

THE TREATMENT OF LEPROSY.

IN the notes from Sydney published this week our correspondent gives some interesting particulars from the report of Dr. Ashburton Thompson and Dr. D. Wallace in the case of an English-born patient who, under the use of very large doses of chaulmoogra oil, so far recovered that his discharge from the leper lazaret was considered justified. It may be pointed out—and, indeed, insisted on—that leprosy varies from individual to individual, and, given care, suitable climate, and treatment, together with good powers of resistance, a relative cure may be, and has been, attained. If we cannot speak of these cases as cures in strict therapeutic sense, in fact they are such, the disease having flickered out, though, of course, mutilations and so forth remain, just as scars after variola, for instance. This case, which has been exhaustively dealt with by Dr. Thompson in this and other reports, is an important one to place on record. The surveys in the report of other old cases can be recommended to those working at leprosy.

In the obituary notice of Major Whitchurch, V.C., published last week, we inadvertently omitted to state that for the same act of gallantry as gained him the V.C., he was awarded the gold medal for distinguished merit of the British Medical Association. The medal was presented to him by Dr. Henry Barnes, President of the Association, on July 30th, 1896, during the annual meeting at Carlisle. The reception which he received on that occasion was memorable, the whole meeting rising and cheering him most enthusiastically, and at the Association dinner on the same evening he had a most hearty reception.

Medical Notes in Parliament.

[FROM OUR LOBBY CORRESPONDENT.]

The Early Notification of Births Bill came on for consideration as amended by the Standing Committee on Friday, and led to a long debate. Mr. Bertram first moved an amendment to free the midwife from the duty of notifying the birth to the medical officer of health. Dr. Macnamara pointed out the objections to this alteration, and quoted the fact that midwives already notified births under the Midwives Act. Mr. Burns expressed a hope that the amendment would not be pressed, as it would destroy the usefulness of the Bill, which he called a humanitarian experiment. The amendment was negatived.

Lord Robert Cecil then moved an amendment to relieve medical practitioners from the obligation to notify under this Bill. He regretted that it was necessary to move this amendment. The case which the medical profession made was that this Bill would impose a new professional duty upon them without payment. He was advised that it would risk the success of the measure if they permitted a fee to be paid, and he felt that they would be obliged to consent to this amendment. He hoped hon. members would remember that the doctors had withdrawn their opposition to the Bill on the terms that this amendment was passed. Colonel Seeley seconded the amendment, and

Mr. Burns said the Government reluctantly accepted it. Personally it was a matter to him of extreme regret that a great and honourable profession, which had signalized its earnest interest in this movement at its commencement, should at practically the last hour have dissociated itself from it. He believed the best of the doctors would deplore it, and that a large number of them would refuse to dissociate themselves from the rest of mankind in the working of this experimental measure. He believed the doctors were greater than their trade-union. Mr. Radford, Mr. Bertram, and Mr. Lupton opposed the amendment.

Dr. Cooper denied that the non-payment of a fee was the ground of the medical practitioners' opposition. It was the penalty to which they objected. [Mr. Burns: No.]

He submitted that when a deputation waited upon the right hon. gentleman, Sir Victor Horsley put it plainly and distinctly that it was the penalty to which they objected. [Lord R. Cecil: The hon. member must surely forget some conversations we have had.] Dr. Cooper continuing said the medical profession felt that notification was the duty of the parent; that it was a civic duty pure and simple. This Bill was based on the Notification of Diseases Act. There was a penalty under that Act, but there was a fee also. But in this matter he insisted that the ground of their opposition was not the fee, but the penalty proposed to be put on the doctor in a matter which concerned the duty of the parent.

