

CORRESPONDENCE.

SKIN-GRAFTING.

SIR,—On reading Dr. Page's article "On the True Nature of Skin-Grafting", and the remarks lately made on several successful cases, I cannot find that those advocating the operation do so under the hope that such complicated physiological changes shall take place as would change an ordinary cicatrix into so much normal skin.

I think Dr. Page's case shows us how much we may hope for in the process of skin-grafting. The ulcer, after appropriate treatment, aided by the inherent power of the surrounding tissues to contract and thus help cicatrization—but also by the power of contraction residing in the granulations of the ulcer—is nearly healed. But a time comes when it becomes no smaller; the surrounding tissues have contracted to their utmost; the granulations produce, or act as, pabulum for the formation of pus-cells; and the ulcer, to all intents and purposes, is incurable: and many must confess that they have often in such cases unwillingly been forced to the same conclusion. But the pieces of skin transplanted are placed where there is a large blood-supply, and are thus placed in the most favourable circumstances for taking root, which is soon exemplified by the action that springs up around them. This seems to be the process of simple cell-formation going on from each as a centre for a limited distance around; hence the benefit of having several of these centres, so as by increasing the points of healing the ulcer is speedily coated over. This, I think, is all the good we can expect from this method of treatment; and experience teaches us that cicatrices, even under the most favourable circumstances, never acquire the complete functions of true skin; and I doubt if those who have been loudest in its praise even dared to hope that from each of the minute grafts should spring a covering of tissues having all the complicated structure of the skin itself, of the subjacent structures, and of the glands and appendages present in the minutest portion of skin, and on which its functions depend. Indeed, we have only to consider that we are dealing with a new product, which is of the simplest formation of low vitality, to feel pleased at the results arising from it, instead of longing after what I am afraid will never come. If skin-grafting be no great stride in surgery, it is just one of those small helps that give fresh courage and hope to the anxious but baffled practitioner. It will help us to treat successfully many cases occurring in patients who often have, though very unable to afford it, been early laid aside from work; viz., among our labouring population.

I hope yet to hear that Mr. Steele has successfully transplanted a piece sufficiently large that may not only considerably forward the healing process, but also, by retaining its elasticity, give a greater chance to the cure being permanent.

I am, etc.
J. MITCHELL WILSON, M.B.

Chatteris, Cambridgeshire, 20th December.

INVENTIONS, &c.,

IN

MEDICINE, SURGERY, DIETETICS, AND
THE ALLIED SCIENCES.

CHALYBEATE BISCUITS.

WE have received a specimen of these biscuits from Messrs. Spiking and Co., the manufacturers. They are said to possess all the invigorating and alterative properties of the most celebrated mineral waters. Certainly, the idea of administering in this form a medicine that is far from agreeable, must be regarded as having the merit of novelty, and to be taking a chalybeate when supposing one is eating gingerbread-nuts, may be described as a triumph of pharmaceutical art. In this case the illusion is complete, and the astringent taste of the iron preparation is very effectually masked. Our analyst reports that one biscuit contains about five grains of iron.

A meeting of the medical officers of the North and South Dublin Unions will be held in the small room, Rotundo, Dublin, on Saturday, December 24th, at 4 P.M., for the purpose of presenting Dr. Maunsell with a testimonial, in appreciation of his services in the cause of the Poor-law medical officers of Ireland.

THE POOR-LAW MEDICAL SERVICE
OF
GREAT BRITAIN AND IRELAND.

THE COST OF POOR-RELIEF.

SIR,—A severe epidemic of scarlet fever having recently appeared in one of the districts of the Taunton Union, and several children being affected with it, at the Board meeting, a fortnight ago, a letter was read from the medical officer, applying for an ounce of quinine. It was refused, only two of the guardians besides the Chairman supporting the application; the majority holding that, if granted, it would establish a *bad precedent*. Accidentally hearing of this proceeding, I turned to the Annual Reports of the Poor-law Board, and found that in 1852 the acreage of this Union was 7,194, and the population 35,126. Medical relief at that date is put at £544:10; gross relief, £12,466:5, or 7s. 1d. per head of population. In 1869, population had increased to 35,601, or 475 more; medical relief is put at £737, whilst gross relief had expanded to £15,597:8:9, or 8s. 9d. per head; the average for England and Wales being 7s. 0½d.

These figures, standing alone, would perhaps prove little as to the ultimate relation between imperfectly cared for sickness and the growth of pauperism. I have, therefore, extracted the statistics of the Kilkenny Union for the year 1869 from the Irish Commissioners' Report, and with this result. The acreage is 110,943, or 40,000 more; the population, 35,499, or nearly the same; the cost of medical relief, £1,238:12:3, or £501 more. From this amount must be subtracted £226:14:7 expended in drugs alone, against nothing for this purpose in Taunton Union; whilst gross relief, inclusive of medical relief, cost £8,371:19:9, or 4s. 5d. per head. Now, although the expenditure on the poor in the Kilkenny Union is considerably in excess of the average 2s. 11½d. of the whole of Ireland, I think I am justified in stating that it contrasts most favourably with the Taunton Union, and that it fully bears out the view expressed by one of the most enlightened of our Poor-law reformers, that the dispensary system, conjoined with liberal medical arrangements and sanitary observances, is the best corrective for the growing pauperism of the country. It is not improbable that the excessive area of this Irish Union might explain its comparatively lower poor-relief expenditure. Whether such be the case or not, it is well to note that in England and Wales we have 664 districts with either a similar or vastly larger amount of acreage.

In conclusion, allow me to state that there are eight medical officers only in the Taunton, and ten in the Kilkenny Union; so that the disparity in acreage is not so great after all.

I am, etc., JOSEPH ROGERS.

Dean Street, December 18th, 1870.

ST. PANCRAS.

THE guardians of St. Pancras have made a redistribution of the medical districts of the parish, increasing the number from six to eight, and have appointed the following medical officers: 1, Mr. Reuben Warn, Highgate Road; 2, Dr. Andrew Browne, Bartholomew Road, N.W.; 3, Mr. Robert A. W. Westley, Camden Road; 4, Dr. J. Thompson, Oakley Square, N.W.; 5, Mr. W. Turnbull, Hampstead Road; 6, Mr. Walter Smith, William Street, Regent's Park; 7, Mr. J. W. Barnes, Gower Street; 8, Mr. T. W. Harding, Gray's Inn Road. Of the present medical officers, four were elected, one withdrew, and one (Mr. Harley) lost his election. There were twenty-nine candidates for the appointments.

MEDICAL NEWS.

ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS OF LONDON.—At an extraordinary meeting of the College, on Monday, December 19th, the following gentlemen, having conformed to the bye-laws and regulations, and passed the required examinations, were granted Licences to practise physic, including therein the practice of medicine, surgery, and midwifery.

Air, Alexander Cummings, M.R.C.S., 33, Lorrimore Square
Evans, Ernest Richard, M.R.C.S., St. Bartholomew's Hospital
Evans, Samuel, M.R.C.S., 23, Manchester Street
Hughes, John Howe, M.R.C.S., Gosforth, Carnforth
Kipling, William, M.R.C.S., Ronaldkirk, Darlington
Pitcock, Francis William, M.R.C.S., Trentham Villas, "The Elms", Ramsgate
Risdon, Alfred, M.R.C.S., 67, Warwick Street
Saunders, William Egerton, M.R.C.S., Guy's Hospital
Vasey, Charles Lyon, M.R.C.S., 5, Cavendish Place