

This seems to me the height of absurdity, and I hope it is only the writer's individual opinion.

You must remember that Mr. Macnamara is discussing the question of the terms on which London diplomates should be admitted to the degree of the new University, not those regulating the admission of students of the present day. These diplomates are busy men, all actively earning their living by their profession. The only reason they are anxious, if found capable, to take this degree is that it may improve their prospects in life. And why throw such useless and impossible stumbling blocks in their way? Does Mr. Macnamara find from his everyday experience of the younger generation of practitioners of the metropolis that they are so deficient in general and literary culture that this further test is necessary? Surely not. The stamp of a university man in these respects is not determined by such examinations, but by his tastes, habits, and associates. I for my part consider that men, who in spite of the many calls of a busy life are yet found capable of keeping themselves on level terms with the ever-increasing knowledge of their profession in the present day should certainly be considered eligible to become graduates of the Albert University unhampered by restrictions born of officialism and red tape.—I am, etc.,

A LONDON DIPLOMATE (ABROAD).

THE MEDICAL DEFENCE UNION.

SIR,—The proposed alterations of the Articles of the Medical Defence Union are retrograde and revolutionary in character. Although the report of the Committee which prepared the new articles was on the agenda of the last Council meeting in London it was withheld at the last moment for some ostensible reason. Hence it becomes necessary for me to appeal to the whole body of members.

I shall merely allude to the introduction of a section into the new articles to prevent the annual meeting from petitioning against legislation injurious to the profession, as it did last time, contrary to the wishes of our President. I believe this attempt to restrict the Memorandum of Association to be futile and illegal.

The really serious matter, however, is the proposed change in the management of the Union. Hitherto all the officials and the Council have been directly responsible to the Union itself, each individual requiring annual re-election. This self-governing system has worked well and the Union has flourished. Now all this is to be changed. At the next annual meeting 12 members of Council are to be elected, and to them will belong the power of electing all the officials, the President of the Union, and as many Vice-Presidents as they choose. Nor are the 12 to be responsible to the Union by requiring annual re-election. They are merely to select from their number any three they choose to retire or stand their chance of re-election. Now suppose that the Council adopted a policy contrary to the wishes of the Union, an annual meeting could elect three members of Council opposed to such policy, but the Council can neutralise their influence by its election of vice-presidents, etc.

Briefly, the 12 members of Council elected at the next annual meeting, under the new articles, will have absolute and practically irresponsible control of the Union. The Council has power to act for the Union, and the acts of the Council are as the acts of the Union.

This is a plain statement of facts, and I appeal to the members of the Union to pause before they hand over their powers to any 12 of their number.

I believe that such a step will prove disastrous to the Union.—I am, etc.,
HUGH WOODS, M.D.,
Hightate. Vice-President of the Medical Defence Union.

THE MODERN TREATMENT OF UTERINE MYOMA.

SIR,—Dr. J. W. Taylor's letter evades the point. I asked him for the proof of positive statements which he makes based upon an experience of a local kind. It will be an easy matter for him if he can substantiate his statements to produce evidence which will satisfy me, and it is perfectly needless for him to ask for the corroboration of negative statements which are purely of negative value. The assertions he makes that galvanism will sometimes cause the entire disappearance of a "small and recent myoma" is so astonishing that, before it can be accepted, it must be subjected to the

strictest investigations, and absolute proof of it must be submitted.

This is not only true in the first instance, but the necessity for such investigation and such proof is emphasised by the remarkable admission involved in his assertion of belief that the single and nulliparous condition gives a finality to the discrimination between secundinal retention and "small and recent myoma." I for one cannot accept the accuracy of his observations, but if I am mistaken, he can easily convince me of my error, seeing that we work together in the same institution.

He fails completely to understand why galvanism is employed in the case of the deltoid muscle, and how (alas, always in a very temporary fashion) benefit is therefrom derived. Neither his philosophical condition nor his unphilosophical theory can explain how the galvanic current is to blow hot in the instance of the deltoid muscle, and cold in the case of the uterus. The whole theory involves an *a priori* absurdity, and day by day its inherent dangers and risks are being made manifest.—I am, etc.,

Birmingham.

LAWSON TAIT.

SIR,—I have followed the correspondence on this subject in your columns with much interest. During the last two years the electrical treatment has been employed by me in a variety of cases, and experience has convinced me that it is a useful addition to our resources. Although I cannot record any remarkable results in the disappearance of uterine tumours, the pain so often associated with them is frequently relieved more completely than by any other treatment. This result is due, in my opinion, to a general slight shrinkage, producing a total reduction in size of considerable importance, where a large tumour is pressing severely on neighbouring parts.

In cases of hæmorrhage and chronic endometritis, I am perfectly satisfied that it is a very valuable remedy, and I am able to record in a number of cases much better results than I had been able to obtain by the curette and intrauterine medication.—I am, etc.,

Weymouth.

MACPHERSON LAWRIE.

