

If the harmful effects noticed by Dr. Gordon be owing to the relative position of the weather in the cyclonic system, then in the southern hemisphere the north-east and north-west winds will be the prejudicial ones, the south-west the beneficial. If to mere rain and wind then in many places in our islands, where the rainy winds are chiefly north and east, such effects will still be noticeable. The latter places are chiefly on the east coast, where high lands lie to the west.—I am, etc.,

Bothbury, May 27th. C. W. LAWSON, M.A., L.R.C.P. & S.E.

POST OFFICE MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS.

SIR,—I am very glad to note that the letter which you were good enough to insert for me in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of April 11th has led to this subject being so well ventilated in your columns. I think that any one reading Dr. Vinrace's letter must realize the serious objections which exist to such a procedure as was adopted in the Brompton District, and I thoroughly agree with him that it would be desirable to know what official was really responsible for the department's action. Probably the best way of getting to the bottom of the matter would be, as Dr. Alderson suggests, for the British Medical Association to approach the Postmaster-General on the subject. There would be ample justification for such a course, as the question is far from being one of purely local significance. The precedent created in this instance may be followed elsewhere in the future with very unfortunate results. It seems to me that in his letter in the *JOURNAL* of June 13th "G. C. C." has made an excellent suggestion as to the manner in which the influence of the British Medical Association might be brought to bear. The Metropolitan Counties Branch would do most useful work for the profession by taking up matters of this kind, and the question of postal medical appointments would be an excellent one on which to make a start.—I am, etc.,

Sydney Street, S.W., June 13th.

JAMES HAMILTON.

* * * We venture to think that Dr. Hamilton's suggestion is a good one, and that a continuance of this correspondence will not advance matters.

OBITUARY.

JOHN BIRKBECK NEVINS, M.D.,

Consulting Physician to the Stanley Hospital, Liverpool.

THE death of Dr. Nevins removes from Liverpool a figure which had come to be looked upon almost as an indispensable feature in the professional, the public, and the literary life of that great city. At a time when men now past middle age were at school, Dr. Nevins was taking a leading part in medical and scientific work in Liverpool, and until a few weeks ago he was still a power in the city, always to the front on public occasions, and still evincing a lively intelligent interest in whatsoever concerned the well-being of the community or the medical profession.

Dr. Nevins was born in 1818 at Leeds, where his father was a banker and cloth manufacturer, his mother belonging to the Birkbeck family which had long been associated with philanthropic work. When 10 years old he was sent to Wakefield Grammar School, and two years later to a boarding school at York. At the age of 15 he left school and spent a year with his father in the cloth mill, but this occupation not proving congenial, he was apprenticed at the age of 16 to a family practitioner in Leeds, and thus entered upon his long medical career. As an apprentice he, of course, had to dispense medicines, and he thus laid the foundations of that grasp of the details of practical pharmacy which he turned to such account in the preparation of some of his works. At the same time he evinced many qualities which showed that he was fitted to become a careful observer and student of Nature, and developed a sound botanical and zoological knowledge by frequently taking long walks in the country, a practice which he had already acquired when at school. On attaining the age of 21 he entered at Guy's Hospital, and afterwards attended the Rotunda in Dublin. In 1840 he qualified as M.R.C.S., the next year he graduated M.B. with honours in the University of London, and then practised in Leeds for a year, after which he accepted a tutorship at Guy's Hospital. As the duties of this post occupied him only during the winter session he went as surgeon during the summer to Hudson's Bay in one of the old Hudson's Bay Company's sailing ships. On these trips he was ever active in the pursuit of knowledge, and acquired

a considerable degree of proficiency in navigation and astronomy. At the end of his second voyage he was offered the position of Lecturer on Chemistry and Natural Philosophy at the newly formed Collegiate Institute, in Shaw Street, Liverpool, now known as the Liverpool College, an appointment which led to his settling in Liverpool in March, 1844. He retained this position till 1868. In 1846 he took the degree of M.D. and from 1848 to 1877 he was lecturer on botany, materia medica, and chemistry in the Liverpool School of Medicine. He used to take his botanical pupils for long rambles, to give them practical instruction in the fields. From 1849 to 1858 he was medical officer to the then West Derby Union Hospital, the duties of which post absorbed a large portion of his time and attention. In 1853 he was appointed assistant-surgeon to the Eye and Ear Infirmary, and subsequently surgeon, a post which he retained until 1877, when he retired and was appointed consulting surgeon. On the foundation of the Stanley Hospital in 1868 he was appointed consulting physician to the institution, and always manifested a special interest in its growth. He was chief medical referee to the Royal Insurance Company for many years and only retired in 1899. In 1886 the medical profession in Liverpool conferred on him the highest honour it was possible for them to bestow by electing him President of the Medical Institution. Many of the members will still recall with interest his charming presidential addresses, in one of which he described and compared the sanitary arrangements of various communities—the Hebrew Camp, Liverpool, Manchester, and Edinburgh—while in the other he gave a succinct and highly interesting account of disposal of the sewage of Manchester.

Dr. Nevins was one who combined the life of the scholar with that of the man of affairs. His published works cover a wide range of subjects, some of which chiefly interest the student and the philosopher, while others appeal strongly to the active workers in science and philanthropy. In his own profession he is best known as the author of the translation of the new *London Pharmacopoeia*, a work with which he incorporated a vast amount of valuable original observation and practical information. He also wrote a work on materia medica, and translated and edited the *Prescriber's Complete Handbook* by Trousseau and Reveil. He held strong views in opposition to the Contagious Diseases Acts, and as President of the society for their abolition, and by various writings, he had no doubt a considerable share in securing their suspension. He was a most active member of the various literary and scientific societies of Liverpool, and actively participated in their work until extreme old age. In fact he was engaged in completing the correction of the proofs of an antiquarian paper a few days before his death.

As a speaker, Dr. Nevins was always interesting. The vast stores of his memory always seemed to lie ready to his hand, and whenever he was called upon to speak at any scientific, philanthropic, or social gathering he always had something happy and appropriate to say. As an instance of the freshness of his memory and the vivacity of his intelligence in advanced age, his delightful address at the special meeting of the Medical Institution on the occasion of the death of the late Queen Victoria may be recalled. He charmed the members with his vivid description, derived from his own personal recollection, of events which took place in the childhood of Her late Majesty. His mood was often playful, and he would sometimes indulge in good-natured banter, but never said anything to wound the feelings of the most susceptible.

Dr. Nevins, whose wife died some years ago, leaves two sons and one daughter. His eldest son, Dr. Ernest Nevins, is physician to the Brownlow Hill Union Hospital.

The interment took place in St. James's Cemetery on June 13th, and was attended by a large concourse, consisting of members of the medical profession, representatives of numerous philanthropic, literary, scientific, and religious bodies, and members of the general public. The Rev. Canon Irving in the course of an address paid an eloquent tribute to Dr. Nevins, who, he said, had been for more than half a century a conspicuous figure not only among men of the medical profession, of which he was a distinguished and honoured member, but also in literary and philanthropic circles. Eager to acquire knowledge, and of great mental application, he was a man of extensive and varied reading, and what his brain gathered his memory retained in a wonderful way. Combined with that literary taste there was a large-hearted charity that found vent continually in rendering most willing aid to the needy and the afflicted. The blind, the orphan, and the deaf and dumb of the city had in him one of their truest and best friends, and he was rarely absent when