Mr. Sherwell thought it was desirable that medical men should be included in the Bill, but he preferred to accept the amendment rather than jeopardize its passage. After speeches in opposition to the amendment from several members,

Dr. Macnamara said the medical profession would hardly be grateful to their advocates, who had succeeded in making it appear that they declined to carry out a professional act because they were not to be paid a fee of one shilling. That was not the case. The medical profession objected to being subjected to a penalty in respect of what was a civil and not a professional obligation. But they put their objection on a higher ground than that. Their function in the birth chamber was a professional one, and it was not for them to scatter broadcast notifications of births. He thought they might have undertaken this duty. He did not say the Government would drop the Bill if this amendment was rejected. But he had been informed that if the doctors were included there would be such a powerful opposition to the Bill in another place as would endanger the progress of the Bill at this stage of the session. He thought the Bill would be worth a great deal even if the medical profession was excluded from its provisions.

Lord R. Cecil said if any intimation regarding another place had reached the Government it had not come through him. He had no reason to suppose the other House would take any particular view about this amendment one way or the other. He was told that unless the medical opposition to the Bill was withdrawn the Government could not see its way to "star" the Bill. He therefore approached the Government and asked it whether it would assent to any amendment of this kind. He then went to the representatives of the medical profession in the House, and they agreed to withdraw their opposition if he moved such an amendment as this, and it was accepted by the Government. If, therefore, this amendment was rejected, he should feel bound to do his best to prevent this Bill from going further. He thought the Government were also bound by that understanding. They could not have gone on with the Bill without the consent of the doctors, and if this amendment was rejected they were honourably bound to abandon the Bill.

Dr. Cooper said the noble lord had approached him, and he withdrew his opposition to the Bill on the understanding that the Government would agree to the insertion of these words.

Mr. Burns said the noble lord had accurately stated the arrangement made between himself and the medical profession. It was true, as the noble lord had said, that there would have been little chance of this Bill being passed this session but for some understanding on the noble lord's part and on his own with the doctors as to the conditions under which this Bill should be passed. But they could not by an understanding or bargain between themselves withdraw the Bill from the purview of the House when perhaps there might be a chance of getting the Bill through. Personally he declined to accept the attitude in which the hon. member for Bermondsey wished to place him. It was all very well to say the doctors now did not want the fee. Had his hon. friend told the noble lord and himself that before the necessity for a bargain of the kind referred to would not have been necessary. It seemed to him that if he had to choose whether this Bill should be lost and a million children in the next year placed under the disability that was imposed upon them by the hon. member for Bermondsey, who he did not believe represented the medical profession in this matter, or leave it to the House, he appealed to the noble lord to exonerate him from any breach of agreement, and to leave the matter to the good sense of the House.

Lord R. Cecil said that as far as he was concerned he felt absolutely bound by the obligation he had come under.

Dr. Cooper asked the noble lord to give way on this point, and he for his part would raise no objection to the House passing the Bill in its present form. When he withdrew his amendment it was on the distinct understanding that the Government would adopt the Bill as a Government measure and "star" it. If he had not withdrawn his amendment it would not have been "starred." Therefore the onus rested entirely with the President of the Local Government Board. Mr. Burns thanked the hon. member for releasing both the noble lord and himself from any supposed understanding.

Lord R. Cecil reminded the House that other hon. members besides himself had come under a similar obligation, and Sir Henry Craik declared that he had no wish to stand between the House and the Bill. If the hon. member opposite, speaking for the medical profession, was prepared to give this relief, he (Sir H. Craik), although with hesitation and without having time to communicate with his constituents, would not place himself in the way of the Bill. The House then divided, and the amendment was rejected by 87 to 19. The minority consisted of Lord Balcarras, Mr. G. S. Bowles, Sir W. J. Bull, Mr. George Cave, Dr. G. J. Cooper, Mr. C. H. Corbett, Sir Henry Craik, Mr. Arthur Fell, Mr. H. W. Forster, Mr. F. L. Harris, Mr. E. J. Horniman, Mr. Norman Lamont, Mr. T. B. Napier, Mr. Patrick O'Brien, Mr. John O'Connor, Mr. A. Rolland Rainey, Mr. A. J. Sherwell, Hon. Lyulph Stanley, and Viscount Valentia. Dr. T. J. Macnamara and most of the members of the Government present, as well as the Labour members, voted with the majority. Mr. John Burns did not vote.