HONORARY DEGREES IN PUBLIC HEALTH.

SIR,—As one who has taken a somewhat prominent position in obtaining the proper recognition of diplomas in Public Health, will you allow me to draw attention to the fact that the University of Durham has recently conferred its degree of Doctor of Hygiene (D.Hy.) upon a gentleman who had not previously passed any special examination for the same, and to point out that if this is to be taken as a precedent a great injustice will be done to all those who have obtained a Public Health qualification after public examination and subsequent to great inconvenience and expense.

The conferring of a Public Health qualification in this manner is also clearly contrary to the spirit of the Medical Act, 1886, Section 21, which enacts that no registrable diploma for proficiency in Sanitary Science, Public Health, or State Medicine shall be granted except after special examination.

It may be urged that the conferring of a degree in Hygiene has a parallel in the giving of such degrees as D.C.L., or LL.D.; in reply to which I would point out that the possession of these latter carry with them no statutory privileges of a public character, whilst the former, if only by inference, enables the possessor to apply for the most valuable of Public Health appointments in competition with those who have obtained their privilege to do so after submission to the stringent regulations of the General Medical Council, and the examinations of the licensing authorities.—I am, etc.,

WILLIAM R. SMITH, M.D., D.Sc.,

Barrister-at Law, Professor of Forensic Medicine in King's College, etc.

THE LYMPH GLANDS IN TONGUE SURGERY.

SIR,—In his address on the Surgery of the Tongue, Mr. Hutchinson indicates three regions in which glandular enlargement may occur, namely, beneath the lower jaw, the edge of the sterno-mastoid, and the site of the deep cervical vessels. He affirms that: "If a gland-tumour appear in one of these regions, it is almost certain that the others will be free;" and further that the selection is "almost a matter of accident." Now we know that the lymphatics from the anterior

portion of the tongue, from the lips, and adjoining part of the mouth pass to the lymph glands under the lower jaw, in contact with the submaxillary; thence the current traverses the superficial cervical lying beside the sterno-mastoid; from these, to the deep cervical in contact with the large blood vessels. Hence, in epithelioma primarily attacking the parts here indicated, we always find these three sets of lymph glands enlarge successively.

On the other hand, the lymph current from the root of the tongue and from the pharynx passes mainly to the deep cervical glands: a portion from the surface tissue also to the superficial cervical. Epithelioma commencing here accordingly implicates secondarily these two sets, sometimes only the deep. The submaxillary lymph-glands now always escape infection—that is, until a very late stage—and those at the edge of the sterno-mastoid may do so.

This, I presume, is what Mr. Hutchinson really means when he states that the three sets are seldom found simultaneously enlarged. But the infection obviously extends from the primary site upon strictly defined anatomical principles. In the present and in similar instances of malignant disease, no caprice or "accidental" distribution of secondary deposits in the lymph glands ever becomes apparent until the remoter stages of the malady, when we have to reckon either with a general blood infection under some circumstances, or, under others, with a complete occlusion of the ordinary lymph channels, diverting the lymph current into various abnormal directions.

With the admission of "accident" as a prime mover in such cases of lymph-gland infection, all surgical measures addressed to these latter organs become aimless rambling in the dark. A recognition of the definite path along which the infective particles of a cancerous new growth in the early days of the malady diffuse themselves appears to me the most important point by far in the surgery of malignant disease. In every case, with the rarest possible exceptions, amenable to surgical treatment, the lymph glands in which deposit will first betray itself can be accurately predicted. These duly enlarge; but enlargement is a late symptom, and is almost certainly indicative of sundry cell collections lurking in other similar organs, yet still of normal size. Even when limited to a single lymph gland, it vastly lessens the hope of complete eradication. In waiting for its appearance, therefore, before we act, we seriously imperil the best interests of our patient. The principal aim of the surgeon who seeks to extirpate cancerous disease secondarily implicating the lymph glands should be the operative removal of all such as are known to be in danger of infection before enlargement has had time to take place.—I am, etc..

Gloucester Place, Portman Square.

HERBERT SNOW.

THE COMMITTEE ON ANÆSTHETICS.

SIR.—THE BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of November 7th contains a list of the gentlemen who have been requested to act on the Committee appointed "to investigate the clinical evidence with regard to anæsthetics on the human subject, and especially the relative safety of the various anæsthetics, the best methods of administering them, and the best methods of restoring a patient in case of threatened death." It is a matter of common experience that it is difficult, if not impossible, so to arrange a committee that objections to its constitution will not be raised by some who are interested in the subject which it is proposed to investigate, and it is more than probable that this particular Committee will not escape the usual fate, but on this point I do not propose to offer an opinion.

I should like, however, to express the hope that the terms of reference may be held to include a very complete investigation into the question of teaching. For some time past I have taken every opportunity of urging upon the profession the importance of systematic instruction being given in the administration of anæsthetics, and I am daily becoming more and more convinced of the justice of these views.

