

tion of the manufacture of narcotics in respect of the United Kingdom was dispatched to the Secretary-General of the League of Nations on March 30th. He was not in a position to give any precise information as to which other States had decided to ratify the Convention, but he anticipated that sufficient ratifications would have been received to enable the Convention to be brought into force by July 13th, 1933. He saw no reason to anticipate the failure of any party to the Convention to conform to its provisions.

Sir J. GILMOUR, replying on April 3rd to Mr. Neil Maclean, who asked if the Government proposed to introduce legislation to ratify the proposals of the Anti-drug Convention, said the Dangerous Drugs Act, 1932, was passed to give effect to the Convention of 1931, and no further legislation for that purpose was required.

On April 4th, in reply to Mr. Llewellyn-Jones, Mr. EDEN said that under Article 23 of the Covenant of the League of Nations the general supervision over the execution of agreements in regard to the traffic in opium and other dangerous drugs was entrusted to the League of Nations, and he presumed that the question as to what international action it was proposed to take with a view to dealing with the illicit trade in dangerous drugs would be considered by the Opium Advisory Committee at its next meeting in May.

Hospital Porters Classed as Domestic Servants.—Sir HENRY BETTERTON stated, on March 30th, that he was aware that a ruling of the High Court had decided that hospital porters should be classed as domestics and therefore not insurable under the Unemployment Insurance Acts. The Royal Commission on Unemployment Insurance had recommended that this class of workers should be brought within the scope of the Acts. This recommendation was under consideration.

Overcrowding in Public Assistance Institutions.—On April 3rd Mr. THORNE asked the Minister of Health if he had considered the report from the Lancashire Mental Hospitals Board in regard to the overcrowding at the Green Lane Public Assistance Institution, Patricroft. Mr. SHAKESPEARE replied that no such report had reached the Minister from the Lancashire Mental Hospitals Board. In December last he called the attention of the public assistance authority to a report made by a Commissioner of the Board of Control on this matter, and the Minister was informed that the authority was now in communication with the Lancashire Mental Hospitals Board.

Mitcham Chemical Factory Explosion.—On April 3rd Sir J. GILMOUR informed Mr. Thorne that immediate steps were taken by the Factory Department of the Home Office to inquire into the explosion at a chemical works at Mitcham, one of the engineering inspectors with special knowledge of chemical works being detailed for the purpose. The advisability of preventing similar factories being built adjacent to residential villas would be most carefully reviewed when the full results of the inspector's inquiries and the proceedings at the inquest were available.

Children and Young Persons Act.—On April 3rd Sir J. GILMOUR informed Mr. Groves that the following sections of the Children and Young Persons Act, 1932, had been brought into force: 19 (2), 64-9, 79, and, for certain purposes, Sections 77 and 88. He could not add anything as to the date on which the remaining sections were likely to be brought into force.

Registration of Nurses.—On April 3rd Mr. Batey presented a Bill to Amend the Nurses Registration Act, 1919, with respect to the registration of existing nurses, and it was read a first time.

Medical Benefit and the Unemployed.—On April 4th Mr. SHAKESPEARE informed Mr. Neil Maclean that the Minister of Health was aware that a certain number of people who had not paid any contributions under the scheme of national health insurance for many years would cease at the end of the present year to be entitled to benefits under the scheme, though they would remain insured under the Contributory Pensions Scheme until the end of 1935. The Minister was afraid that it would be impracticable to impose any further burden on the funds of approved societies by once again ex-

tending the title of these people to health insurance benefits. Mr. Shakespeare further told Mr. Leckie and Mr. Llewellyn-Jones that the possibility of extending the title of these persons to medical benefit beyond the end of the present year was fully discussed when the amending National Health Insurance Bill of last year was before Parliament. The Minister was not prepared to introduce further legislation on the subject.

Isolation for Infectious Diseases.—Mr. NEIL MACLEAN, on April 4th, asked the Minister of Health if he would make available to members of the House the circular issued by his Department to local authorities instructing them to reduce the period of isolation in infectious cases and to have the patients discharged sooner from institutions, and the instructions to local authorities to abandon the disinfecting of houses from which cases of infectious diseases had been removed. Mr. SHAKESPEARE replied that the Minister had issued no such instruction, but he assumed that Mr. Maclean referred to the circular issued on March 22nd, in which he asked local authorities to give special consideration to the recommendations on those subjects which were contained in the report of the Committee on Local Expenditure.