On Clause 2, Mr. Adkins carried an amendment empowering "the council of a county, other than the county of London, may adopt the Act either for the whole of the county or for a district therein." Dr. Cooper moved to add the words, "In London the medical officer of health of every metropolitan borough (including the City of London) in which this Act is in force for the time being, shall send weekly to the London County Council, in a form prescribed by the Local Government Board, a list of all notices of birth received by him under this Act during the past week." The amendment was agreed to, and then Mr. Whiteley moved that the Bill be read a third time. Dr. Cooper regretted that in Committee this Bill had been deprived of its compulsory character. The rate of infant mortality was higher in the rural districts than it was in London. The main cause of infant mortality was not ignorance. Contributory causes were an impure milk supply and drink; but the real cause was that 60 per cent. of the fathers were not in receipt of a living wage and could not provide for their children properly, and therefore the mothers were compelled to go out to work. Mr. Lupton opposed the Bill, because it was based on compulsion. Lord R. Cecil and Mr. Adkins spoke in support of the third reading. Mr. Burns disagreed with the view that poverty was the great cause of infantile mortality. This was proved by the fact that in the rural districts 5,000 out of every 100,000 children born died in the first three months; in mining districts, where the wages were twice as high, 8,000 out of 100,000 died; and in the textile districts, where wages were higher still, 9,126 out of 100,000 died. Married women, in his judgement, ought not work in factories; their province was at home. The sooner the working classes recognized that fact the better for the home comforts of the men, the better for the children, and the better for the State. The Bill then passed its third reading. When the second reading was moved by Lord Allendale in the House of Lords on Saturday, the Marquis of Lansdowne protested against the House being asked to pass a Bill which it had not even seen. The debate was adjourned until Monday, when the Bill was read a second time without discussion; its remaining stages being taken by consent, it was passed, and received the Royal Assent on Wednesday.

The Vaccination Bill, which does not touch Scotland, was before the Commons on Thursday last week for the purpose of considering the amendment made in the Lords which confirmed the right to make a declaration of conscientious objection to the father or single parent having charge of the child instead of "either parent."

Dr. Macnamara expressed regret at the amendment, but said there was no prospect of resisting the Lords' amendment without endangering the Bill, and he therefore advised its acceptance. Mr. Lupton said that the provision was particularly hard on the people in the country districts who lived many miles from the magistrates. If the Bill were lost there were many who would not regret it. These peddling attempts to mitigate a great injustice were of doubtful benefit. The more the stream was dammed the greater would be the breach. This amendment was a special hardship, which the House of Lords need not have inflicted on poor suffering people. Sir W. Collins followed, and said that he regretted that the point had been surrendered. The Lords had shown a disregard of public convenience. Though he should have been glad to see Bill go further, he accepted it as an advance in the direction of the abolition of compulsion. Mr. Lehmann protested against the way in which this decision had been forced on the House by the action of the Lords. It was after mature consideration that the Standing Committee extended the power to apply to the mother. Mr. Cave said that it was hardly fair to present this as a case of the House of Lords overruling the will of the House of Commons. The Bill as introduced was in the form approved by the Lords; and this amendment relating to the mother was only inserted in Grand Committee by a majority of two, against the wish of the President of the Local Government Board. Mr. Burns wound up the debate, and said that the hon. member for Sleaford exaggerated the difficulty of making a statutory declaration. Under the old procedure the certificate of exemption could only be obtained from a magistrate in court. Under the Bill, even with the Lords' amendment, the facilities provided for making a statutory declaration by an objector to vaccination, and the accessibility of those before whom that declaration could be made, were an improvement beyond all comparison with the conditions which at present existed. He believed that the statutory declaration deprived the father of nearly all the complaint he had now on the ground of loss of time. On the merits of the question, his own view was that the liability and responsibility should be put upon the father and not the mother. The Lords' amendment was agreed to, and the Bill received the Royal Assent on Wednesday.

