

EDINBURGH SOCIAL UNION.

The twenty-fifth annual report of the Edinburgh Social Union and Social and Sanitary Society has been issued. The object of the society is to apply the methods which economic science suggests as tending most permanently to the mental and moral development of the community. The immediate question to face is how to "raise the standard of comfort without waiting for the operation of legislative changes." The Housing Committee concerns itself with houses the average rent of which is £6 10s. a year. There is a Window Gardening Committee and an Industrial Law Committee, and the work generally is deserving of the support of the benevolent.

PROPOSED EXTENSION OF THE CITY OF GLASGOW.

A problem which is engaging the attention of the Glasgow municipality at the present time is that of the absorption of surrounding districts, which, owing to the tramway facilities, have become mainly residential, although outside the city boundary. The reports of the Medical Officer of Health show that there has been a steady decrease in the number of inhabited houses within the city since 1904, amounting to a total of over 6,000 fewer than in 1903. There is also a shrinkage of population, the inhabitants being 70,000 less than the estimate of the Registrar-General. This is accounted for by the great increase in districts close to Glasgow, but outside the municipal area, the population of the Burgh of Cathcart, on the South, for example, having increased since 1901 by over 75 per cent. Other southern districts have correspondingly increased. It is maintained that the whole hygienic conditions could be improved, and the death-rate lowered, if there was a single authority dealing with the whole area. Other questions have cropped up of recent years, and now that the rates within the city are going down while those in adjacent burghs are tending upwards, the argument for amalgamation becomes evident to residents within the autonomous burghs. A special committee has been appointed by the Glasgow Corporation to consider the whole question.

GLASGOW'S DEATH-RATE FOR 1909.

The deaths registered in Glasgow during 1909 numbered 15,244, which is equivalent to a death-rate of 17.5 per 1,000 of the population. Notwithstanding the heavy mortality during the last quarter of the year, when the rate for several weeks exceeded 30, this rate for the whole year is again lower than before, the lowest previously recorded being 17.8 per 1,000 for the immediately preceding year. The rates for the four quarters of the year were 19.9, 16.6, 12.6, and 19.7, as compared with 23, 17.1, 14.6, and 16.4 the previous year. The heavy increase during the last quarter of 1909 was, as already noted in our columns, due mainly to respiratory diseases following a phenomenal spell of fog. Respiratory diseases during the year accounted for 3,411 deaths, as compared with 1,305 in 1908. In the last quarter of 1909 the deaths from respiratory ailments numbered 1,225, or only 80 less than the total for the whole four quarters of 1908. Deaths from infectious disease, however, were decreased by 232, the deaths from measles numbering only 398 as against 830 in 1908, and from cerebro-spinal fever 49 in place of 156. Phthisis accounted for 1,179 deaths, four more than in 1908. Diarrhoeal diseases also showed a considerable reduction, being 180 as compared with 301 a year ago.

THE MILK SUPPLY OF GLASGOW.

In a lecture on sanitation and dairying, Mr. John Frew, County Sanitary Inspector, Bathgate, dealt recently with the causes of disease among cows, and insisted that the condition of the buildings in which they are housed should be perfected. Mr. Peter Fyfe, Chief Sanitary Inspector of Glasgow, who presided, related the results of tests of 120 samples taken without any discrimination at railway stations and shops. Of 60 taken at stations only 1 was found to be adulterated; it was reported on by the analyst as "watered." Of 60 taken in shops 13 were reported against for deficiency in fat, but no sample was found

watered. In only 7 of these samples was the deficiency such as would have warranted a prosecution, the percentage legally amiss being thus 11. For the whole 120 samples, 8, or 6 per cent., were legally adulterated. Looked at in general, 14 samples, or 11 per cent., were reported against, in comparison with 14 per cent. for Liverpool and 29.4 for Scotland.

DRINK AND CRIME.

In a lecture to the Glasgow Branch of the British Medical Temperance Association, Dr. Devon, medical officer to the Glasgow Prison, dealt with the question of drink as a cause of crime. He concluded (1) that drink put a man into a condition in which he was more liable to commit an offence than when sober; (2) that while drinking was common in all parts of the country, police offences occurred mainly in closely populated districts; (3) that the number of crimes in Scotland was not dependent on the amount of drinking alone, but was mainly dependent on indulgence in drink under certain conditions of urban life; (4) that the major portion and the most serious kind of offences against property were not attributable to drink, while those against the person were. In his opinion, much progress could not be expected till attention was devoted to the causes underlying the drinking, and till those who profited by the conditions which incited to vice and crime dealt with.

DUNDEE PARISH SANATORIUM.

The question of providing buildings for the treatment of phthisical cases in the grounds of the East Poorhouse has been before the Parish Council Committee for some time, and a scheme for the erection of a sanatorium has been recommended. The building will accommodate 32 patients, and will cost £2,000.

