

**The Sale of Poisons.**—In answer to Sir Thomas Dewar, who inquired on Monday whether it was proposed to introduce this session legislation to regulate the sale of poisons, Mr. Secretary Akers-Douglas said that the Lord President of the Council had under his consideration the question of legislation on the subject, but he (Mr. Akers-Douglas) was not in a position to make any statement as to the introduction of a Bill. Under regulations made by the Pharmaceutical Society, under Section 1 of the Pharmacy Act, 1868, and approved by the Privy Council, it was at the present time required that all liniments, embrocations, lotions, and liquid disinfectants containing poison must be sold in bottles rendered distinguishable by touch from ordinary medicine bottles, and that each and every bottle must bear a label giving notice that its contents were not to be taken internally.

**The Evasion of the Medical Acts under the Companies Acts.**—Sir John Tuke asked the Secretary of State for the Home Department on Tuesday last whether he was aware that evasions of the Medical Acts and the Dental Acts to the detriment of the public had been effected under the provisions of the Companies Acts; and, if so, whether he proposed to initiate legislation to preclude the possibility of such evasions being effected in future. Mr. Secretary Akers-Douglas said that he was aware of the cases recently before the Courts. He was not in a position to make any statement as to legislation, but he might say that the Lord President of the Council had been in communication with the General Medical Council and the Board of Trade on the subject of companies carrying on business as doctors and dentists, and the Board of Trade were, he understood, obtaining the opinion of the Law Officers of the Crown on the question of the registration of such companies under the Companies Acts.

**The Prevention of Corruption Bill.**—The Lord Chancellor carried the second reading of this Bill in the House of Lords on Monday last. He said that he had received a letter signed by twenty-two of the principal banks in London, earnestly pressing the Government to pass the measure. He hoped that the Government would take care that the Bill should not be lost again at the end of the session, as it dealt with a very serious and crying evil. Lord Avebury and the Archbishop of Canterbury supported the second reading, which was passed without a division.

**The Juvenile Smoking Bill.**—Dr. Macnamara presented this Bill on Tuesday last, to provide for the prevention of juvenile smoking. It is supported by Mr. John Burns, Mr. Churchill, Mr. Crooks, Sir John Gorst, Mr. Lambert, Mr. Lloyd George, Major Seely, Dr. Shipman, Sir John Tuke, Mr. Cathcart Wason, and Mr. George White. The second reading was put down formally for March 30th.

**Underfed School Children.**—Last Monday Sir John Gorst asked the Secretary to the Board of Education whether the attention of the Board of Education had been directed to the evidence given in December, 1903, by Dr. Eichholz, one of their inspectors, before the Committee on Physical Deterioration, in which he testified that in a school in Lambeth he considered 90 per cent. of the children unable, by reason of their physical condition, to attend to the duties of the school in a proper way; that in a school in West Ham he found a similar condition, 87 per cent. of the infants, and 77 per cent. of the elders; in a school in Manchester, 66 per cent.; in another Manchester School, 60 per cent. of the infants, 44 per cent. in the lower standards, and 27 per cent. in the upper standards; and in many schools in other towns a considerable, though less, proportion; and what steps the Board of Education had taken to prevent the waste of public money involved in providing instruction for children thus unfit to receive it. Sir William Anson answered that he had carefully read the evidence referred to, and had himself visited the Lambeth school. The right hon. member was probably aware that there were very wide differences of opinion as to the extent of the evil complained of and the remedies to be applied. A departmental Committee had been appointed by the Lord President for the purpose of providing useful and precise information on the subject.

**Medical Inspectors of the Local Government Board.**—Mr. Crooks asked the President of the Local Government Board whether the medical inspectors of the Local Government Board were permitted to accept appointments for pay

outside their official duties. Mr. Grant Lawson answered that a medical inspector was required to devote the whole of his official time to the duties of his office; but this was not intended to interfere with the manner in which he employed the rest of his time or his holidays.

## Scotland.

### THE ABUSE OF MEDICAL CHARITIES.

At a meeting of the Joint Conference Committee of the Queen Margaret College Settlement Association Charity Organization Society, held in Glasgow on March 7th, Professor R. Stockman read a paper on Abuses of Medical Charities. He pointed out that medical relief was an early form of charitable aid; it was one outcome of all the great religions of the world, and had had a wide extension in Christian times. During the past sixty years considerable anxiety had been felt regarding the large increase in the number of people taking advantage of such relief. In London the proportion receiving medical aid was about one-third of the whole population, and during the past ten years this proportion had increased by 23 per cent., whereas the population had increased only by 6 per cent. Professor Stockman attributed this largely to the improved conditions found in hospitals to which people were attracted by the great comfort by which they were surrounded in such institutions. Provident dispensaries and parallel institutions where the charge was based on a weekly wage limit had not, he said, proved successful, and in his opinion the only way to check the abuse of medical charities was to rely on the generous feeling of the working classes and of society generally.

