

not be certified as adulterated. At the present time there is no authorised or accepted standard for the composition of "milk-blended butter" and therefore it is impossible to certify that it is not of the "nature, substance, and quality of the article demanded by the purchaser."

Hospital News.

The annual report of the West Bromwich District Hospital shows an increase in the number of patients during the past year. In spite of this the committee is able to report that the deficiency from last year has been reduced from £411 to £392 and that it has transferred £200 to the endowment fund.—At the quarterly meeting of the general committee of the Walsall and District Hospital an equally satisfactory financial statement was made although the subscriptions show a slight falling off attributable to the bad trade in the town.—Departing from their rule heretofore, the Aston guardians have appointed a lady to the post of junior medical officer to the workhouse infirmary. The successful candidate is Dr. Catherine Frazer who has gained experience at the West Riding Asylum and other institutions.

Health of Birmingham and District.

The medical officer of health has just issued his quarterly report in which he points out that both the birth-rate and the death-rate are the lowest on record, the former being 29 per 1000 and the latter 15·7 per 1000. The very low death-rate is attributed to the comparative absence of epidemic disease. 24 cases of small-pox were notified during the quarter and 374 cases of scarlet fever. Phthisis was accountable for 216 deaths and other forms of tuberculosis for 69 deaths, so that altogether one out of every seven deaths registered during the quarter was due to the infection of tuberculosis. The number of cases of consumption notified under the scheme of voluntary notification was 206 and the medical officer expresses the opinion that in time this number will be considerably increased when medical men and patients appreciate what the health committee is prepared to do in the way of removing infective matter and giving directions for preventing the further spread of the infection. Although no fresh case of small-pox has been notified during the last three weeks, there has been one death from that disease. The small-pox wards of the hospital are now empty. From the annual report of the medical officer of health of Shropshire I gather that the birth-rate during last year was 26·4 per 1000. The birth-rate in the county is consistently below that of the whole of England and Wales, a fact which the medical officer attributes entirely to the difference in age distribution of the population. The death-rate, 15·7 per 1000, shows a slight increase on the three preceding years. This seems to have been partly due to the prevalence of measles and whooping-cough. The latter complaint caused 89 deaths, all of children under five years of age, and there can be no doubt, according to the medical officer, that exclusion of children under five years of age from school would be followed by a diminished mortality from whooping-cough. There was a slight increase in the amount of phthisis throughout the county and it was almost entirely in the urban districts.

Workhouse Accommodation.

The question of accommodating the large number of applicants in the Birmingham workhouse is just now seriously engaging the attention of the board of guardians. It is expected that during the coming winter great demands will be made upon the accommodation. It was so last year, despite the fact that 100 men were boarded out at Risbridge. Several advocate the building of a new workhouse and even go so far as to say that it would actually pay the ratepayers to do so. They point out that the present site, a very valuable one, could be sold or leased and in that way it would bring a good return. Further, there would be a big saving in the management, for at present the buildings of the workhouse are scattered and an enormous staff is rendered necessary. Of the schemes for more temporarily relieving the existing pressure the one which seems to be regarded with most favour is the provision of a home for the "ins and outs." It is claimed that in addition to its affording accommodation for more adults it will release the children from workhouse associations. A scheme for the purchase of a site for such a home was recently brought forward but was defeated largely on the ground that no expert valuation of the site had been obtained. Other premises which are considered

suitable have again been found and it is probable that the question of their purchase will be brought before the guardians at their next meeting. A joint committee of the Newcastle-under-Lyme, Stoke-on-Trent, Wolstanton and Burslem, Stone, Leek, and Congleton unions has lately been engaged in considering what can be done for the unemployed in view of the coming winter. By formal resolution the committee recommends the guardians to adopt a somewhat similar scheme to that of the Salvation Army Farm Colony, Hadleigh, and of the guardians of the Poplar union, Landon, expressing the opinion that it is the wisest solution of this difficult question. A county like Stafford is believed to be particularly suited for a farm colony and it is thought that eventually such a farm would be self-supporting.

A Water Famine in the Potteries.

Newcastle-under-Lyme and some of the Potteries towns were a few days ago suddenly deprived of their water-supply by the bursting of a trunk main from the Hatton reservoir at Trentham. The inconvenience caused was great; rain-water had to be used for drinking and domestic purposes, though many found it impossible even to obtain that. Thousands assembled in the streets with vessels of every description trying to obtain water which was brought into the towns in barrels from country springs and sold at good prices. Happily the main was quickly repaired and the water was turned on again.

August 22nd.

WALES AND WESTERN COUNTIES NOTES.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS.)

Typhoid Fever at Bridgend.