England and Wales.

[FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENTS.]

MANCHESTER.

HOPE HOSPITAL.

THE Salford Board of Guardians is apparently acting in the same way as the man who cut off his nose to spite his face. There is some ground for believing that, under the strong pressure of the Local Government Board, it has agreed to do at least some of the things that the Salford Division of the British Medical Association urged; but it is impossible to obtain official verification of this, and the reports of the guardians' intentions are somewhat contradictory. In order to settle any doubts, the honorary secretary of the Salford Division on December 31st, 1909, wrote to the clerk to the guardians, asking in the most conciliatory terms for information, and stating that the British Medical Association had no desire that the present deadlock should continue, and that as soon as the Division was convinced that it could do so with justice to its members and to the profession it would withdraw all opposition, and that it was solely with a view to facilitate this that information was asked for. The clerk sent a printed acknowledgement to the letter, saying that it would be submitted to the proper committee in due course. On January 15th no further answer had been received, though the "proper committee" had had a meeting, and the board itself had also met. Meantime the guardians had been advertising in the public newspapers for two resident medical officers at Hope Hospital; the last day for sending in applications was January 19th, and several prospective candidates, with a praiseworthy desire to support the profession in its attempts to obtain reasonable conditions for the medical officers, had written to the honorary secretary of the Salford Division asking for information. He was, of course, unable to advise, but, being anxious to facilitate matters, he again wrote to the clerk to the guardians on January 16th, asking for a reply to the

former letter, and stating that the Division would be pleased to be able to inform the profession that there were no longer any objections against the appointments. Again the clerk sent a printed form stating that the letter would be laid before the proper committee in due course. This seems to mean that no information will be given until after the last day for receiving applications for the vacant posts. In other words, it practically amounts to a refusal to give information. The position then is this: The guardians are trying to get candidates for the two resident posts on the faith of rumours which they have allowed to be circulated, but which they refuse to substantiate, and through an advertisement in the public newspapers which has been refused by the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL and the *Lancet*. One of these rumours is that the Local Government Board urged the guardians to work in harmony with the local profession in a matter which so intimately affects the profession. The guardians' method of doing this is to refuse information just at the time when it is necessary, and to expect the profession to rely on rumours which may or may not be correct as to intentions which may or may not be carried out if once the junior resident posts can be filled. It is perfectly possible that application may be received for the posts from candidates who are ignorant of the state of affairs, but in the absence and practical refusal of information, it must be definitely understood that candidates will accept the appointments at their own risk if they neglect the "warning notice." Possibly, if no suitable applicants are forthcoming, the necessary information will then be given, but the guardians will have had themselves to blame for any delay, just as they are to blame for the fact that during the last four or five months they have had to pay locumtenents six guineas a week out of the ratepayers' pockets. They evidently prefer to stand on their dignity rather than to work in harmony with the local profession for the welfare of the hospital. No such petty motive will actuate the local profession when anything like satisfactory information is obtained.

ST. MARY'S HOSPITALS AND WOMEN DOCTORS.

At a meeting of the board of the St. Mary's Hospitals last week, at which Sir F. Forbes Adam presided, the question of the appointment of a woman resident medical officer was discussed, and Dr. E. Maude Marsden was appointed house-surgeon for a period of six months. This is the first appointment of a woman to the resident staff at St. Mary's Hospitals. The question of a similar appointment at the Royal Infirmary is still being vigorously canvassed, and signatures are being freely obtained to a petition that the board of the infirmary should reconsider its refusal to appoint a woman resident medical officer.

MEDICAL EXAMINATION OF ENGINE DRIVERS.

At an inquest in the Manchester Coroner's Court on the death of an engine driver the medical evidence was to the effect that the driver was suffering from Bright's disease and might have had an attack on the footplate at any time. As a matter of fact, he had moved his engine from a siding in spite of the signals being against him, and a serious accident was only avoided by a railway inspector jumping on the buffers and applying the vacuum brake. In reply to the coroner, a railway official said that there was no periodic medical examination of engine drivers. The coroner pointed out to the jury that the man had been suffering from an exceedingly serious form of disease which was liable to cause a breakdown at any moment. While in that condition he was allowed to be in charge of an engine, and therefore of the lives of a large number of people. Time after time tragedies occurred of which there was no apparent explanation, and it seemed to him that here was a possible cause. He thought the railway company should do something to prevent such a possibility. The jury returned a verdict of death from natural causes, and expressed the view that the railway company ought to arrange for a compulsory periodic medical examination of all engine drivers.

PRESTON.

