

that the profession may look to without misgiving to represent its views and wishes.

We ought to be sure in the first place that the Board will in no way consider any question connected with such medical aid societies as are commercial undertakings and not simply mutual benefit societies, for our relations with the former constitute a question of medical ethics to be decided by the profession alone without any outside interference; and it must be clearly defined that the Board will be a Conciliation Board pure and simple, and that it will in no way attempt to act as a court of arbitration. I should hardly have thought it necessary to suggest this had not correspondents evidently had the idea that the Board would so act.

On the very important question of a wage limit it seems rather useless to speak, as the friendly society representatives refuse to listen; it is possible, though not probable, that the Board in their deliberations may conceive some mutually agreeable alternative, which may, directly or indirectly, have the same effect; but as there is small chance of this, the possible good that may result from the labours of the Board is very much diminished in amount.

And finally, in accepting the proffered services of the Board we must remember that there is small chance of their completely solving our difficulties, and therefore we must not relax one iota of our energies in other directions, first among which should be an endeavour, persistent, definite, and, if possible, organised to instruct the working classes as to what really are our complaints and our wants; at present they are deplorably ignorant on these points, and no wonder, for they have no means of knowing; they hear the opinions of their own leading men, who more often than not are of the very class we would exclude from medical aid, and when occasionally they do hear our views, it is too frequently during some heated discussion which only tends to deepen in their minds the impressions already there.

In addition to the public press, we might do much by small local and friendly conferences between the representatives of the Branches of the friendly societies and their various medical officers. Again, at the annual dinners so common with these societies, the medical men who often attend might without offence and with good effect put in a few judicious words to advance their views. We are more likely to influence the working man by local conferences and direct conversation than otherwise, and the working man himself is, I believe, not unreasonable nor ungenerous.

To be effectual these attempts must not be confined to a few small areas, and the medical men in each district must work together with the one object in view. It should be easier to get men to work together in this way than to get them unanimously to adopt more extreme measures, and even if some remained inactive it would not undo the work of the others. Anyhow, we must peg away until we influence a large body of opinion. This course will be more in keeping with the dignity and the traditions of a humane and learned profession than any attempt by an artificial union to wrest from the friendly societies by force the terms we think proper and just. And for this reason, for its methods, as I imagine them, and for its probable educational value, I like the suggestion of a Conciliation Board.—I am, etc.,

Freshford, Aug. 8th.

CHARLES E. S. FLEMMING.

#### MEDICAL AID SOCIETIES.

SIR,—The tone adopted by Mr. Bryant in that part of his address in which he alludes to medical aid societies is, to say the least, disappointing. To dispute the magnitude of their system of totting is absurd; patients of mine complain of it as a positive nuisance. One of my patients was touted whilst I was actually making a visit.

Their method is to ask the person canvassed to join Dr. So-and-So's club. That they are ruthless and powerful is proved by the following case. A medical man of my acquaintance severed his connection with a medical aid society. They promptly set up a dispensary opposite him and quashed him. It is a significant fact that one of the most energetic directors of a certain medical aid society is a medical man.

Touts are paid on commission, or at all events the fixed wage is very small.

The continued existence of the Hearts of Oak Society indis-

putably proves that assurance for sickness and death can be arranged in such a manner as not to sweat medical men.

If club and medical aid work were abolished insurance societies would promptly adapt themselves to these new conditions.

To arrange a so-called "Board of Conciliation" is merely a way of arranging to continue paying blackmail.—I am, etc.,

August 13th.

J. F.

#### EXAMINATIONS FOR HIGHER QUALIFICATIONS.

SIR,—In my opinion the General Medical Council has acted wisely in having nothing to do with this new crusade against the methods of carrying on examinations for higher qualifications. The spirit of the law is against the Council burdening itself with any such task. The Council has the authority of Parliament to safeguard the public against men insufficiently educated being allowed to practise. This is all the public demands, and the General Medical Council performs its duty satisfactorily.

If colleges or corporations admit to their Fellowships individuals after a paltry examination, then the corporations in question will be the sufferers, for such Fellowships will cease to be of value from the standpoint of superior knowledge. Moreover, it must be remembered that in many instances Fellowships are sought after not because of their educational value, but because they give social standing, or because they are a guarantee that the possessor is likely to conform to the dictates of good conduct.—I am, etc.,

Leeds, Aug. 19th.

G. SHARP.

#### IMPROVED VENTILATION.

SIR,—The revolution which has been effected in the conditions of ventilation by the introduction of electric lighting does not as yet appear to be fully realised by the advisers to public bodies and institutions, or we should not find so many examples in London of the absence of provision for the respiratory needs of the assembled multitudes. It might be well worthy of discussion whether in a hall which has been lit by electricity without any new provision for ventilation the audience are better or worse off than when they were stifled by the heat and carbonic acid of the old gas illumination. The atmospheric conditions are now quite different, for the whole contamination is the effect of human exhalation, to which may possibly be added the introduction of air from improper sources. Such air becomes unfit for respiration much earlier than when carbonic acid alone has to be considered, and the necessary air-change is certainly retarded by the absence of gas burners.

In the present state of our knowledge we turn to the bacteriologist rather than to the chemist for an estimate of the impurities we have to combat in designing ventilation under such circumstances. If we could satisfy the former, the latter would have little or nothing to add. A principle of ventilation directed especially to the expulsion from places where people congregate of solid frequently disease-bearing impurities of air, could not fail to have a great future before it, and is not so impossible of application as might be supposed. In fact, the difficulties of the ventilating engineer are much fewer than they were formerly, when he was bound to the superheated, carbon-laden, upward stream which was stronger than he was. He did his best with sunlights, etc., and tried to pacify those who complained of draughts with floor-inlets heated by hot-water pipes.

Electricity has changed all that. The engineer is free to act upon a body of air which has no very strong tendencies. It has to be changed imperceptibly, noiselessly, economically, without inconvenience to the breathers. The bacteriologist also demands that the supply shall be well chosen, free from dust and other evils, and that the greatest facilities shall be offered to all offensive particles to pass out as quickly and quietly as possible. To meet all these requirements will exercise the skill of the engineer, but he has his object clearly before him. The air must be taken from a level far enough above road refuse, and yet not so high as to encounter the upshafts of drains. It may with advantage be filtered, and then brought in at as great a distance as possible from the people in order to avoid draughts. The outlet, on the other hand, should be as near as possible to the source of the impurities to be carried away. These are thickest upon the floor, and are