

CORRESPONDENCE.

THE NURSING QUESTION AT GUY'S HOSPITAL.

SIR,—In reference to the paragraph upon this subject in your last week's issue, I beg to state that you are in error in supposing that this is a students' question. The fact is, that the medical and surgical staff are at present unanimously protesting against arrangements introduced by the new matron. They believe that they will have the support of the whole profession in resisting any attempt to make the matron and her nurses the predominant power in the hospital.—I am, sir, yours obediently,

December 3rd, 1879.

A MEMBER OF THE STAFF.

REGISTRATION OF INFECTIOUS DISEASE IN EDINBURGH.

SIR,—Your article on the registration of infectious disease in Edinburgh will commend itself to the profession here. It is astonishing and reprehensible that the Council of the two Colleges, one of whose functions is to examine and report on all Acts of municipal legislation connected with health, have not prevented this section of the Act passing into law. I venture to say that it will be found as unworkable as it is insulting and injudicious. The best that can be wished for it is that (as you so well say) it may "lapse into desuetude" until it is amended. That Dr. Littlejohn has sanctioned it is simply inconceivable. It would be interesting to learn from its author what is the distinction between scarlet fever and scarlatina.

Thanking you for your well-timed remarks,—I am your obedient servant,

Edinburgh, November 29th, 1879.

F.R.C.P.E.

THE DISCOVERY OF THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN TYPHUS AND TYPHOID FEVERS.

SIR,—In a letter headed "The Discovery of the Difference between Typhus and Typhoid Fevers", written by Dr. A. P. Stewart, and published in your JOURNAL of November 15th, that gentleman says he will yield to no one in this country the claim of priority.

It is generally admitted by a large number of medical practitioners in Glasgow, as well as by many others throughout both England and Scotland who are cognisant of the facts in connection with the matter under discussion, that but scanty justice has been done by most writers on the question to the claims of the late Dr. Perry of Glasgow. In proof of this, I will shortly mention one or two facts which, although known to many practitioners here, are not known to the medical profession generally.

In January 1831, fever became so prevalent in Glasgow, that the usual accommodation in the Royal Infirmary was found to be quite insufficient, and an auxiliary fever-hospital was opened under the charge of Dr. Perry, in which, during seven months, 1,145 cases were treated.

In August 1833, Dr. Perry was appointed one of the physicians of the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, and continued to act as such for many years, during which time a very large number of fever patients were under his care, as well as very numerous cases of small-pox. Shortly after his appointment, he appears to have been led to the conclusion that typhus was a disease quite distinct from dothineritis or gastro-enteritis, as typhoid fever at that time was usually termed. He frequently brought forward his new views at the fortnightly meetings of the Glasgow Medical Society, but failed, however, for a considerable time to convert any of the members of that Society.

I find, however, that, at the meeting of the Society of date May 19th, 1835, the following minute was made. "Dr. Perry having, on various occasions, stated to the Medical Society a number of propositions as the result of his observations in typhus fever in the Fever Hospital of Glasgow, which were not considered to be in accordance with the experience of the generality of the members of the Society, and, at the same time, their great importance, if made out, being fully admitted, on the motion of Mr. Watt, seconded by Dr. Macfarlane, it was agreed that five members of the Society should be appointed as a commission to visit the wards of the Fever Hospital along with Dr. Perry, who readily undertook to point out the facts upon which his opinions had been formed. The following gentlemen were appointed a Commission by ballot: Dr. William Weir; Dr. W. Young; Dr. John Pagan (late

Professor of Midwifery in Glasgow University); Dr. John Macfarlane (late Professor of Practice of Medicine in Glasgow University); Mr. George Watt (Convener)."

The following is an excerpt from the minutes of a meeting held on October 6th, 1835.

"Mr. Watt, as convener of the Fever Commission, stated that the members of the Commission had repeatedly visited the Fever Hospital during the recess; but that, although their observations were nearly matured, their report was not in such a state of forwardness as to admit of its being laid before the Society at the present meeting. At the suggestion of the President, it was agreed that the report should be received on any conversation night during the session."

At a meeting on May 17th, 1836, "Mr. Watt, convener of the Committee, read the report of the Fever Commission. In accordance with a recommendation made in the report, a Commission, consisting of the undermentioned gentlemen, was appointed to continue the investigations during the present summer, and report to the Society next session: Drs. Cowan (Physician to the Hospital), Perry, Weir, Pagan, Lawrie, and Messrs. Watt and Ritchie."

I have in my possession a copy of this report, which homologates to a great extent the views at that time entertained by Dr. Perry respecting the distinct nature of typhus fever. The discussions that took place in Glasgow at this date excited a great deal of interest among the members of our profession; and the investigations which took place by the Commission under the guidance of Dr. Perry, as well as the instruction received at that time by Dr. A. P. Stewart, then a student of medicine and resident physician's clerk in the Glasgow Royal Infirmary, did, there is no doubt, direct his attention to a further personal study of fever. The result of this was the admirable paper published by him upwards of four years later, in October 1840, first in Paris, then in Edinburgh.

The only reference which he makes to this, however, in his paper is, when speaking of the eruptions observed: "Dr. Perry of Glasgow was the first whom I heard maintain the complete difference of that opinion".

In the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* (vol. xiv, 1836) will be found the observations upon which the Glasgow Medical Society appointed a Commission to investigate and report. It has been objected that Dr. Perry's observations have not been sufficiently accurate and discriminating to aid much in the settlement of the question of the identity of typhus and typhoid fevers, especially from the fact of his admitting that the intestinal lesions now held to be characteristic of enteric fever may be found in a proportion of the cases of typhus and small-pox.

With our extended knowledge, we know this admission to be incorrect; but it must be borne in mind that those observations were made at a time when none of the profession recognised the distinction between the fevers, and in the face of a considerable amount of opposition. Moreover, anyone who has had much experience in the treatment of fevers knows how difficult it is in cases met with every now and again to decide as to the exact type of fever, when the symptoms are somewhat indefinite.

Even Dr. A. P. Stewart, who claims the credit of the discovery of the difference between typhus and typhoid fevers, states that, out of twenty-two cases of typhus, Peyer's glands were distinctly elevated in two. Although aware that Dr. Perry's opinions upon this particular point became afterwards more in accordance with the facts, I admit that it is unfortunate that he did not publish the result of his subsequent experience.

While this inaccuracy in Dr. Perry's observations (if such it were) has been seized upon and made an argument for refusing to give any credit to the claims I now advocate, the other points of distinction embodied in the observations are altogether ignored. While ready and willing to accord all due praise to Drs. Stewart, Jenner, Murchison, and every other labourer in the field of science who extends our knowledge of fevers and who assists in spreading abroad important truths, I will conclude my remarks by a short quotation from the observations published by my late father, Dr. Perry, in January 1836, and leave the question to every unprejudiced reader to decide for himself who has the best claim to priority. "Inflammation of the membranes of the brain, of the bronchi, and of the mucous membrane of the stomach and intestines, and various febrile affections arising from cold, fatigue, improper ingesta, etc., more particularly disease of the aggregated glands of the ileum and the mucous follicles, often termed dothineritis or gastro-enteritis, have been too often confounded by medical practitioners with typhus fever, though they are characterised by dissimilar symptoms, and require a very different mode of treatment."—I am, yours, etc.,

ROBERT PERRY, M.D.

11, Queen's Terrace, Glasgow, November 18th, 1879.