DR. R. C. BROWN, who has been a munificent benefactor to the Preston and County of Lancaster Queen Victoria Royal Institution, has given £510, a sum which covers the estimated cost of the new building which is to be used for the provisional isolation of infirmiry in-patients suspected of having contracted diphtheria or scarlet fever (or septicaemia), but whose symptoms are not sufficiently pronounced to justify their immediate removal to the Corporation Isolation Hospital in Deepdale Road. When this building is completed, one of the three blocks erected by the late Mr. E. R. Harris, hitherto used as a temporary isolation hospital, will be available for the reception of thirteen ordinary or non-infectious patients. In the name of the managers, Mr. Park has expressed their deep feeling of gratitude to Dr. Brown for his further manifestation of interest in the hospital, and his great generosity towards the institution. The fact may be recalled that Dr. R. C. Brown lately promised to continue for a further term of two years the Pathological Scholarship of £150 a year, which he founded in connexion with the Committee for the Study of Special Diseases.

NEWCASTLE-UPON-TYNE.

CLINICAL SOCIETY: ADDRESS BY SIR HALLIDAY CROOM: BANQUET.

ON January 13th Sir Halliday Croom delivered an address on "The Physiology, Pathology, and Psychology of the Menopause" in the University of Durham College of Medicine to the members of the Clinical Society. The Medicine Theatre was filled to overflowing. An enthusiastic welcome was given to the orator, and very great interest was taken in his address. The lecture was of a scientific yet almost of a popular character. The pathological aspects of the question were carefully dealt with, whilst the psychological, always an interesting side of human activities, were handled with a delicacy and truthfulness such as the subject necessitated. Sir Halliday Croom rightly laid stress upon the necessity of vaginal examination in all cases where discharges of blood occurred months or years after the "change of life" had been reached. Such a discharge was not a reappearance of menstruation, but often denoted either malignant disease of the uterus or some adenomatous or other change of the endometrium. To Professor T. W. McDowall fell the honour of proposing a vote of thanks to Sir Halliday Croom. It was extremely appropriate that he should do so, for the orator and he had been boys together, and had therefore many reminiscences in common.

In the evening the banquet of the society, which was held in the King's Hall of the Armstrong College, was attended by upwards of 150 members and friends. Among the guests were the Earl of Durham, Viscount Ridley, the Right Hon. Robert Spence Watson, and others. Mr. Leech, the President, occupied the chair. It fell to the President to propose the health of the guest of the evening. This he did in felicitous terms. In his reply Sir Halliday Croom was equally happy. To the Earl of Durham was entrusted the toast of "The Empire," than in whose hands it could find no better exponent. His lordship, who is a most acceptable after-dinner speaker, was most enthusiastically welcomed and thanked. Viscount Ridley's reply to the toast was most able and of a statesmanlike character. Other toasts followed. The dinner was altogether a great success.

DINNER OF PAST AND PRESENT STUDENTS.

Graduates of the University of Durham and students of the College of Medicine are looking forward to the dinner of past and present students, which is to be held in the College of Medicine on February 3rd under the chairmanship of Dr. W. C. Beatley.

PROFESSOR RUTHERFORD MORISON.

To the Professorship of Surgery in the University of Durham, rendered vacant by the resignation of Professor Page, Mr. Rutherford Morison has been appointed.

LIVERPOOL.

LIVERPOOL SCHOOL OF TROPICAL MEDICINE.

THE Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine, with the assistance of the Colonial Office, has taken steps to start investigations on the following lines: (1) Researches on malaria; (2) a detailed bibliography of malaria, the literature of which has grown so enormous during the last ten years (being in ten different languages) that it requires thorough classification; (3) researches on various points of parasitology; (4) researches on pathological chemistry. The school is continuing the work at the Runcorn Research Laboratories, and is enlarging the staff there. It may be added that the secretary of the school has received a letter from the Compagnie du Kasai, dated Brussels, January 8th, in which the president of the company says: "We have much pleasure in sending you the enclosed cheque for £100 towards the funds of the Liverpool School of Tropical Medicine as a slight recognition of the magnificent work your school is doing in the cause of tropical medicine."

THE LATE SIR ALFRED JONES.

Sir Alfred Jones, the senior partner in the shipping firm of Elder, Dempster and Co., who died on December 13th last, left estate valued at £674,259 gross, with net personalty £446,759. Subject to power to carry on any business of his for ten years, Sir Alfred left the residue of his estate on trust for such charitable purposes and objects in England or any British possession on the West Coast of Africa as his trustees may think proper. For their guidance he indicated, among other purposes, original research of all kinds into the cause of disease on the West Coast of Africa.

Canada.

[FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.]

THE PREVENTION OF TUBERCULOSIS.

