

CORK FEVER HOSPITAL.

AT a recent meeting of the Town Council the minutes of the Public Health Committee during October were read, from which it appeared that a communication had been received from the Committee of the Fever Hospital, stating that there was a considerable increase of patients suffering from fever and scarlatina in the city. That there were 67 patients in their hospital, and requesting to know whether they should continue to receive patients into the hospital, sent them by dispensary medical officers, without reference to whether the cases were proper cases for theirs or the Union Fever Hospital. Pending the consideration of the matter, the Committee of the Fever Hospital received permission to admit the cases as sent to them. Subsequently a joint meeting of the Public Health and Law and Finance Committees was held, the dispensary medical officers and Dr. Brodie, Local Government Board inspector, being present. At this meeting the following recommendations were adopted:—

"That, with a view to enforcing the 141st section of the Health Act, which gives power to the sanitary authority to compel the removal to hospital of cases of infectious disease so situated that their presence in their homes would probably lead to the spread of the disease, and also with a view to checking the admission of cases to the North Fever Hospital, which more properly ought to go to the Union Hospital, the dispensary doctors are asked in every case coming under their notice, in which they considered it necessary to have the patient removed to hospital, to furnish the sanitary authority with certificates such as are prescribed by the Act, and arrangements will be made by which these certificates will be collected by the sanitary staff twice a day. On receipt of the certificate the sanitary officer is to be directed to at once send the ambulance-van to the house of the sick person, and he is to decide which of the two hospitals the case is a proper one for. In case of a refusal to go, the sanitary officer is at once to get a justice's order compelling the removal to the hospital selected by him, and if the order be obstructed or disobeyed, the sanitary officer is to proceed under that section of the Act of Parliament against the persons causing the obstruction."

MEDICO-LEGAL AND MEDICO-ETHICAL.

MEDICAL ETIQUETTE.

SIR,—I shall be glad if you will give your opinion on the following case. A., B., and C., medical practitioners in the same town, are suddenly called to attend D., who had taken poison, viz., carbolic acid. A., who is the family attendant, arrives first; then, in a few minutes after, B., when a consultation is held. From the quantity of poison taken, the moribund and unconscious state of D., etc., they decide that nothing is possible to be done; this decision is told to the attendants. At this time, C. makes his appearance, and is told by A. and B. the nature of the case, and also their united decision, and he is asked to judge also. After time had been given him to form an opinion, and he had not spoken, A. suggests that they all should adjourn downstairs, when A. and B. go and give their opinion to the family, and wait a few minutes, excepting C. to follow them, which he did not. A. informs the family he will call again shortly, and then A. and B. leave the house together, walking slowly, expecting C. to join them and give them his opinion, because, as yet, he had not said anything either about the diagnosis, prognosis, or if any treatment was advisable or not. C. never makes his appearance, nor afterwards makes any communication, either written or oral, to A. or B. Later on, A. makes a second call, and again a third call, each time finding D. worse; and it was only on his third visit that A. became aware of the fact that C. has taken charge of the case, and had also led the family and attendants to believe that he might be able to make D. recover consciousness, at least, which made the attendants make uncomplimentary remarks on A. and B. A., on finding out the state of affairs, expressed his surprise that C. should act in the way he had done, especially as C. was the last comer; and gave up the case then, and only then. D. died shortly after this (in a few hours). Although C. knows that A. and B. thought his conduct in the case, and to them personally, was most uncourteous and unprofessional, still he has never given them any explanation; so I should be glad if you will say whether C. was (1) right or wrong; and, (2) independently of being the family attendant, was the case in charge of A., he being the first to arrive? I enclose my card, and remain, yours faithfully,

SURGEON A.

* * According to the following rule, extracted from the *Code of Medical Ethics*, which expresses our own view on the subject, "Surgeon A." will find that he, as the ordinary family attendant, and, moreover, the first practitioner to arrive and see the patient, was justly entitled to take charge of the case; and, further, that he acted advisedly in associating B. and C. in the consultation.

"In cases of sudden illness, or of accidents and injuries, it frequently happens, owing to the alarm and anxiety of friends, that several practitioners are simultaneously sent for. Under these circumstances, courtesy should assign the patient to the first who arrives, and he should select from those in attendance any additional assistance that may be necessary. In all such cases, however, the officiating practitioner should request that the family doctor (if there be one) be summoned; and, unless his further attendance be desired, should at once resign the case to the latter on his arrival."

