear on the balloting committee hold themselves in any way responsible for the administration of this department of the club's work. It is of some importance to the profession at large to have information on this point, because, though it is distinctly stated that the medical department is a "branch entirely separate from the club," it is also declared that "it is not necessary to be a member of the club for medical treatment." The clear inference is that a simple formality of a payment of so many guineas entitles any one to avail himself of the opportunities here offered for the cure of most of the ills which flesh is heir to. We again ask: Is it well that syndicates of this kind should enter into competition with individual members of the profession? and can the members of this club complain if their incorporation with a medical department which adopts such advertising methods and claims such extensive powers of cure brings down upon them adverse criticism? What has an academy of physical culture to do with the treatment of disease? There seems to be but one answer—the department exists for the purpose of making money. If this be so, the members, and especially the medical members, of the balloting committee, all of whom are men of the highest integrity, should pause to consider whether in thus allowing their names to be associated with such questionable practice, they are not unwittingly harming a great profession, and, no doubt unconsciously, encouraging those who live in the borderland.

(To be concluded.)

THE MIDWIVES BILL.

THIRD READING IN THE HOUSE OF COMMONS.

[SPECIAL REPORT.]

THE Midwives Bill came up for third reading in the House of Commons on Friday, June 13th.

Mr. HEYWOOD JOHNSTONE (Sussex, Horsham) proposed certain verbal amendments consequent upon changes made on the report stage, especially with reference to extension of the period of grace to be allowed to unregistered midwives.

The SPEAKER said he had satisfied himself that these amendments did not raise any new point, but were simply consequential, and did no more than give effect to the already expressed intentions of the House.

The amendments in question were therefore agreed to without discussion.

Mr. GRIFFITH-BOSCAWEN (Kent, Tonbridge) said the Bill was an exceptional one in its character, and, as he had always opposed it, he would not like it to pass its third reading without a few remarks. It was a measure contrary to what had been the whole course of legislation upon such matters for many years. The object of Parliament for years past had been, so far as possible, to strengthen the law against quacks and unqualified practitioners. That had been the tendency and object of the Medical Acts. At present under these Acts no doctor might practise midwifery unless he was qualified not only in that branch but also in medicine and surgery. Under this Bill that policy was entirely reversed, and, so far from making the qualifications more strict they made it more easy, and allowed a certain number of practitioners to practise under this Bill, although they were only qualified in midwifery, and whose qualification even in that would, he feared, not be at all high in many cases. At the same time he recognized that there were special reasons why this course should be adopted. In the first place, although the law required high qualifications as necessary for medical men, the fact was that a large proportion of the poorer classes did not resort to the medical profession in ordinary cases of labour. They resorted instead to certain

classes of midwives, often very ignorant as well as untrained, unregistered, and unqualified. These had undoubtedly been the cause of inflicting upon the poor a vast amount of unnecessary pain and suffering. The result was that through the carelessness or want of education of these midwives, a great deal of preventable mortality had been caused. The reason why so many poor people did not avail themselves of the services of doctors, but went to these ignorant women instead, was on account of the comparatively high charge made by qualified practitioners. If poor people often could not afford to pay a doctor, and went rather to unqualified women, whose charges of course were much less, there was a great risk that they would still prefer to employ the cheaper of these women, even if they were less qualified. He might venture to point out to the promoters of the Bill that unless the amendment which was inserted last week had been inserted, the Bill would have been practically useless, because it would still leave the unqualified person to continue to practise as before without limit of time. It would simply have set up a separate class of trained or registered midwives, but, just as now, the poorer people did not go to the expense of a doctor, but preferred the cheaper service of a midwife; so if this Bill had passed in the form in which it was originally introduced, the result would doubtless have been that, instead of going to the registered midwives, who would be somewhat more expensive, the poorest class would still have continued indefinitely to resort to unregistered and unqualified women, so that the very evil that it was sought to remedy might have gone on in perpetuity unchecked. Importance must be attached to the amendment introduced last week fixing the year 1910 as the date after which it would not be lawful for any woman habitually and for gain to practise midwifery unless she was registered. It must, however, be pointed out that until that date the Bill would fail very largely to meet the evil that it was designed to remedy; and he could not say that he thought much good was likely to result. He had heard sinister rumours that an attempt would be made in another place (the House of Lords) to remove the essential amendment to which he had referred. He knew that Mr. Collings, who represented the Home Office felt most strongly on the subject, and had spoken strongly against the amendment. He (Mr. Griffith-Boscawen) had read the speech of that right hon. gentleman three or four times since hearing it, and failed to understand the objection he felt. The right hon. gentleman in effect said that if the words of the embodied amendment were inserted it would not only prevent unqualified and unregistered women from nursing a case, but would prevent them from rendering such menial services as washing the children and cleaning the house, or otherwise assisting a female friend in the period of confinement, and, in fact, discharging the domestic duties which at an ordinary time would be discharged by the poor woman herself. He (Mr. Griffith-Boscawen) did not see how that could follow from the words of the amendment, which was framed expressly to meet the case of women who "habitually and for gain" practised midwifery. What was clearly referred to in the Bill was the nursing of a woman during her period of labour, and not merely the discharge of menial functions in the household. If there was any doubt about that, surely it was possible in the other House to insert words to make the meaning clear, namely, that what was aimed at was not to prevent household duties being discharged, but simply to prevent actual professional attendance and nursing being done by an unqualified woman. The Under-Secretary of State for Home Affairs seemed to suggest last week that an agricultural labourer could not or would not pay for the services of a qualified midwife for his wife; but if that really were so what was the use of the Bill? It was important that any legislative provision made should apply to all classes, and he could not anticipate any good result whatever from the Bill unless the penal amendment was retained. (Hear, hear.) He would like to see the Central Midwives Board made a stronger body. He agreed with the hon. member for the Scotland Division of Liverpool that the British Nurses Association should be represented on the Central Board.

Mr. T. P. O'CONNOR: That was agreed to last week.

Mr. GRIFFITH-BOSCAWEN said he was glad of that, but he had forgotten the fact or overlooked it, because the Bill was