

abyss of cacophony as to write the sentence "that is, those one lives among," which he attributes to me, and I am still more sure that in no conceivable state of sobriety could I ever have pronounced it. But as the statements in question represent my sentiments with more or less accuracy, I shall not quarrel with the phraseology, for I wish, in my turn, to controvert the "fundamental principle" laid down by Dr. Fothergill that the Division is a "local club." The whole point of a club is that it shall be exclusive; the whole point of the Association is that it shall be catholic. A club is organized for sport or pleasure; the Association for business. A club desires that none but men of similar tastes shall meet within its walls; the Association wishes to embrace every medical man who is not, frankly, a *mauvais sujet*. Indeed, the Association can never operate to full benefit till it includes every medical man worth having, and it can never gather all such into its fold unless it exercises the broadest charity and the widest tolerance. In so far as Dr. Fothergill's scheme for reform makes for an ethical committee removed from local influences, I support it, but, in so far as I understand it, this end is not entirely secured. Under a good system it should be impossible for a practitioner to be called upon to judge the actions of a colleague in his own district. The independence of the judiciary is the first step towards securing impartial decisions.

One sentence in Dr. Fothergill's letter I warmly endorse. "Let us be sportsmen," he says. Gentlemen who race on the turf have an excellent tribunal for hearing complaints, to wit, the Jockey Club. Whether we decide to model ourselves on the pattern of that body or not, there is one function which it possesses which we might advantageously confer on our Ethical Committees—namely, the power to dismiss complaints as being "frivolous and vexatious."—I am, etc.,

London, W.C., Sept. 1st.

HUBERT E. J. BISS.

THE REPORT OF THE ROYAL COMMISSION ON THE FEEBLE-MINDED.

SIR,—“X. Y. Z.” in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL for September 12th makes appropriate reference to the “grandiose” recommendation in the above report, in which it is proposed that one or more duly-qualified medical men be appointed to act in districts as certifying medical practitioners. Like him, I think that medical practitioners in general are quite competent to undertake the duty of certification. It may surprise him to learn the Parish Council of Glasgow, otherwise styled the Glasgow District Lunacy Board, have in their service a medical officer in private practice, entitled the Certifying Physician in Lunacy, now enjoying a salary of £350, notwithstanding the fact that the council employ other twenty medical men on the outdoor staff, each receiving a salary of about £85 a year, all being quite able and qualified to give certificates regarding cases of alleged insanity in the various divisions of the parish. The certifying official, in addition to his salary, receives about £20 a year for certifying cases belonging to other parishes, and the council provides him with the National Telephone Service, the district officers paying for their own telephone connexion. The certifying medical officership was instituted as far back as the year 1888 by the Barony Parish of Glasgow, the present holder of the appointment being promoted from the outdoor staff. The Barony Parochial Board and, since the amalgamation of the Barony and City Parishes in 1898, the Glasgow Parish Council have provided in one of their district hospitals most expensive accommodation for the reception of doubtful mental cases. The outdoor medical staff, having such observation wards at their service for doubtful cases are quite capable to deal with all cases of alleged insanity occurring in their districts. The certifying officer is also appointed to take charge of the fifty beds in the observation wards although the medical superintendent of the hospital is both able and willing to do so, there being nothing special required in treating such patients apart from the extra nursing and surveillance. I hold that we have a medical officer serving under the Glasgow Parish Council who is not required either outdoor or indoor. He has been in office all these years simply in the grandiose sense of the recommendation now made by the Royal Commission on the Feeble-minded. As a member of the Parish Council and District Lunacy

Board and even in the capacity of a ratepayer I have publicly protested against the existence of this useless and wasteful appointment. I trust that the profession will resist the policy of the Commission to eliminate general practitioners from their right and duty to deal with and certify mental cases. I expect that both the Government and the public will oppose the schemes in their report as involving enormous and unnecessary expenditure.—I am, etc.,

Glasgow, Sept. 14th.

JAMES ERSKINE.

SPECIAL EXHIBITIONS AT THE CLINICAL MUSEUM.

SIR,—We have just closed in the clinical museum at the Polyclinic the second of our classified exhibitions of portraits, etc. The first was devoted to the so-called *stigmata insectorum* and the second to *xanthelasma* and *xanthoma*. The latter comprised nearly fifty portraits and the former about half that number. Both of them resulted in the demonstration of important facts of some novelty, and were of much clinical interest by bringing into juxtaposition pictorial representations, from various sources, of similar but very rare affections. In these past exhibitions the selection was from our museum collection alone. We did not seek the co-operation of others nor invite loans. Our displays might probably have been much increased and somewhat enriched had we done so. We are now arranging a third classified exhibition, and I shall be much obliged if you will be kind enough to allow me to bring under the notice of your readers the fact that we shall on this occasion gladly accept co-operation and the loan of drawings. The subject is *syphilis* in all its various departments. Our rooms afford good accommodation for such displays. We have abundance of false-backed frames, and drawings which are lent to us can be immediately placed behind glass for safe protection. It is not proposed to keep this special collection open for more than about a month, beginning from October 1st, but this will be open for reconsideration at the end of that time. The histological section will be under the special charge of Captain Pinch, to whom all communications should be addressed at the Polyclinic, Chenies Street, W.C.—I am, etc.,

London, W.C., Sept. 14th.

JONATHAN HUTCHINSON.

THE PRESS AND THE PLAGUE IN TRINIDAD.

SIR,—The island of Trinidad in the West Indies contains a population composed mainly, as regards its European constituents, of descendants of (1) the original Spanish and Portuguese colonists, (2) the French settlers, followers of Rouse de St. Laurent in 1783 augmented by the refugees from Haiti in 1793-1797, and (3) the British, who since the conquest in 1797 and annexation in 1802, have made it their home. There is a large element of African or partial African descent; several thousand Hindus, originally agricultural emigrants, and some other Asiatics, as well as natives of the adjacent Spanish-American Republics, whom the prevalent political vicissitudes have induced to change their domicile. The Government is that of a Crown Colony, in which the Anglo-Saxon, though numerically inferior to the other elements of the population, holds the political control, as well as a large share of the commercial enterprises of the island. As in many other Crown Colonies, there is a section which is always, either covertly or openly, like the proverbial Irishman, “agin the Government,” and loses no opportunity of expressing its opinions in the press.

From an observation of its publications for more than twenty years I have been led to the conclusion that the press of Trinidad is a self-constituted *Vehmgericht* which, however useful it may have been in the past in controlling the arbitrary exercise of power by the Government, has now outlived its usefulness, and, like its prototype, has, as will be seen from the cuttings enclosed, so far as it can, adopted the style of that section of the Hindu vernacular press of which Mr. Tilak was so bright a star.

Any one who does not “stand solid” with it, or who in any way incurs its enmity, is pursued with characteristic and persistent vindictiveness, no matter how such action, as in the present instance, is detrimental to the public welfare. In their private capacities the editors and