C.'s conduct, if correctly reported, cannot, we regret to add, be regarded otherwise than most discourteous and unprofessional.

PURCHASE OF PRACTICE.

SIR,—Be good enough to allow me to ask those experienced in such matters an answer to the following: What would be a fair sum for two partners to offer to a retiring partner for the purchase of his third share of book debts, amounting to £1,270, of which £800 are presumed to be "good" debts, £200 "doubtful," and £270 "bad"? I think, too, a reply would be of service to others than yours obliged.

JUSTICE.

December, 1883.

CLUB-PAYMENTS.

INQUIRER will feel obliged for information. Some few years ago, a club-patient who was neglected by his club-doctor called in another practitioner, who sued the club for his attendance successfully, the judge holding that the patient had contracted with the club for due medical attendance, and, not getting it from the club-doctor, the club was liable, and gave a decree accordingly.

* * Benefit-clubs vary in their rules, but it seems improbable that any rules would be so framed as to give a medical man called in by a member a right to claim payment from the society. The member who calls him in is primarily liable to pay his doctor's charges, and he might have a right under the rules to obtain payment or an allowance from his society. The decision, as "Inquirer" reports it, seems extraordinary. Was it given by your late county court judge, or by the present one?

PUBLIC HEALTH
AND
POOR-LAW MEDICAL SERVICES.

A HARD CASE.

WE have received a slip from the *Evesham Journal and Advertiser* which states that, at a recent meeting of the Evesham Board of Guardians, Mr. H. E. Haynes, district medical officer, made a personal application to the board, asking them to reverse their decision not to pay the fee of £5 for amputating the arm of one Henry Rogers, who, in a fit of epilepsy, had fallen into the fire and seriously burnt his arm. Mr. Haynes had attended this man for several months, at his own home, as a pauper-patient, and, finding that he was going to the bad, decided on sending him into the Cottage Hospital, where he amputated the arm. The man subsequently made a good recovery. The Cottage Hospital, it would appear, was in Mr. Haynes' district. The guardians refused to reverse their decision not to pay, alleging, as the principal ground for so doing, that, by sending the man into the Cottage Hospital, he had ceased to be a pauper.

We consider this decision to be unfortunate, and that it will operate most prejudicially to the working of such establishments; for Poor-law medical officers, who are notoriously ill-paid, will not be induced to send their pauper-patients to such institutions, if, by so doing, their very limited poor-law stipends are to be thus mulcted thereby. We would advise Mr. Haynes to lay the case before the Local Government Board; not that we anticipate that much good will arise therefrom, save that it will enable some friendly member to raise the question in the House of Commons, and so secure more satisfactory arrangement for the future.

It should also be understood that the patient absolutely refused to go into the workhouse infirmary, where, as the guardians assert, he might have been operated on for nothing.

A COMPLAINT AGAINST GUARDIANS.

SIR,—I desire to bring to the notice of the profession the treatment I have just received at the hands of the guardians of the X—Union.

I have held the appointment of medical officer to one of the districts of the union for six years, during which time not a single complaint has ever been made as to the way in which I discharged my duties. I do not live in my district, and the appointment has, therefore, to be confirmed annually. At a recent meeting of the guardians, an old practitioner, who has resided in the district for years, and whose diploma dates back forty-six years, was appointed in my place, he having applied for the office. Although the house of this practitioner is situated within the district, it is not in any way more conveniently situated for the sick poor than my own.

At the same meeting the guardians appointed a practitioner to another district who does not reside in the district, although an application was made by a practitioner living in the district, and who was in every way a suitable candidate.

The above facts speak for themselves, and further illustrate the treatment to be expected from Boards of Guardians.—I am, sir, yours faithfully,

T. H. N.

* * Although we hold that our correspondent has been very badly treated, we doubt whether he has any remedy. An appeal to the Local Government Board would be useless, as the department would send the letter to the guardians, who would desire their clerk to reply, and the explanation, however untruthful, would be accepted as correct. The only advice we can give, is to suggest that our correspondent should compete for the office of guardian at the next election.