

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE ROYAL MEDICAL AND CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY:
ADMISSION OF ARMY MEDICAL OFFICERS.

SIR,—I congratulate you sincerely on not having been made the agent to convey to the profession Mr. Surgeon-Major Wyatt's grumbings against the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society. The case is a most fit one for the pages of the *Lancet*, and is most recklessly handled by that journal, which, as usual, confutes itself. What has autocracy to do with the question? A letter, written apparently without the authority of his brother officers, and conveying, as I am confident it does, an insult to many of them in both services, is indited by Mr. Wyatt and presented by the editor of the *Lancet*, pistol in hand, at the heads of the Fellows, who, through all the struggles of their professional lives, have been laying aside a part of their hardly earned moneys to maintain the Society and its library. I, for one, should be delighted to share my privileges with any professional brother (come he whence he might) who sought them gracefully and like a gentleman; but I hope you will aid us with your pen to meet this "stand and deliver" sort of attack. Neither Mr. Wyatt nor the person who writes in the *Lancet* has taken the trouble to ascertain the course adopted by the Council in dealing with the representation made to them by six of their Fellows, in accordance with the laws, as suggested by the Secretary, in answer to Mr. Wyatt's first letter. I have reason to believe that the Council have given to it the most careful consideration, and have dealt with it in a manner which is likely to be satisfactory to the Fellows at large, and which exhibits the most liberal courtesy to the medical officers of the army and navy. The line taken by the writer is, therefore, alike prejudiced, insulting, and contrary to the facts. Those who are acquainted with the threats of vengeance against the Council which have been liberally uttered of late by a penman of the *Lancet* whose paper was not printed in the *Transactions*, will be at no loss to trace the animus which has prompted this extraordinary attack upon the Council. But it must be particularly unsatisfactory to the medical officers of the army, and especially of the Guards, to find themselves presented, by Mr. Wyatt and the *Lancet*, as involuntary suitors *in forma pauperis*, and to see their case used as a *cheval de bataille* to gratify the passions of a writer who does not hesitate to distort the facts in dealing with it, in order to use it as a bludgeon directed at the heads of the Council of the Society whose sympathy is appealed to. I shall say nothing about the unhappy position in which Mr. Wyatt has placed himself with the Society, the profession, and his brother officers, by his precipitate appeal to a party writer without fully informing himself of the course of events, and by allowing himself and his brethren to be placed in an utterly false position.

I am, etc.,

AN OLD FELLOW OF THE ROYAL MEDICAL AND CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY.

SIR,—The question of the advisability of making army medical officers honorary members of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society is one, I think, fairly open to discussion in your columns by its members; and this I must offer as my excuse for now referring to it.

In favour of the concession, the example of Dublin may be quoted, where, perhaps like in some other capitals, the various medical societies show the utmost liberality to those officers, and which I for one shall always recall with the greatest pleasure. There is, however, this distinction between the two garrisons, that, whereas in the one the troops are being constantly changed, in the other they are nearly stationary. This, in my opinion, renders the proposed concession uncalled for, unless it could be made to apply to those medical officers only who may do duty temporarily in or near London.

I am, etc.,

A MEDICAL OFFICER OF THE GUARDS.
November 1867.

THE NEW BREECH-LOADING RIFLE PROJECTILES.

SIR,—A fearfully alarming account of the effects of the new breech-loading rifle projectiles has appeared in the *Medical Times and Gazette* (October 26th, 1867). The army combatant is usually supposed to be satisfied if he puts a bullet into his antagonist anyhow or anywhere; certainly he has hitherto been supposed not to aim after anything more severe than smashing a bone or sending a bullet into one of the cavities of his antagonist's body. But, according to the article in question, these trifles do not satisfy the combatants of the present day. The principles on which the Chassepot, in common with the Boxer and other new bullets, have been constructed, are designed to accomplish much more than disabling antagonists. The Prussians, too, are no longer contented with the needle-gun bullet, the effects of which the Austrians can

