

for two new ones made by one of the well-known London makers. On arrival, they were sound, but fitted so tightly in their cases (with bayonet-joint) that it was with considerable difficulty that they could be opened at all. Perhaps this was the effect of the warm climate, causing expansion of the metal; at all events, in using the slight force necessary to extricate one from its case, it flew out with a jerk and smashed the tube. Of course, the instrument could not be repaired; and thus my fourth thermometer came to grief, after having been used upon one occasion only.

Now, I fancy there is room for improvement in the construction of clinical thermometers, and I should be glad to know if it would be possible to make them of the toughened glass. If not, could not the tube be covered with vulcanite or some similar material, leaving a slit through which one could read the index? If feasible, one of these plans might be adopted with benefit; at any rate, the suggestion may be a hint to the instrument makers.

Algiers. H. R. THOMSON, L.K.Q.C.P., M.R.C.S.E., etc.

THE SHEFFIELD INFIRMARY.

SIR,—The paragraph headed "The Sheffield Infirmary," which appeared in your last week's number, has excited a good deal of uncomfortable feeling amongst the members of the profession in this town. Allow me to state that the paragraph in question neither originated with nor was authorised or approved by me or any of my relatives, and that I am sincerely sorry that any remarks should have been made upon the qualifications or claims of any one candidate without a similar notice of those of all the others.

I am, sir, yours, etc., R. J. PYE-SMITH.

25, Change Alley, Sheffield, December 27th, 1876.

PUBLIC HEALTH AND POOR-LAW MEDICAL SERVICES.

REPORTS OF MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HEALTH.

CROYDON.—The population is estimated by Dr. Philpot at 63,000 in the middle of 1875. The births were 2,155, and the deaths 1,362; so that the birth-rate was 34.3, and the death-rate 21.6, per 1,000 population. There were 38 deaths from scarlet fever, 45 from whooping-cough, 90 from fever, and 50 from diarrhoea. The fever death-rate was 1.42, and the zymotic death-rate 3.66, per 1,000 population. The epidemic of enteric fever began in January, when 15 cases occurred, and increased up to the end of April, during which month 186 cases were reported; it then decreased up to September, when it again increased, raging with greatest intensity in October, when 275 cases happened, from which time the epidemic gradually declined and eventually ceased. The largest number of deaths occurred in April, October, and November. As Dr. Buchanan has reported on the outbreak, we need not follow this matter any further. The sanitary work appears to have been well carried out, as there were 2,018 house-to-house inspections, 1,656 reinspections, 837 visits to slaughter-houses, and 1,287 orders served on owners of property to abate the nuisances existing on their premises. The mean birth-rate for Croydon during the ten years 1865-74 was 36.5, and the death-rate 19.66; so that the birth-rate in 1875 was lower and the death-rate higher than the average. The death-rate from pulmonary diseases was 3.25, from tubercular affections 2.68, and from wasting and convulsive diseases of infants 2.49, per 1,000 population.

PETERBOROUGH.—According to Dr. Thomson, the Medical Officer of Health for the Borough and City of Peterborough, during the last quarter typhoid fever has been very extensively prevalent. In one part of the city, "there were twenty-eight houses containing one hundred and thirty-three inmates, of whom thirty-nine were smitten with the fever.....The extremely hot season was the exciting cause, but the unsanitary condition of the houses was the real one." Another group of cases directed Dr. Thomson's attention to the National School, where he found "the privy close to the boys' schoolroom (the windows of which, in the hot weather, were all open), and communicating directly with the asphalt, also close under the windows; the smell from this was frightful". He "also here found the gratings without traps". It is right to state that these unfortunate defects have since been remedied; but it also strikes us rather forcibly that such defects in a public school ought to have been discovered and remedied long ago, and before attention was directed to them by their fatal effects. In connection with

the fever outbreak, Dr. Thomson seems to have paid much attention to the water-supply; and from his report it would appear that Peterborough is very peculiar as to the quality of the water-supply, all of which is apparently derived from the same source, viz., wells sunk in very open strata. "Eastgate pump: pure. National School, Albert Place: free from organic matter, but contains an excess of chlorides and salts of iron, which accounts for the taste and smell. Alma Place, Mill Field: pure. Copeland's house, Mill Field: very full of organic impurities. Johnson's houses, Lincoln Road East: two samples contain a trace of organic matter, but not sufficient to condemn them. Boyett's well, Monument Street, contains organic matter. Morris's well, Lincoln Road East: saturated with organic matter." Dr. Thomson recommends the silicated carbon filter. It is to be regretted that Dr. Thomson does not publish the details of the analyses he has made; and we venture to think that, on reanalysis, he will revise his opinion as to the freedom from organic matter of the National School well. Not having samples of the water, we can only theorise; but "the excess of chlorides, salts, and iron" makes us sceptical as to the conclusion regarding absence of organic contamination at which Dr. Thomson has arrived. Again, "pure" is a misleading term to apply to water; "wholesome" is a much better term. It would be exceedingly interesting to know whether these "pure" waters were free from chlorides, etc. Peterborough just now is greatly exercised as to its drainage and water-supply. If their medical officer's analyses be correct, it would appear that they have a supply of pure water close at hand. It is gratifying to learn that Peterborough is, save for this typhoid epidemic, a very healthy town; and without doubt the energy the Council are displaying in matters sanitary will be thoroughly repaid in the increased health, wealth, and comfort of the inhabitants.

TENBY.—The births in 1875 were 132 in number, and the deaths 62, of which 22 were of children under five years of age, or 46 per cent. of the whole, which is a very large proportion. There was only one death from zymotic diseases, against fifteen last year; whilst the deaths from consumption were above the average. A table of deaths is appended; but, as no percentages are given, the figures cannot be compared with those of other districts, unless calculated by the reviewer. Mr. Lock complains of the marsh, which, he says, is worse than ever, as the culvert, *as usual*, became blocked up, so as to render the adjacent roads impassable and to flood several cottages. The slaughter-houses are reported as being too small, and their situation near the stream "Ritec" as very bad, as he believes blood and garbage are thrown in.

MILITARY AND NAVAL MEDICAL SERVICES.

MILITIA SURGEONS.

SIR,—Will you kindly grant me the privilege of saying a word or two in reference to the claims of militia surgeons?

I confess that from what I have read on the matter, and from what I personally know of the subject, I am one of those who think that the surgeons have not made out fair claims for compensation on account of some of their duties, and consequently some of their perquisites, being transferred to army surgeons. The case of militia adjutants, which they adduce in order to strengthen their claims, is not to the point. The adjutants, in losing their appointments, lost their living; consequently, they had a right to compensation. The doctors, in taking their appointments, took them in order to gain for themselves influence and private practice. These objects being more or less attained, and they having been well paid for any little duties which they have performed, I think they are more than compensated for any drawbacks which they should know must necessarily attend all such appointments. But the militia surgeons have got increased rank by the transaction, a matter of no little moment when many of them have interesting families around them, and they are still in full control of their respective regiments when up for training. And this leads us to consider, Who are to be in medical charge of the regiments when called out for service, as they are likely to be, in case war breaks out between Russia and Turkey? If the country expect that the present militia surgeons will march with their men, I am afraid, in too many instances, it will be disappointed. Those with whom I am acquainted certainly will not throw up private practice and public appointments, for the honour of serving with their corps in foreign parts. If this is the true state of the case in many instances, I think those gentlemen who cannot respond to their country's call in case of an emergency, which may arise any day, ought to resign, and give young and untrammelled men a chance of distinguishing