### TYPHUS FEVER IN ABERDEEN.

A special meeting of the Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society was held in the Society's Rooms, King Street, on March 9th, at 8.30 p.m. Dr. George Rose, President, occupied the chair. The meeting was convened for the purpose of discussing the present outbreak of typhus fever in the city, and on account of the importance of the subject all the members of the profession in the city and suburbs were cordially invited to attend, whether members of the Medico-Chirurgical Society or not. The discussion was opened by Dr. Matthew Hay, Medical Officer of Health for the City of Aberdeen. Dr. Hay gave an account of the epidemic, tracing it from its beginnings up to the present time, and by means of a chart showed in a most lucid manner how the epidemic had been spread to the parts of the city in which it has mostly prevailed. Typhus fever had been absent from Aberdeen since 1899, when five cases occurred, but on the present occasion it got a much firmer hold unfortunately before its presence was recognized. Indeed, several weeks elapsed and a number of deaths occurred before suspicion was aroused, the earlier cases having been accompanied in adults by such complications as pneumonia, bronchopneumonia, etc., and the deaths having been certified as being due to these causes. The epidemic was ultimately traced back by Dr. Hay to a house in a very poor part of the city, inhabited by a chronic epileptic and his family, and as this individual was an invalid, and had not been out of the house for several months, how he contracted the disease remains a mystery; beyond that point the origin of the outbreak cannot be traced. At all events the man died, and as Dr. Hay was able to connect the great majority of the cases with this source he put down the cause of death as typhus fever. Dr. Hay gave a short account of previous outbreaks, and then went on to discuss the symptomatology of the disease and the main characteristics of the present epidemic. He described the modes of infection and laid most stress on mucous contact, such as kissing and using the same feeding utensils, etc.; perhaps the most interesting part of the paper was his argument on the theory that fleas were responsible for carrying the infection from one individual to another. In support of this he pointed out that practically all the cases showed many flea-bites and that, so far as the sanitary staff and nurses were concerned, cases of infection had occurred only amongst those who had to convey patients to the hospital or to deal with them immediately on admission. No nurse attending the cases after they had been cleansed, nor any of the ward maids, had taken the disease. For example, the ambulance driver who assisted in removing the cases from their houses to the hospital took typhus and died, and several

nurses who had the first care of the patient in the dirty condition in which most of them were, and had to handle their clothing, had taken the disease, but happily with no fatal result. On these and other grounds Dr. Hay argued against typhus being regarded as a virulently infectious disease to the extent maintained by Osler and other authorities. Dr. Hay then went on to describe the methods adopted to check the epidemic, and was able to state that these had been in the main satisfactory, and that the epidemic showed distinct signs of abating. In the past three weeks only one new case had been reported. Altogether, over 100 cases have passed through the city hospital. Dr. Angus Fraser continued the discussion of the symptomatology of the disease, and gave an able account of typhus fever as it was found in Aberdeen when he first became attached to the medical wards of the Royal Infirmary. At that time some hundreds of cases passed through the wards annually. Drs. Edmond, Lister, McKerron, T. Fraser, and Pirie also spoke. The President expressed the feeling of a crowded meeting in a few well-chosen words, and thanks were accorded most heartily to Drs. Matthew Key and Angus Fraser for their able and elaborate contributions.

#### ASEPSIS IN OBSTETRIC PRACTICE.

At the ordinary meeting of the Aberdeen Medico-Chirurgical Society on March 2nd a discussion took place on the subject of asepsis in obstetric practice, introduced by Professor Stephenson in a well-reasoned and instructive paper. Drs. McKerron, John Gordon, Rose, Beveridge, Scott Riddell, and Rorie also spoke. Dr. D. Rorie, who has succeeded to the practice of the late Dr. Arthur (Cults), was, by ballot, unanimously admitted to the membership of the society.

## Ireland.

#### POISONING BY STRYCHNINE AND MERCURY.

A CASE of some interest was tried at the recent assizes at Armagh. An old woman, aged 74, who had some £33 or so in the savings' bank, and whose life had been insured by one of the prisoners, died under suspicious circumstances. Her daughter had come to live with her about a year before, and from that date, although healthy before, the deceased began to suffer from sharp attacks of colic and diarrhoea. On the day of her death a daughter-in-law gave her a dinner of potatoes, and she died within half an hour in horrible agony and convulsions, ten minutes after the first onset. No inquest was held, and one prisoner went to Canada and the other to Scotland. However, the body was exhumed, and inflammation was found in parts of the intestine; the feet were still arched; 286 grains of metallic mercury were found in all, of which 4 were in the stomach; and one-seventh of a grain of strychnine, with traces in the liver and kidneys. It was brought out in evidence that the daughter-in-law had bought under an assumed name ten grains of strychnine to poison rats two days before the death, and that the daughter had from time to time procured quicksilver with the ostensible object of mending a looking glass. The Crown entered the charge of poisoning by strychnine against the daughter-in-law; she was convicted and sentenced to death. The charge against the daughter was of feloniously administering metallic mercury with intent to kill; she also was convicted and sentenced for life. Several instances of the most utter callousness on the part of both prisoners were brought out in evidence; the son of the old woman, husband of one of the prisoners, was already in gaol for assault.

