

Surely the right course is to postpone making the appointment until after the Representative Meeting has met.—I am, etc.,

R. WALLACE HENRY,
Hon. Secretary and Representative of the
Leicester and Rutland Division.

Leicester, Jan. 15th.

SIR,—Mr. Edmund Owen has given the Council a timely, and very grave warning. For myself I should say let the appointment not be made. The Medical Secretarial Department could, with very great advantage, be "closed down" until the government of the Association is more settled. At least it would be a saving of vast sums spent quite recklessly on "agenda" books and useless literature of all kinds.

As to the Medical Secretary and the "dictatorship," it is a most fortunate thing for the Association that Mr. Smith Whitaker has secured a more profitable berth.

It will be a serious matter for the present Council if it fills up the office of Medical Secretary at present; don't let them defy the members of the Association much longer; they have done and are doing day by day a great deal too much to split up the Association—they cannot succeed in destroying but they can weaken it. We have been too long governed by a coterie, and, worse than all, a political party. This must be ended!—I am, etc.,

Old Trafford, Jan. 16th. JAS. BRASSEY BRIERLEY.

SIR JAMES BARR AND THE INSURANCE ACT.

SIR,—Sir James Barr's reply to Dr. Dixon and Dr. Hislop, in the JOURNAL of January 13th, should give a quietus to accusations of political partisanship.

Those who know Sir James Barr's strong and independent character are well aware that he would never allow personal or political considerations to interfere with his public duties. He could, no doubt, afford to disregard the opinions of Dr. de Coverley Veale and Dr. Lishman, the latter of whom fails to obscure his own Radical proclivities; but I would remind these gentlemen that Sir James Barr's letter was addressed to the public, and surely the public have as good a right to be protected against bad legislation as the medical profession.

Personally I thought his letter most refreshing, and I was sorry that its author had not been moved to indite it sooner. As it is, however, it cannot have failed to influence the thoughts of many members of the public for whom it was intended, and so will have done good.—I am, etc.,

Little Sutton, Chester, Jan. 16th. H. W. NOTT.

SIR,—It appears to me that the present correspondence, which is assuming the qualities of a discussion on the ethical principles of the Insurance Act, should have occupied our attention before the Act had passed into law. I believe that no sect of the community is better qualified than medical men to discuss the ethical principles of this Act; but those principles have never been challenged, and now we have lost our opportunity. With Sir James Barr I agree, and believe that this Act forcibly demonstrates the fact that this country has followed Germany in the path of degeneracy.—I am, etc.,

Edinburgh, Jan. 13th. FREDERICK PORTER.

A HOSPITAL FOR PAYING PATIENTS.

SIR,—Mr. Lawrie McGavin's letter in the JOURNAL of January 13th is another instance of the unwisdom of expressing an opinion without the trouble of ascertaining the facts of the case.

He says: "By what right Dr. Hilliard claims to command a greater knowledge of nursing homes and their management than I do myself I cannot quite see," etc.

If Mr. Lawrie McGavin had taken the trouble, he could have ascertained that Dr. Harvey Hilliard and the committee of doctors who initiated the idea of the hospital for paying patients—of which committee I had the honour of being chairman—spent much time for many months and held numerous meetings of medical men and others interested, with the object of acquiring all possible acquaintance with the subject of nursing homes. Plain truths are frequently unpalatable fare, and the plain truth of this matter is—that Mr. Lawrie McGavin has expressed

an opinion on a matter of which he has no knowledge.—I am, etc.

London, S.W., Jan. 13th.

LAUNCELOT ARCHER.

THE NEW CELL PROLIFERANT.

