

Efficient Vaccination.—Dr. McDonald asked, on June 21st, if, in view of the increasing practice of many medical men to certify successful vaccination on the production of one vesicle with commercial lymph, the Minister of Health would authorize public vaccinators to use their discretion, in cases of objection to four marks, to insert a smaller number, but not fewer than two, in order that a larger number of children might become protected by the more effective and purer lymph supplied by the National Vaccine Establishment. Sir A. Mond regretted he could not do as suggested. It was essential that vaccination performed at the public expense should be maintained at a high level of efficiency. He was advised that the number, area, and character of the vaccination marks had an important bearing upon the degree and permanence of the protection afforded by vaccinations against small-pox.

Medical Uses of Cocaine.—Dr. McDonald asked, on June 21st, if the Minister of Health was aware that cocaine was not a drug which was essential to the medical and dental professions, inasmuch as many less toxic substitutes were manufactured. Sir James Baird (Under Secretary for the Home Office), replying, said that this department was in consultation with the Ministry of Health as to the need of cocaine in medical and dental practice, and he was not prepared at present to express any opinion on the suggestion that its importation should be entirely prohibited.

The Statistics of Cancer.—In reply to Mr. R. Young the Minister of Health said that he was fully aware of the importance of investigating the causes of cancer by all possible means, but there were insuperable difficulties in drawing accurate inferences from comparison of recorded cancer death rates in the different countries of the world. The question of international study of cancer prevalent was, however, receiving attention in the department, and was being brought before the international bodies concerned with public health questions.

The Feeding of Destitute Families.—Dr. Fremantle asked, on June 21st, if the Minister of Health was aware that the procedure whereby destitute families received relief in money and in kind from three separate authorities—namely, boards of guardians, education authorities, and borough or urban or rural district councils—commonly resulted in an uneconomic and defective dietary; and whether he proposed to take any steps to centralize the organizations concerned with a view to a better physiological use of the resources available. Sir A. Mond said he knew that in certain circumstances assistance might be given to destitute families from the three sources mentioned. Steps were being taken, as far as practicable, to prevent overlapping.

The Supply of Radium.—Sir E. Nicholl asked, on June 26th, whether, having regard to the uses of radium for medical purposes, the Minister of Health was making inquiries with the object of obtaining this hitherto scarce substance, and whether he knew that considerable quantities were to be found in England, notably in Cornwall, but largely undeveloped. Sir A. Mond said that the Medical Research Council had a provisional supply of radium at its disposal. An increasing demand was to be expected, but he was not in a position to recommend the development of its production in any particular area, as that obviously depended upon geological and commercial considerations.

Blind and Deaf Children.—Mr. Fisher, answering Mr. Stanton, on June 22nd, stated that notwithstanding the present financial difficulties, it will be possible to allow existing schools for the education of blind and deaf children to be used to the full extent of their accommodation.

Infanticide Bill.—This measure, originally called the Child Murder Bill, was read a third time in the House of Lords on June 27th.

Dogs Act Amendment Bill.—Colonel Burn, on June 26th, introduced a bill to amend the Dogs Act, 1906. It was backed by Mr. Joseph Green and Sir Frederick Banbury, and was read a first time.

Pension Appeal Resources.—On a suggestion by Major Kelley that specialists should be asked to make special inquiry as to the pre-war health of ex-service men deprived of pensions, Major Tryon, on June 20th, explained the existing resources of such a man for appeals. Every man dissatisfied with the assessment of his disablement had a right of appeal either to a medical appeal board or to an assessment appeal tribunal, and every man who was refused pension on the ground that his disability was not due to service had a right of appeal to an entitlement appeal tribunal. In the case of a medical appeal board a specialist sat on the board, and in the other cases the tribunal was empowered to consult a specialist when it considered that course necessary. The man's complete medical history, so far as obtainable, was always placed before the board or tribunal.