#### ALTERATIONS IN BELFAST COURT HOUSE.

The High Sheriff of Belfast (Dr. Henry O'Neill) recently made an official inspection of the court house, Belfast, and procured estimates for several much-required improvements, both for general and special sanitary arrangements, and also for public convenience. The alterations, which have been talked about for some time, are sadly needed; and if Dr. O'Neill has brought about their accomplishment it will be another instance of a committee of one doing in a few hours what two boards haggle about for months, and he will deserve the thanks of the public and both legal and medical professions.

#### OUTRAGE AT THE COUNTY LIMERICK INFIRMARY.

Mrs. O'Brien, a governor of the County Limerick Infirmary, and widow of the late Lord-Lieutenant of the County, was visiting the infirmary a short time ago, when somebody

threw a disinfectant at her. The matter has been inquired into by the Committee, but the person who threw the disinfectant has not been identified, and the Committee recommended that the matter should be allowed to drop with an apology to Mrs. O'Brien. After some discussion, however, a notice of motion was given for the dismissal of the matron, the house surgeon, the cook, the laundress, and the housemaid.

#### HEALTH OF BELFAST.

At the monthly meeting of the City Council, on March 1st, the Medical Superintendent Officer of Health reported the notification of 187 cases of zymotic disease, including two of small-pox; 867 births had been registered, and 606 deaths; and the annual death-rate from all causes was 22.0. Diphtheria and scarlatina had somewhat increased; measles was also prevalent, and of a serious type; 14 cases still remain in the Small-pox Hospital. The Council also approved of the scheme of Mr. Meyer, offering prizes for the best kept and most cleanly houses of 4s. a week rent or under.

## PROFESSOR OSLER'S FAREWELL ADDRESS.

The valedictory address delivered by Professor Osler at the annual commencement exercises at Johns Hopkins University on February 22nd has been the occasion of revealing to the world the vanity of the boast so frequently heard from Americans that in the matter of humour they are a specially favoured nation. They have, it is true, a humour of their own, but the *Medical News* of New York frankly tells its countrymen that "with all their ability to see a joke, they are world-famous for not being able to take a joke." Evidently a man of dainty humour and graceful wit, like Professor Osler, is out of place among a people who require to have their jokes carefully dressed and distinctly labelled to prevent misapprehension. What universal scoffing there would have been about the thickness of the British pate if a distinguished professor of medicine in this country had found it necessary to ask the medical journals of two continents to explain that he did not seriously suggest that men over 60 should be put to death with chloroform! But the American papers have taken it as spoken in good sooth and sober sadness, and have during the past few weeks debated the subject with the utmost gravity, and there is some risk that "oslerization" will find a place in the language. The whole thing is so absurd that we are rather surprised that Professor Osler should have taken so much trouble to explain a matter which to people of the most ordinary intelligence seems to need no explanation.

The remarks made in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of March 4th in an article entitled an Age Limit of Intellectual Work were founded on the brief telegraphic summaries of Professor Osler's address which appeared in the London newspapers. Now we have before us the whole text as published in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* of March 4th, and it will be fair to Dr. Osler and perhaps not uninteresting to our readers to give them an opportunity of forming a judgement as to his meaning from what he actually said.

#### THE CALL OF THE EAST.

After expressing the feelings of mingled gratitude and sorrow engendered by the last public function in which he would appear as a member of the University, he said his hearers might well wonder what motives had induced him, being "neither stricken deeply in years nor seriously damaged by illness," to give up a position of such influence and importance. He thought it was best they should stay in the wonder stage. Who could understand a man's motives? Did he always understand his own? He went on: "This much I may say in explanation—not in palliation. After years of hard work, at the very time when a man's energies begin to flag, and when he feels the need of more leisure, the conditions and surroundings that have made him what he is and that have moulded his character and abilities into something useful in the community;—these very circumstances insure an ever-increasing demand upon them, and when the call of the East comes, which in one form or another is heard by all of us, and which grows louder as we grow older, the call may come like the summons to Elijah, and not alone the plowing of the day, but the work of a life, friends, relatives, even father and mother, are left to take up new work in a new field. Or, happier far yet, if the call comes, as it did to Puran Das in Kipling's story, not to new labours, but to a life