The Vaccination (Scotland) Bill was read a second time in the Commons last week. The Secretary for Scotland, in moving the second reading, said the Bill put the conscientious objector in Scotland on the same footing as in England. Under this system there had been an increase of vaccination in England, and there was every reason to believe that the same beneficial result would follow in Scotland. At present there was no indulgence shown to the conscientious objector in Scotland. The Bill removed the inequality and was in strict accordance with the recommendations of the Royal Commission. On the motion of Lord Balfour in the other House, an alteration had been made in the Bill with reference to the registration of the conscientious objection. The Government accepted this. The Bill was referred to a Committee of the whole House. It was considered on Thursday night, and passed with two-drafting amendments, and was read a third time on Friday night. The Bill finally passed the House of Lords on Saturday and received the Royal Assent on Wednesday.

The Expiring Laws Continuance Bill came before the Committee of the House last week, and Mr. Lupton moved the omission of the Vaccination Act of 1898 from the schedule. The Bill, he said, defined the kind of lymph which the Local Government Board thought was good, and not what medical men thought was good. The Local Government Board went to Germany to buy its calf lymph, with the result that small-pox and other diseases, notably cancer, which caused over 5,000 deaths a year, were spread by this poisonous lymph. The substitution of calf lymph for humanized lymph caused thousands of deaths yearly, and thousands of other people were condemned to miserable lives by its use. The President of the Local Government Board, in reply, said that if the hon. member had his way, certificates of exemption would no longer be possible, and as an antivaccinator he would be considerably worse off. The Local Government Board

got the best calf lymph it was possible to obtain. The amendment was withdrawn, the Bill reported without amendment, and read a third time.

Sources of Calf Lymph.—Mr. Weir asked the President of the Local Government Board, in view of the fact that before the lymph obtained from any calf was used the animal was slaughtered for the purpose of ascertaining the condition of its health, would he state how many of the 505 calves hired last year were found on examination to be in perfect health; and, seeing that the hire of a four months' old calf for a fortnight costs the Board on an average 34s., would he say whether, in making arrangements for the supply of calves, the Board called for tenders, and for what period were contracts made. Mr. John Burns replied that of the 505 calves hired last year 444 were, after slaughter, examined by the veterinary surgeon and 442 were certified as perfectly healthy. The contracts were not made for any definite period. The Board had from time to time made inquiries with a view to obtaining tenders from different contractors, but they had not found persons willing to tender under the conditions which they found it necessary to impose.

The Public Health (Scotland) Act Amendment Bill was read a second time in the House of Commons on Wednesday last week. The Secretary for Scotland explained briefly that the object of the measure was to amend three clauses in the Public Health (Scotland) Act referring to infectious diseases which local authorities had found to be too restrictive in their operation. When the Bill passed it was hoped that steps would be taken to bring consumption within the range of notification. The public health medical authorities in Scotland desired the Bill to pass. After the second reading the Bill was referred to a Committee of the whole House. The Bill passed through Committee on Thursday night without amendment, and was read a third time.

Education (Administrative Provisions) Bill.—When this Bill came before the Lords for second reading last week, Lord Crewe explained the objects of the measure, and dealt particularly with the clause relating to medical inspection and attendance. He said it was the only point on which differences had arisen. An amendment had been moved in the Commons providing that parents who were able should be made to pay for medical attention on the lines of the Provision of Meals Act of last year. The President of the Board of Education had carefully considered the question, and had come to the conclusion that it was impracticable. If parents had to pay they might refuse to allow the doctor or the nurse to enter their homes, and so the great object of the Bill would be nullified. The charge would not be a serious one, and it was proposed to make a considerable addition to the grants to elementary schools generally, but not for this specific purpose. This fact should be taken into consideration in considering any extra cost involved. The Archbishop of Canterbury warmly supported the second reading, as did Lord Londonderry and the Bishop of Hereford. The second reading was carried without a division. The Bill was read a third time last week on Friday night, and received the Royal Assent on August 28th.

