

doubt been the outcome of panic induced by the falling off of students of medicine in the metropolis. Now all legislation consequent upon panic is dangerous, and the danger in this instance is intensified on reading the report of the Standing Committee of Convocation on these changes. Our University has won and kept its high position in the medical world by the general and scientific training of its graduates, as well as by their professional knowledge. Under the new régime, by the introduction of numerous by-paths to admission, the general education and scientific training are reduced to a valueless minimum, and even the medical examinations can be taken piecemeal—that is, subject by subject. By catering for quantity at the expense of quality, our University, I feel sure, will not attract, as some think, those students who now naturally gravitate to the provincial universities, but will lose its present popularity and undermine its very foundation. Decentralization in medical education, with the ever-increasing facilities for scientific and clinical training which the provincial schools afford, has come to stay. If the London University degree is to be esteemed in the future as it has been in the past, it can only be by maintaining unimpaired its high standard of general and scientific training and its high examinational tests.—I am, etc.,

London, W., Oct. 11th.

ERNEST W. WHITE.

#### THE MEDICAL COUNCIL AND ITS PRESIDENT'S ADDRESS.

SIR,—In thirteen columns of the most graceful, rippling prose, of which he is a past master, the President of the General Medical Council has given Victoria University and your readers an account of the development and functions of that body.

Such a pronouncement is much to be welcomed, for the number of those who have hazy notions about the General Medical Council and its work is large.

I fancy, however, that, after its perusal, the conclusion to which most readers will come is that the General Medical Council is a very impotent body, and that there is no evidence to show that it has ever tried (by endeavouring to obtain increased powers) to be anything else.

The duties, it seems, are chiefly two—educational and registrative (the latter including judicial). With regard to the former, the Council is by no means autocratic, for the Privy Council can veto any of its recommendations, and the Corporations can openly defy it. With respect to the latter, it is absolutely despotic, for it can strike any one off the *Register* without appeal. But, even with this despotic power, the authority of the General Medical Council is more apparent than real, for it seems quite unable to enforce its own decrees.

At least one ingenious victim has quite outwitted the august body by inventing a non-registrable but very effective qualification of his own, with apparently gratifying results. This may be new to the Council. If so, it is as well that it should realize at once that its decisions are not as effective as it has imagined, and that the sequels strike outsiders as a most appropriate, but not surprising, Gilbertian result of a fifty-eight years' more or less somnolent and inefficient existence.

The fact is, the constitution of the General Medical Council is fundamentally vicious. Many of us hope that the time is coming when it will cease to be mostly composed of delegates from shortsighted and selfish Corporations, and will consist of members elected by the votes of all those on the *Medical Register*. Then, real progress will be possible, and the Unity of the Medical Profession nearer fulfilment.—I am, etc.,

London, W., Oct. 15th.

HERBERT SIEVEKING.

#### THE DECLINE IN THE BIRTH-RATE.

SIR,—I think Dr. Pattin overestimates the effect of hypernutrition on the declining birth-rate. I deny that women are potentially less fertile than formerly. As a matter of fact, owing to her superior physique, the middle-class woman of the present day is as well or better fitted to bear children than her mother or grandmother were. But nowadays the modern middle-class woman looks on pregnancy as the greatest misfortune that can befall her. From my experience as a general practitioner I have no hesitation in saying that

90 per cent. of young married couples of the comfortably-off classes use preventives. This is quite enough to account for the declining birth-rate without looking round for other causes.—I am, etc.,

Boscombe, Oct. 14th.

ARTHUR W. THOMAS, M.D.

#### LARVAE IN THE INTESTINE.

SIR,—In the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of July 14th I read with interest an article by Dr. Cattle with regard to a patient of his who complained of a "nest of insects" in his inside, and that he felt them crawling about. Some years ago I had two patients in one family suffering in a similar manner, mother and child. The mother brought me some strange-looking insects, with rounded, hard, hairy backs, dark brown in colour, with black eyes, extremely repulsive-looking, which ran about quickly. A very large number had been passed. I gave them santonin and purged them, and they were soon quite well.

Out here in New Zealand the botfly is extremely common, and I remember wondering at the time whether the botfly was the cause of them. I have never seen or heard of a similar case.

It is common enough in the stomach of the horse to find the mucous membrane so closely set with the larvae that no particle of mucous membrane is visible, and yet the animal may present no symptoms and be in perfect health till its death.

Were these armadillo-looking insects due to bots?—and what is their life-history?—I am, etc.,

Timaru, N.Z., August 26th.

H. V. DREW, F.R.C.S.

#### THE METROPOLITAN HOSPITAL SUNDAY FUND.

SIR,—The memorandum on this subject by the Metropolitan Counties Branch, published in the *SUPPLEMENT* of October 13th, is undoubtedly an able one, but I regret to see that it omits all mention of two of the points mentioned in your annotation of August 11th, which seem to me strong reasons why a Royal Charter should not be granted to the petitioners, the first being that to have three funds—one collecting on a Sunday, another on a Saturday, and the third throughout the year: the Hospital Sunday, Hospital Saturday, and the King Edward's Hospital Fund—for London is mere wastefulness; and the second being that of the three funds it is certainly not the best, but has the special defect of aiding and abetting the system of hospital subscribers' letters, one of the most fruitful sources of hospital abuse, from which the King Edward's Fund is entirely free. I trust that in any representations made to the Privy Council on behalf of our Association these two points will be prominently put forward.—I am, etc.,

London, N., Oct. 13th.

H. NELSON HARDY.

#### ANTIVACCINISTS' TACTICS.

SIR,—In reply to the letter you publish from the editor of the *Cleveland Medical Journal*, may I be permitted to explain that the booklet of *Notable Debates*, etc., for which he granted permission to reprint *in toto*, is not yet printed. When it is, Mr. Carter's conditions will certainly not be intentionally disregarded.

The rescripts of which he expresses disapproval are merely excerpts from other journals, such as the *Vaccination Inquirer*, and it was a hypersensitive desire to regard his wishes that finally induced me to attach the special appendix to the booklet of *Professional Opinions*.—I am, etc.,

Stone, Staffs., Oct. 16th.

WILLIAM J. FURNIVAL.

WEST SOMERSET MEDICAL DINNER.—The seventh annual dinner for medical men residing in West Somerset, will be held at the London Hotel, Taunton, on Friday, October 26th, at 6.30 for 7.0 p.m., Dr. R. Liddon Meade-King in the chair.

A PROVINCIAL sessional meeting of the Royal Sanitary Institute will be held at the Royal Pavilion, Brighton, on Saturday, October 27th, when a discussion on the co-ordination of measures against tuberculosis will be opened by Sir William H. Broadbent, Bart. The chair will be taken at 11 a.m. by Colonel J. Lane Notter, M.D., R.A.M.C., the Chairman of Council of the Institute. Dr. Newsholme, M.O.H. Brighton, will give a short account of local arrangements for the notification of phthisis and the sanatorium training and treatment of patients.