tell something about, but are changing it, it is said, for a much more terrible missile—nothing less than a bullet-shell filled with detonating powder. Listen to the kind of wound it is to make. "If this bullet lodge in one of the cavities of the body, it explodes, and fragments of metal tear their way through the viscera, while the disorganisation is increased by the sudden evolution of large quantities of gas. When a limb is struck, the muscles are lacerated and torn up from their connexions; the bones also are usually comminuted, whilst the skin, curiously enough, is rarely ruptured. Such is the terrible missile, which, it is said, Herr von Dreyse has recently introduced into the Prussian army, having adapted it to the needle-gun." The inventors of the projectile for the Chassepot rifle in France, and of that for the converted Enfield rifle in England, have not been so cruel as to introduce detonating powder in their bullets; but "by a very simple contrivance", however, they have made them to produce almost equally destructive results. "This consists merely in boring into this bullet a cylindrical cavity extending from the apex for about two-thirds of its length" (a figure is given in the original article to illustrate this); "when in use, the orifice of the cavity is closed by a plug of beeswax or boxwood. When such a bullet strikes an object presenting considerable resistance, the shock is communicated to the column of air in the interior, and is immediately distributed in a direction outwards to the walls of the cavity, producing the most astonishing effects upon the form of the bullet. The effects, moreover, upon the internal organs are almost as formidable as those produced by the exploding shell, though not complicated by the escape of large volumes of gas. No wonder, as the writer suggests, the prospects of success in the treatment of such injuries do not appear very promising.

To calm the apprehensions which the article in question may have raised in some minds, nothing more is required than the mention of the following facts. The Chassepot rifle ball is a *solid* ball, without cylindrical cavity, plug, or anything of the kind. As the bore of the Chassepot rifle is only a very small fraction more than four-tenths of an inch, it would be difficult to provide in the bullet a cavity for a column of air to produce the supposed results named above. The Boxer bullet has a cylindrical cavity in the first instance; but, before being made up in the cartridge, this cavity no longer exists; it is completely closed—not merely the orifice, but the whole of the hollow—by a long plug of wood. If any one chooses to consult the last number of the *Journal of the Royal United Service Institution*, he will find full explanation of the purposes which this plug is designed to serve. Lastly, although some experiments by Herr von Dreyse on firing exploding shell-bullets from the needle-gun rifle have been made public, there never has been the slightest intention of arming the Prussian infantry with such a missile. It is sufficiently obvious that, for many reasons, detonating shell-bullets would be most objectionable projectiles for general use in military service.

I am, etc., T. L.

P.S. There is no foundation for the supposed introduction of an explosive bullet to be the projectile for the weapons in the hands of the Prussian troops. Between ten and twelve weeks ago, a son of Herr von Dreyse, the inventor of the needle-gun, brought to the Prussian School of Musketry at Spandau a newly invented form of explosive bullet; but, excepting for certain special purposes, such as the explosion of powder-carts, it did not present any features of probable utility. No one is likely to entertain the idea of introducing such a bullet for common use in the army.

THE HYPODERMIC USE OF STRYCHNINE AND OF MORPHIA.

SIR,—Within the last few years, there have been recorded three or four cases, sufficiently authenticated, it appears (by Frémineau, Sämann and others), of complete amaurosis, with entirely negative ophthalmoscopic evidence, in which the subcutaneous injection of strychnine has proved of sovereign advantage in restoring the sight of the patients, after varying intervals of total extinction, and after unavailing trials of other methods.

As regards the hypodermic administration of morphia, in your valuable abstract of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society's Committee, no reference is made to the important caution of injecting the drug slowly and gradually, as the only means so far available to forestall the alarming symptoms of danger which in some cases have been found immediately to follow the rapid entrance of the solution in the cellular tissue. There is, however, perhaps the more need of attention being directed to this point, as, in the abstract, the necessity is expressly and very properly too—insisted upon, that "the needle should be passed suddenly through . . . in order that the cellular tissue may be reached as shortly as possible."

I am, etc.,

Manchester, November 1867.

A. SAMELSON.