Parents and Medical Inspection of School Children.—Sir William Collins asked the President of the Board of Education whether under the Education (Administrative Provisions) Bill there was any obligation on parents to submit children attending public elementary schools to medical inspection, as well as an obligation upon local education authorities to provide for such medical inspection. Mr. McKenna replied that in the view of the Board the obligation placed by the Bill upon the authority to provide for inspection did not of itself compel a parent to submit his child to inspection.

Diphtheria Antitoxin.—Mr. Ashley asked the President of the Local Government Board whether he was in a position to make any statement with reference to the supply of diphtheria antitoxin on the part of local authorities for the treatment of those who were not in a position to buy it themselves; and whether he would

draw the attention of the local authorities to the power given them under Section 133 of the Public Health Act, 1875 (38 and 39 Vict., c. 55), which enabled them to provide medicine and medicinal assistance to the poor of their districts. Mr. Burns said he was advised that the enactment referred to, and a similar enactment in the Public Health (London) Act, 1891, enabled sanitary authorities, with the sanction of the Local Government Board, to provide a temporary supply of diphtheria antitoxin for the poorer inhabitants of their districts, and medical assistance in connexion therewith. He proposed to issue a general order giving sanction to such provision by sanitary authorities, subject to suitable conditions. The order was in preparation.

The Poor-law Commission and Irish Lunatics.—Mr. Field asked the Chief Secretary to the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland whether he could state what the Government proposed to do respecting the Viceregal Report upon the Poor-law administration and treatment of lunatics in Ireland; and whether he was aware that both those questions were regarded as extremely urgent by the majority of Irish county councils, who favoured efficiency, economy, and reform. Mr. Birrell replied that the great majority of the recommendations of the Viceregal Commission would require legislation to give effect to them. The question of legislation would receive full consideration, but it was one of considerable magnitude and complexity, and he could not at present make any statement as to when it might be possible to introduce legislation on the subject. He had already stated that if the local authorities concerned should desire that effect might be given to any particular recommendations which could be carried out under the existing law, the Local Government Board would give prompt and favourable consideration to the matter.

Plague Mortality Figures.—Mr. Rees asked the Secretary of State for India whether he would consider the advisability of giving, in official publications and answers, together with the actual figures relating to plague mortality, the figures per mille of the population of India, in order that comparison might not be made with a population approximating to that of the United Kingdom. Mr. Secretary Morley said he would bear in mind the suggestion in cases in which the additional information would be pertinent and correct, and might prevent misleading comparisons. When, as frequently happened, plague was practically confined to a province, a per mille ratio to the population of India would itself be misleading.

The Embassy Medical Officer at Tokio.—Sir William Collins asked the Secretary of State for Foreign Affairs last week whether the medical officer to the British Embassy at Tokio was a legally qualified medical practitioner in accordance with the requirements of the Medical Act, 1858. Secretary Sir Edward Grey answered that he must remind the honourable member that on 4th June last, in reply to a similar question, he informed him that he was not prepared to make any statement involving an interpretation of any part of the Medical Acts. He must adhere to what he then said.

The Mortality in the Transvaal Mines.—In reply to Sir Gilbert Parker, Mr. Churchill said for the first three months of the year the average rate of mortality per 1,000 per annum was: Kaffirs, 31.6; Chinese, 16.3. The figure for whites was 20.0. Official figures for a later period were not available for Kaffirs. The average mortality for Chinese for the first six months of this year was 15.6, but in comparing the mortality returns of Chinese with Kaffirs, some regard must be paid to the fact that a certain number of Chinese were repatriated as physically incapable. He noticed that in the report of the Superintendent of Foreign Labour for 1905-6, it was stated that for that year those repatriated as physically incapable were 1,840, as compared with a total number of deaths, 935.

Public Health Bills.—The Public Health Bill, the Public Health (Scotland) Bill, and the Public Health (regulations as to Food) Bill were all passed through their final stages; they received the Royal Assent on the day of the prorogation (August 28th).