SIR,—With regard to a letter in your issue for January 13th on the origin of some recently published studies on this subject, may I remind your scientific readers that they are evidently based on the work of my brother, Mr. H. C. Ross, M.R.C.S., L.R.C.P., as fully described by him in his book on *Induced Cell Reproduction and Cancer*, published a year ago by Mr. Murray. In Chapter XV of the book, et seq., it was shown that certain substances, when placed upon chronic ulcers, have the power of causing very rapid cell proliferation—the result being verified *in vitro* by the action of the same substances on human leucocytes, and illustrated by photographs of the ulcers and blood specimens. The "new cell proliferant" is probably merely another of these "auxetic" substances, but tested only on ulcers. A paper by me on the subject will be found in the current *Proceedings* of the Royal Society of Medicine and also partially in *Nature* of December 14th last.—I am, etc.,

Liverpool, Jan. 13th.

RONALD ROSS.

SIR,—The following extract may be of interest to those who are taking part in the correspondence on this subject. It is taken from a book with the following title: *MATERIA MEDICA or a New description of the Virtues and Effects of all the drugs or Simple Medicines Now in Use. . . . Done from the Latin Original of Dr. Paul Harman late Professor of Botany in Leyden . . . by Edward Strother, M.D. Coll. Med. Lond. Reg. Colleg.*

The extract is as follows:

24. *Consolida Major, Comfrey.*

It is of a sweetish, mucilaginous, and viscous Taste. It consists of mucous, thick, watry, and oily Particles; from whence it has the following Virtues.

Its sweetish Taste bespeaks it of a temperate and middle Nature, because some saline, and sulphureous Corpuscles are always well blended and incorporated in a sweet Taste; and its mucous and viscous Taste shew it to have a Power of consolidating and gluing* Wounds together.

It mollifies, and is anodyne, because its smooth and oily Parts cover over, and, by its watery, it dissolves, the saline Particles, which hinder a Cure of Ulcers, or Wounds; therefore is it us'd as an internal Vulnerary.

It is a Specifick in Exulcerations, or Excoriations of the Kidneys, especially such as are rais'd from Cantharides; and then it is boil'd in Milk and drank.

It is us'd internally to breed a Callus in Bones that are fractur'd.†

Wherever Acrimony is the Cause of a Disease it is a Specifick; because the viscous Particles wrap up the salts: From whence it is of Use in Dysenteries, and in Ulcers of the Lungs, or in Coughs proceeding from sharp tickling Salts, which are betray'd by a tickling dry Cough.

Its Juice express'd glues together, and heals external Wounds.

In short, 'tis emollient, anodyne, agglutinant, consolidating, good in Ulcers and all sharp Humors.

N.B. It is always us'd internally in Decoction, and lest its Particles being viscous, should stick to the Wrinkles of the Guts, 'tis advisable to add to the Decoction the Seeds of Fennel, or some such Aromatick; and *This is a General Rule for all viscus Plants.*

Its Preparations are only Syrup of Comfrey of *Fernelius* whose Dose may be to two Ounces.

Its *Generical Mark*; It has monopetalous, tuberos, cylindrical Flowers, dispos'd into Jags, with four Seeds join'd together.

* N.B. Wounds have two General Intentions, *Agglutination* or *Digestion*; such Wounds are fit for the first method of Cure as have lost no Substance, or made in a Part where an Eschar wou'd be unseemly; namely, the Face or Hands.

† N.B. A Callus is at first a liquid Matter, which in Process of Time is gelatinous, and lastly hardens into Bone. *Papen's* Digestor reverses this Method of Nature; and, from an hard Substance, turns it back again to a Jelly: It must be concluded, that Comfrey, if it succeeds, contains a great many earthy Parts in it.

The book from which this quotation is taken was published in London by Charles Rivington and printed at the "Bible and Crown," in St. Paul's Churchyard, in 1727.—I am, etc.,

Manchester, Jan. 13th.

CHARLES POWELL WHITE.

SWEETS IN CHILDHOOD.

SIR,—In the correspondence upon this vital question I have failed to see mentioned one of the principal points—that is heredity. I have found that a far greater percentage is traceable to the maternal side.—I am, etc.,

London, N.W., Jan. 12th.

PERCY MAY.