THE Canadian Parliament has passed the following resolution:

That in view of the encouraging results which have come from the money already spent in disseminating information regarding tuberculosis, and of the interest which the people of Canada are taking in the question, and also in view of the great saving in life which has been brought about in other countries by practical work in this connexion, the House is of the opinion that Parliament should now take more active steps further to lessen the great suffering and mortality.

Special Correspondence.

PARIS.

The Concours d'externat.

THE publication the other day by one of the examiners at the recent *concours d'externat* for the Paris hospitals of certain criticisms of the manner in which these examinations are organized aroused in my mind a feeling of strong and righteous indignation. Probably our British *confreres* know very little about the *concours* held in France, and doubtless nothing at all about the *concours d'externat*, unquestionably the most picturesque, the most characteristic, and the most jovial of all. The *externat* of the hospitals constitutes the first degree in the medical service of the Assistance Publique, of that hierarchy which comprises *externe*, *interne*, *chef de clinique*, and *physician* (or *surgeon*) to the hospitals. He who has been *externe* has the right to present himself at the *concours d'internat*, and that is pretty nearly his only reason for existence; the only use of the examination to which he is required to submit is to act as the first turnstile in a road otherwise too freely sprinkled with obstacles. Long ago, Francois Rabelais, *doctor medicinae* of the Faculty of Montpellier, suggested that judgements rendered by courts of law should be drawn by chance, by a kind of ballot, proving by many solid arguments that decisions at least as satisfactory as those resulting

from the prolonged judicial proceedings could be obtained in this way, and in much less time. This method might have been employed in the selection of *externes*, but it would have been a great pity, for we should have lost one of the ceremonies best calculated to give the young student a lofty idea of the process by which "masters" are created.

The way in which an examination is organized may be influenced by three considerations—the object with which it is established, the convenience of the candidates, and the convenience of the examiners. Here the object in view, which is to reduce the number, is attained beforehand independently of the means. The convenience of the candidates cannot be allowed to weigh in the balance against the convenience of the judges, eminent personages who have other fish to fry. For the jury, therefore—that is to say, the examiners—it is important that the *concours* should be simple and quickly over. These two conditions have been realized with a mechanical ingenuity which James Watt himself might have envied. The most essential piece of apparatus for the fabrication of *externes* is an accurate clock whose single hand completes the circuit of the dial in five minutes. The only other accessory apparatus consists of three rooms opening one into the other. All the candidates assemble in the largest room, which will be designated by the letter C. The president of the jury at the beginning of each sitting draws from an urn the names of twenty candidates to be examined that day. On the summons of the president they descend into the arena, their fellows who have escaped for that day taking the opportunity of calling attention by jokes, puns, or appropriate growlings and hootings to any oddity in a name or peculiarity in personal appearance. The chosen twenty are at once secluded in the second room, which may be indicated by the letter A, where they are cut off from all communication with the outer world. The president then draws from another urn the question which is to be the subject of the oral examination. The clock comes into action at this point. When its ping is heard the first candidate is led into the third room (B), where he is at once confronted with the subject. Five minutes are allowed him for meditation, and then another ping dispatches him to Room C, a second candidate at the same moment taking his place in B. Face to face with the seven impassive and silent examiners and with the clock, which warns him to temper his eloquence, he grinds out his discourse until another ping cuts him short; at the same moment the machinery expels the second candidate from C, to take the seat just vacated by the first, and a third counter in the game, a third young hopeful, passes from A to C. The process is repeated until the supply is exhausted. The machine, it will be seen, works simply, automatically, and with lightning-like rapidity. Nobody has heretofore dared openly to criticize machinery so wonderfully well adapted to its purpose, although, to tell the truth, I must admit that on the fateful day, when it was my turn to perorate in face of the circling hand of the five-minute clock as it went its inflexible way, being intimidated, inhibited by its sardonic motion, I hastily decided that the whole business was so stupid and absurd that, I believe, never did the fate of a timepiece hang so near the edge of the bottomless pit; but that must have been because I was young and inapt to see through the poverty of externals into the inner harmony of things. Let me add, confident that so personal a detail will not be permitted to find its way back again across the narrow seas, the story of a little incident which befell me a short time after I had undergone this examination. I was serving my time as a soldier in Paris, and circumstances into which I need not more particularly enter caused me to find myself in the kitchen of the Secretary-General of the Assistance Publique. My eye fell upon an object which seemed not altogether unfamiliar. "What," I said, in a voice which startled the *cordons bleus*, "is that apparatus up there?" "That?" she said. "Oh, that is the beefsteak clock, and very convenient it is. You put the beefsteak on the grill, and it begins to sizzle; ping! goes the clock, and you turn the steak over; ping! goes the clock again, and your beefsteak is cooked to a turn. The annoying thing is that every year, at the beginning of October, they take the clock away from me for two months; I miss it very much, and I can't imagine what they do with it." "Ah," I said, "what do they do with it?"