Blind Persons Act.—Sir A. Mond has stated that thirty-two local authorities have not submitted schemes under the Blind Persons Act, 1920. All schemes submitted had been approved or promised approval subject to modifications. Twenty-seven authorities had schemes under consideration, and he trusted that the remaining authorities, five in number, would reconsider their decision in the matter at an early date.

The Case of Ronald True.—Mr. Holmes, on June 19th, asked what course was pursued in the case of a man who, having been found guilty of murder, sentenced to death, reprieved on the ground of insanity, and ordered to be detained as a criminal lunatic, was subsequently certified as having recovered his sanity? Mr. Shortt replied that the Criminal Lunatics Act of 1834 provided that where a man was certified sane in the circumstances mentioned, the Home Secretary, if satisfied that it was proper to do so, might direct that he be remitted to prison to be dealt with according to the law.

THE PLIGHT OF RUSSIAN DOCTORS.

As recorded in last week's SUPPLEMENT the Council of the British Medical Association on June 14th considered a letter from the Russian Committee for Famine Relief, giving the substance of an appeal from the Pirogoff Medical Society for help for starving medical men and their families in Russia. During the course of discussion the Treasurer and other members of the Council urged that the quickest and most certain way of obtaining support would be by direct appeal from the head office to each member. It was unanimously resolved that an appeal should be issued to members on behalf of the fund, that the subscription asked for be 5s. a head, and that secretaries of Branches and Divisions be asked to give all assistance in their power. In accordance with this decision a letter is now being circulated to all members of the British Medical Association in Great Britain and Ireland. Needless to say, contributions from other members of the medical profession would be welcomed. Further reference to the appeal is made elsewhere in a leading article. The Association's letter is as follows:

AN URGENT APPEAL TO THE BRITISH PROFESSION.

British Medical Association,
429, Strand, London, W.C.2.

DEAR SIR OR MADAM,

The Council of the Association at its meeting on June 14th received a most pathetic and pressing appeal for help to the starving medical men and their families in various parts of Russia. The communications we have had with Russian medical men in this country and from the Russian Committee for Famine Relief, make it clear that the Russian medical societies have done their best to help their own colleagues so long as that was possible, but now they feel compelled to appeal to their brethren in other parts of the world. The conditions are truly appalling, as the Russian medical profession is to a great extent literally starving and losing a very large number of its members in the fight against epidemics of every kind.

The appeal is for the only form of assistance which under the circumstances can be effective—namely, food parcels sent to individual medical men, and to groups for distribution among members in greatest need. Lists have been given to us of doctors and families of deceased doctors to whom food parcels must be sent without delay if they are to be saved from actual starvation. The method of sending these food parcels is through the American Relief Administration, 67, Eaton Square, S.W.1, which makes itself responsible for the delivery of the parcel to the individuals addressed, and gets a receipt from them showing that the parcel has actually been received. The contents of each parcel have been decided upon, after much experience, by the American Relief Association. Each parcel costs £2 4s., inclusive of all charges.

The Council, on hearing these and other particulars, came unanimously to the conclusion that this was a case for prompt action and an appeal to which every medical man ought gladly to respond. The Council desires not only to send relief to our starving colleagues, but to show them that the response has been immediate and widespread, and for that purpose it has resolved to limit the subscription to 5s. and to ask every one of the members of the Association to subscribe that sum and to send in the enclosed addressed envelope a postal order or cheque *at once*, payable to Mr. L. Ferris-Scott, the Financial Secretary of the Association, who will send a receipt. Subscriptions were immediately received from each member of the Council present on June 14th.

It will not be possible to acknowledge all the names of subscribers in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL, but the amount of money collected each week will be notified there. The money received will be promptly used in the dispatch of food parcels to Russian doctors and their families through the American Relief Administration. It is most earnestly hoped that the response will be commensurate with the desperate need of those for whom this appeal is made.

Yours faithfully,

DAVID DRUMMOND,
President.

R. WALLACE HENRY,
Chairman of Representative Meetings.

ROBT. A. BOLAM,
Chairman of Council.

G. E. HASLIP,
Treasurer.

June, 1922.