Experiments in Locust Control.—The fifth report of the Committee on Locust Control of the Economic Advisory Council, which will shortly be published, will contain a report on experiments into locust control by subjecting the flying swarms to a cloud of poisonous material discharged from an aeroplane.

Notes in Brief

In England and Wales during 1932 nine persons, all males, were executed. Their ages were 32, 25, 22, 49, 36, 36, 23, 18 years and 11 months, and 43.

The Home Secretary will consider what action can appropriately be taken on the proposed "all-in" wrestling between women, which he holds to be open to the strongest objection.

Medico-Legal

HERBALIST ACQUITTED OF MANSLAUGHTER

At the Manchester Assizes, before Mr. Justice Lawrence, from March 29th to 31st, the trial took place of Charles Clement Abbott of Leigh, Lancashire, described as a "physico-medical practitioner," on a charge of manslaughter in respect of a boy named Taylor, who had been under his care for nine months until January of this year, when his death took place owing to meningitis. The circumstances of two recent inquests in which the defendant was concerned, one of which led to the criminal proceedings, were detailed in the *Journal* of March 25th (p. 541).

Sir Reginald Banks, K.C., who prosecuted for the Crown, stated the facts which were brought out at the inquest. The "Abrams's box" method was used by Abbott in the treatment of the boy. The boy was taken to Abbott about twelve times, and on every occasion except one this "humbag and hocus-pocus," in the words of counsel, was followed. The night before Taylor died Abbott rubbed his chest and head with a lotion. It was also alleged that Abbott in conversation had claimed to be entitled, like a qualified doctor, to give a death certificate, though after this boy's death he stated that this case was different from the others, and that he could only give a letter of notification to the coroner.

Evidence was given by the father of the dead boy, who stated that Abbott and two other men were all introduced to him as doctors, and were spoken of by that term. The mother also stated that all along she had taken Abbott for a fully qualified practitioner. She admitted that, a month before the boy died, she had expressed herself as very pleased with the treatment he was receiving from Abbott, and the improvement that he showed. An analytical and consulting chemist stated that the lotion used by Abbott simply consisted of oils commonly employed for external dressings, and another of Abbott's preparations which was given to the boy was an aqueous extract of liquorice.

Dr. E. P. Maitland of Shaw, who made a post-mortem examination, attributed death to meningitis, and said that if a lumbar puncture had been performed there would probably have been amelioration of symptoms and prolongation of life. Dr. R. Mackinnon of Oldham gave similar evidence.

Dr. J. F. Ward of Manchester stated that in his opinion if a lumbar puncture had been made and a proper serum used the boy might have been cured. In cross-examination, he agreed that if the disease was pneumococcal meningitis lumbar puncture would not have prevented death for long. With regard to "Abrams's box," he agreed that there were a few qualified practitioners of some distinction who were still pursuing investigations into that method.

Mr. E. G. Hemmerde, K.C., for the defence, said that Abbott when a miner, at the age of 17, was cured by a herbalist after his life had been despaired of, and henceforth he devoted himself to herbalism. For twenty years he had been engaged in "the work of healing," and some 100,000 persons had passed through his hands. He had built up a big practice in his native town, and had made a large income, the major part of which he was devoting to pursuing his researches. He had specially interested himself in the "Abrams's box" theory, whereby it was claimed that disease could be diagnosed by vibrations.

The defendant in evidence said that although his patients sometimes called him "doctor," he always let them know that he was not a registered medical man. With regard to this boy, under the treatment he had given, satisfactory improvement was made, but there were occasional relapses. He had treated six or seven cases of meningitis, and had had one previous death in a very advanced case. He had no faith in serum treatment. He also stated that he was given a special exemption from war service by Sir Auckland Geddes, and that his "sick notes" were accepted by approved societies for the purpose of sickness benefit.

Evidence on behalf of the defendant was given by Mr. Percy Bean, an analytical chemist, and by his son, Dr. Percy Bean, also by certain physio-medical practitioners, and by several persons who declared themselves to have been cured by Abbott's treatment. Mr. Hemmerde urged that there was no justification for describing Abrams's method as hocus-pocus, seeing that a committee of distinguished medical men appointed some years ago to consider the method did not so describe it.

