

PUBLIC HEALTH AND POOR-LAW MEDICAL SERVICES.

EPIDEMIC OF ENTERIC FEVER AT NEWLYN EAST.

DR. BALLARD's report to the Local Government Board on the late epidemic of fever at Newlyn East has just been issued. After describing the extremely unsanitary state of the village, he goes on to say: "The wretched appearance of such a village, especially on a wet day, with its pools of surface and slop water lying about everywhere close to the cottages, and sodden excrement visible anywhere at the rear or sides, can be better imagined than described. I have seen nothing worse in the most neglected mining villages in Staffordshire." Dealing with the water-supply, Dr. Ballard mentions that, practically, for years past the only public source available has been the "town well"; and he states that Mr. Vigurs, whose opinions and statements are frequently referred to throughout the report, had been for a long time convinced that this water was grossly polluted, and had not permitted any of it to be brought into his house. On examination, Dr. Ballard found that there had been for a long time a free interchange of contents between the well and a public drain three or four yards from it. He observes that, under the circumstances of drainage and water-supply, and of excremental filth, there had been abundant opportunity for the spread of fever in the village if the material of the fever became accidentally introduced. Such an epidemic spread had occurred more than once before, namely, about 1848, and again in 1874. On the latter occasion, Dr. Vigurs told him the epidemic was very severe and extensive. On September 24th, Dr. Mackey, the newly appointed medical officer of health, on making a primary visitation of his district, became aware of the present outbreak, but, by a resolution of the St. Columb Rural Sanitary Authority, was prohibited from obeying the Local Government Board's order of March 12th, requiring him to transmit a copy of his special reports for the information of the board. The first intimation the board received was a paragraph in the *Times* of October 19th, and it was in view of that paragraph that Dr. Ballard was instructed to make an inquiry. He commenced it on October 23rd, and it was terminated on November 1st. Up to that date, the list of cases given him by Dr. Vigurs amounted to ninety-nine persons; probably there were, in addition, other mild cases not on the list, so that he would not be far wrong in estimating that about one-sixth of the population had been attacked. The number of families, or houses, invaded was sixty-two—more than one-third of all the families in the place. By a plan which accompanies the report, Dr. Ballard indicates that the greater proportion of the families invaded resided in the part of the village nearest the town pump. But Dr. Ballard does not consider the use of the water the sole cause of the spread of the disease. The sale and distribution of milk from infected houses, privies by several families in common, exposure to accidental infection by infected excrement, and the scarcity of water, which forbade the observance of that personal cleanliness essential to the prevention of the spread, were also operative causes. Dr. Ballard says that he has been unable to discover by what means the specific contagium of enteric fever obtained access to the town drains. A postscript relates the progress of the epidemic after his visit, and Dr. Vigurs states that the last case that came under his observation was on November 29th. Dr. Ballard adds some recommendations with the object of placing "the village in a wholesome condition generally, and to prevent the recurrence of epidemic disease". Houses unfit for habitation or injurious to health should be dealt with under Section 91, etc., of the Public Health Act. The authority should also provide a hospital for the reception and isolation of cases of dangerous spreading diseases, and public means of disinfection of infected articles should be permanently provided. A parochial committee should be constituted to watch over the sanitary condition of the village, which should be empowered to deal with nuisances and the prevention of the spread of disease under the Public Health Act. It is pointed out, however, that the appointment of such a committee, desirable for rapidity of local action, will not relieve the guardians of their obligation to see to the sanitary welfare of the village. The guardians should request their district medical officers, on any case of dangerous disease liable to spread coming to their knowledge, without delay to acquaint the medical officer of health with the fact, in order that it may be speedily dealt with. The guardians should also arrange with the registrars to furnish immediate information of any death registered from fever or other dangerous infectious disease.

OBITUARY.

ANDREW WOOD, M.D., LL.D. Ed., LL.D. Cantab.

IT is our painful duty to-day to record the death of Dr. Andrew Wood, Edinburgh, on Tuesday, January 25th, at the age of seventy years.

Dr. Wood was a son of a well-known surgeon in Edinburgh, the late Mr. William Wood; he graduated as M.D. in Edinburgh in 1831, and in the same year became F.R.C.S.E. Since that time, he has practised in Edinburgh with much success, and with the warmest friendship of his numerous patients. In 1879, he was made an LL.D. Edinburgh, and in 1880 LL.D. Cambridge.

It was not as a physician alone that Dr. Wood was so well known, but as a highly cultured scholar; during the later years of his life, he enriched our general literature by the publication of a number of translations from classic and foreign languages: thus, he was the author of a translation of the *Satires of Horace* into English metre; Schiller's tragedy of *Don Carlos* into English blank verse; *Epistles and Art of Poetry of Horace* into English metre; Lessing's drama of *Nathan the Wise* into English blank verse; Schiller's *Lay of the Bell*, and other *Ballads*, into English metre. He was a member of the different medical societies in Edinburgh, and a member of the General Medical Council, at the meetings of which he was a vigorous exponent of the views of the Scottish medical schools, and an ardent defender of their rights and privileges. He held the appointment of Inspector of Anatomy for Scotland; and was Surgeon to Heriot's, Merchant, Maidens, and Trades' Hospitals. Previously, he had been President of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, Medical Officer of the New Town Dispensary, and President of the Royal Medical Society.

Dr. Wood's life was thus a busy one in a professional and public capacity, and yet in this last he found time to act as a keen politician in State and Church. A few months ago, the writer of this notice (on the occasion of Dr. Wood mentioning to him that he had been fifty years in practice) suggested to him the desirableness of some rest from his many labours; but Dr. Wood repudiated such an idea, and said he believed he should "die in harness". Never was a saying more literally fulfilled. For a few days, Dr. Wood had been out of sorts; but on Tuesday he made his round of visits, called at a publisher's, and had a look at some periodicals, then drove home. When the carriage arrived there, Dr. Wood was lying in it insensible; he was at once removed, and was seen almost immediately by Sir Robert Christison and Dr. Haldane, but within a short time he was dead. It is difficult to believe that his manly form will be seen no more in the streets of Edinburgh, nor in the meetings of the educated and professional world; and that the kindly ring of his well-known voice will be heard no more. By professional friends, his loss will be deeply regretted; and he will be mourned for with a heartfelt sorrow by the many patients to whom he has been a lifelong conscientious physician and sincere friend.

MEDICO-PARLIAMENTARY.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.—Thursday, January 20th.

The Abergavenny Asylum.—SIR W. HARCOURT, in reply to MR. WARTON, said the committee of visitors to the Joint Counties Asylum at Abergavenny wished to enlarge the existing asylum. The Commissioners of Lunacy thought there ought to be a new site and a new asylum, and there being a difference of opinion, the Commissioners of Lunacy desired the Home Secretary to settle the difference between them. The matter was carefully inquired into, and it was finally reported that although a new site and a new building would be the most perfect thing, a new building on the old site would do well enough. In consequence of that, he declined to force the local authority to go into unnecessary expense; and he did not desire to use the central authority to compel local authorities to enter upon expenditure which they thought unnecessary.

Medical Reform.—MR. ERRINGTON asked the Vice-President of the Council whether he would agree to the appointment of a select committee to continue the inquiry commenced in 1878 into important questions of medical reform. MR. MUNDELLA replied, that last year there was a measure before Parliament, but the Government did not see any probability of the Medical Bill being disposed of, and receiving proper attention during the present session. They had, therefore no intention of introducing it, but they had under consideration whether some advantage would not result from a continuation of the inquiry.