I am very far from depreciating the enormous value of strictly scientific investigations, and yet I would boldly assert that in the more complete recognition of systematic teaching of this subject as an important element in the medical curriculum, we are much more likely to obtain a practical solu-

tion of that extremely difficult and painful problem, "deaths from anæsthetics," than in the more abstruse realms of science.—I am, etc.,

J. FREDERICK W. SILK,

Assistant Anæsthetist to Guy's Hospital, etc.

Weymouth Street, Portland Place, W.

MEDICO-LEGAL AND MEDICO-ETHICAL.

AN EXTRAORDINARY SENTENCE UPON A LUNATIC.

In the *Times* of December 15th there is a case reported which is of importance as showing the view held by the Bench with regard to acts committed by persons when afflicted with mental disease. The case was that of a man who pleaded guilty to removing a railway lamp, and thereby endangering the lives of passengers upon the railway. He also pleaded guilty to stealing a lamp and other articles belonging to the railway company. The report states that the "conduct of the prisoner in the dock was very strange; and a medical man who was called said that he was undoubtedly of unsound mind, and would get into mischief again if he was let loose." Now, under ordinary circumstances, the unfortunate man would have been certified and sent to an asylum, or given over to the care of his friends if he was in a fit state, and if any friend would come forward and become responsible for his safe care.

The learned judge, however, actually sentenced the unfortunate lunatic to eighteen months' imprisonment for endangering the lives of passengers, and three years' penal servitude for the larceny. "His lordship said that he took this course for the prisoner's own protection. If the prisoner were at any time found not to be a lunatic, a representation must be made to the Home Secretary, and he would be set at liberty. It must be seen that the man was properly treated as a lunatic, as the sentence was not intended to be a criminal one."

This is a most extraordinary procedure. The man is pronounced to be a lunatic, and consequently is a person who is not responsible for his actions; as the result of his diseased mental condition he does certain things which bring him within the reach of the law, and he is condemned and sentenced as a felon to three years' penal servitude for his insane actions. It is all very well for the learned judge to attempt to mitigate the severity of the sentence by adding that "it must be seen that the man was properly treated as a lunatic, as the sentence was not intended to be a criminal one," but we fail to see why this unfortunate person was sentenced at all.

In this case as reported, the lunatic is said to have pleaded guilty when he was clearly not in a state of mind to be permitted to plead at all, and then sentenced as a criminal for having done so. Again, we cannot understand why the plea of insanity was not set up; for, if successfully maintained, as it clearly could have been, the prisoner should have been acquitted on the ground of insanity.

THE SALE OF SPIRIT OF NITROUS ETHER.

OF the standardised preparations of the *British Pharmacopœia* there is no doubt that the spirit of nitrous ether occasions the pharmacist the greatest trouble and anxiety in maintaining his stock of the required strength. This technical difficulty was recognised by the magistrate in the hearing of a summons taken out by the Poplar District Board of Works under the Sale of Food and Drugs Act against C. P. Maitland, of East India Dock Road, for selling spirit of nitrous ether deficient in nitrous ether, and consequently only the payment of the costs of prosecution was imposed. In reference to the analyst's certificate showing the preparation sold to be deficient in nitrous ether to the extent of 40 per cent, the defendant, according to the *Times* of December 12th, pleaded that in his neighbourhood, where the drug was sold in very small quantities and the bottle must therefore be frequently opened, it was almost impossible to keep the preparation at the proper standard, as "the spirit would gradually evaporate to the extent of 40 per cent." But admitting that the accurate dispensing of spirit of nitrous ether is accompanied by a certain amount of difficulty, the obstacles are surely not so great but they might be overcome by the exercise of a few precautionary measures, the adoption of which constitutes in the eyes of the public the strongest claim of the pharmacist to the maintenance of a higher scale of charges than the grocer.

CONSULTATIONS WITH JUNIORS.

EXCEPTION having been taken by a correspondent upon whose letter we commented on December 19th, p. 1335, to the principle laid down in the rule quoted in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of December 5th, p. 1237, we have referred the point involved to the author of the *Code* in question, who in response has expressed his readiness to introduce in any future edition emendatory words with the view of removing any doubt as to its true meaning and intent, and which will then read as follows, the proposed defining interpolations being printed in italics:

"When a senior practitioner is called upon to meet a *relatively young and less practised* junior in consultation for a second opinion, it will be competent for the former to represent the propriety and advantage of obtaining the assistance of a more experienced practitioner; but if the patient specially desire to have the opinion of any qualified member of the profession, even though a *comparatively youthful* junior, it will be at the option of the practitioner in attendance to acquiesce or withdraw," etc.

A PASSIVE RIVAL.

TOXTETH writes: B., a medical practitioner in a village, has been asked to allow himself to be nominated as surgeon to a sick club, which is now held by A. B. has consented to stand for the post. To hold the position it is necessary that B. should be proposed and initiated as a member of the club before the election as surgeon. Does B. act unprofessionally in allowing himself to be proposed and initiated as a