Mr. Justice Lawrence, in summing up, said that the jury had to be satisfied beyond all reasonable doubt that the treatment accelerated the death of the patient, and that it was so negligent and unskilful that it went beyond that negligence which might be a matter for civil action. A man, whether registered or not, was entitled to practise medicine within certain limits. There were some diseases which the unregistered practitioner was not entitled to treat. The jury had nothing to do in this case with the difference of opinion existing between herbalists and the orthodox practitioner. It appeared that there were genuine differences of opinion even among registered medical practitioners as to the methods of treatment in a variety of cases, particularly in reference to the use of serums and vaccines. A fact which had not been sufficiently brought to the attention of the court was that this boy who had died had been virtually given up by two registered doctors who had been called in, and it was agreed by the parents that Abbott's treatment had improved the boy's condition. He had made no mistake in the diagnosis, and it did not seem that he could be charged with neglect because he had not suggested the operation of lumbar puncture. As for the box, which it was said proved him to be an impostor, it appeared that this was a contrivance invented by a member of the medical profession, and inquired into in 1924 by a committee. It had also not been proved that the contents of the medicines which Abbott supplied were valueless; they apparently contained a large variety of herbal ingredients of the best sort, and were compounded in the most scientific and up-to-date way. Sufficient patients who had recovered had been called to show that Abbott was not incompetent. After full consideration of the case, in his lordship's view, it was quite unsafe to do anything but acquit the prisoner.

The jury thereupon, without further consultation, returned a verdict of "Not guilty."

The Services

COMMISSIONS IN THE R.A.M.C.

The War Office announces that twenty-five permanent commissions in the Royal Army Medical Corps are being offered to qualified medical practitioners, under 28 years of age, registered under the Medical Acts. There will be no entrance examination, but candidates will be required to present themselves in London for interview and medical examination on April 28th, 1933. Applications should reach the War Office not later than April 21st. Further particulars will be found in our advertisement columns this week at page 43. All information as to conditions of service and emoluments may be obtained either by letter or in person from the Assistant Director-General, Army Medical Services, the War Office, Whitehall, S.W.1.

AUXILIARY R.A.M.C. FUNDS

The annual meeting of the members of the Auxiliary R.A.M.C. Funds will be held at 5.45 p.m. on Friday, April 21st, at 11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, W., when the annual report and financial statement for the year ended December 31st, 1932, will be presented and the officers and committee for the current year elected.

DEATHS IN THE SERVICES

Surgeon General William Johnston Charlton, late R.A.M.C., died in Dublin on March 29th, aged 84. He was born on April 11th, 1848, was educated in the medical school of the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland, and took the L.R.C.S.I. in 1868 and the L.K.Q.C.P. in 1869. Entering the Army as assistant surgeon on April 1st, 1871, he became colonel on July 1st, 1899, and surgeon general on August 11th, 1902, retiring on April 11th, 1908. He served in the Tirah campaign of 1897-8 on the North-West Frontier of India, in command of a general hospital, and later as principal medical officer on the Malakand.

Medical News

A discussion, with cinema demonstration, on Böhler's influence on the treatment of fractures will be opened by Mr. R. Watson Jones, Mr. E. P. Brockman, and Mr. Bryan Burns at the meeting of the Harveian Society of London at the Paddington Town Hall, Harrow Road, W., on Thursday, April 13th, at 8.30 p.m.

The Royal Sanitary Institute will hold a sessional meeting in the Town Hall, Dover, on Friday, April 21st, at 4 p.m. After a reception by the mayor, there will be discussions on difficulties in the administration of by-laws and regulations, opened by Mr. W. Boulton Smith, and on diphtheria immunization, opened by Dr. T. J. Nicholl.

A short course of instruction on the nature and treatment of disorders of speech will be conducted by Dr. Douglas Guthrie, Mr. George Seth, M.A., and Miss Elsa Davidson, at the Speech Clinic of the Royal Hospital for Sick Children, Edinburgh, commencing on Monday, May 8th, at 5 p.m. The course, consisting of six meetings, will deal with the evolution of speech, the anatomy and physiology of the speech mechanism, the psychology of speech, and the treatment of speech disorders. Further particulars may be had from the secretary, Edinburgh Post-Graduate Courses in Medicine, Dean's Office, New University Buildings, Edinburgh.

A post-graduate course on infantile tuberculosis will be held by Dr. P. F. Armand-Delille at the Hôpital Hérold, Paris, from April 24th to May 15th. The fee is 200 francs. Applications for tickets should be made to the secretary of the Faculty of Medicine, Paris.

A course of post-graduate lectures on genito-urinary diseases will be given at St. Paul's Hospital, Endell Street, W.C., on Wednesdays at 4.30 p.m., from April 19th to June 21st, with the exception of May 31st. The course is free to registered medical practitioners and students.