IN a report to the Bridgend (Glamorganshire) urban district council the medical officer of health (Mr. Wyndham Randall) gives a very complete and detailed account of the circumstances attending the recent epidemic of typhoid fever in the town, where there is a population of about 7000 persons. Typhoid fever is rarely absent from Bridgend and in the first quarter of the present year 12 cases occurred. Not a single case, however, was reported during the whole of April or until the middle of May when the epidemic began. Up to the end of July, when the outbreak was practically over, 90 persons were attacked and ten died. The highest number of cases notified weekly were in the second, third, fourth, and fifth weeks of the outbreak, the numbers being respectively 15, 11, 13, and 19. The 90 patients resided in 73 houses. In 12 houses there were two cases, in one three cases, and in one four cases. Mr. Randall discusses at some length the possible causes of the epidemic. There was no evidence of the milk-supplies or of shellfish acting as the medium of infection, and there was no special preponderance of cases among those persons who lived in houses built on gravel or among those who had recently come to reside in the town. There appears to have been an opinion, held locally, that the river gravel which had been used as binding for some of the roads was the initial cause of the epidemic, but as only 16 cases occurred in streets where this substance had been used this hypothesis is negatived. The water-supply of the town is derived from springs which issue from the carboniferous limestone at the base of a hill and on the bank of a mill-race. The water issues from these springs at considerable pressure and is collected in a natural rocky basin, from which it is pumped to the town and filtered through sand before entering the mains. It has been suggested that after a period of dry weather this natural reservoir, or the springs supplying it, may have the general level of their underground water so lowered as to be below the level of an incoming spring tide and specific pollution may arise from the damming back of the river water. It appears, also, that during the first fortnight of May it was found necessary for some purpose or another to turn some of the town sewage directly into the river and the same thing was done later in the month. An examination of the public water-supply taken on June 6th revealed the presence of the bacillus coli communis. Mr. Randall does not seem to think that this sewage pollution of the river could have been entirely responsible for the outbreak from the fact that the first person attacked must have been infected some time before the date in May when the sewage first entered the river. He expressed the opinion,

when the epidemic was at its height, that it might be due to the excessive dryness of the early months of the year indirectly leading in some way to the specific pollution of food, and he now points out that this opinion is strengthened by the cessation of the outbreak after the June rainfall.

Bacteriological Diagnosis in Gloucestershire.

Acting upon the advice of the county medical officer of health (Dr. J. Middleton Martin) the Gloucestershire county council at the beginning of 1904 made arrangements with Professor Stanley Kent of University College, Bristol, to undertake at the cost of the council the bacteriological examination of specimens sent up by medical officers of health in the county. This arrangement allowed of examinations being made in the case of "suspects" or persons suspected of having the disease, of "contacts" or persons who had been in contact with a patient suffering from the disease, and of "controls" or persons at the termination of an attack in order to establish freedom from infection. During the year 1904 there were examined for diphtheria 243 specimens of which 96 gave positive results; 39 for typhoid fever, of which 17 reacted; and 18 for tubercle, in six of which the bacillus was found.

The Medical Officer of Health of Chipping Sodbury.

At the meeting of the Chipping Sodbury rural district council, held on August 8th, it was stated that the Home Office had applied for the report of their medical officer of health. It was decided to inform that authority that the council were still awaiting the sanction of the Local Government Board to their nominee and also to refer them to the last report issued by Dr. F. T. Bond.

Taunton Eye Infirmary.

The Taunton Eye Infirmary has just been sold by auction for the small sum of £165. The institution was founded by the late Dr. Billett in 1854 and work was carried on by voluntary subscriptions and with the assistance of an endowment until quite recently, when it was decided, by the surviving trustee, to place the matter in the hands of the Charity Commissioners. This authority formulated a scheme whereby the property should be sold and the proceeds (after paying necessary expenses), together with the endowment, should be applied for the benefit of the Taunton and Somerset Hospital.

August 21st.

SCOTLAND.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS.)

Juvenile Smoking.

THE subject of "juvenile smoking" has recently been under discussion at meetings of the town council and school board of Glasgow, and signs are not wanting that the verdict may be suppression by the police. Special inquiries conducted by the headmasters and teachers in a few of the largest schools revealed the fact that the pupils with the dullest intellects were the habitual smokers. In one class alone it was found, according to evidence and the boys' own admissions, that there were four lads who simply could not give up the smoking of cigarettes. In connexion with this subject interesting information has been collected by the secretary of the Scottish Anti-Tobacco Society relative to American and European legislation bearing on the use of tobacco in children. Inquiries were also made in our colonies and in Japan. The information has been procured from official sources, chiefly from the embassies of the various countries or British consuls. In the United States of America the use of tobacco is prohibited to children under a certain age and the evils of its use are taught in the State common schools. The total American population in 1901 was 76,358,501 and there were under anti-tobacco prohibition laws 65,898,069. The colonial returns show that in Tasmania the prohibition applies to children of and under 13 years, and in Prince Edward Island, New Brunswick, North-West Territory, British Columbia, and Cape Town the age is 16 years and under. Recently legislation has been adopted in the Channel Islands and the Isle of Man making the age 14 years and under. In answer to a letter making inquiries, Viscount Hayashi, the Japanese Ambassador, states that in Japan persons under 20 years are prohibited from smoking, and that if the parents or guardians of a youth permit him to smoke they are fined and the tobacco dealers who sell smoking appliances or tobacco to youths are fined.

H.M. Consul at Constantinople, Mr. C. A. Ayres, writes that in Turkey there is no law prohibiting the use of tobacco by youths under a certain age. In Norway the law enables municipal authorities, if they wish, to pass by-laws forbidding the sale of tobacco to children under 15 years, but H.M. Consul at Christiania writes that he knows of no case in Norway where the local authorities have passed such by-laws. In Belgium there are no regulations of any kind, State or otherwise, prohibiting youths from smoking or in any way limiting the age. In Austria boys attending the lower classes in all schools, civil and military, are prohibited, but there are no laws to enforce that prohibition, merely disciplinary regulations. In Germany rules are laid down in the chief military college restricting smoking by under officers, while cadets are not allowed to smoke at all. In France no police regulations exist interdicting children from smoking; and in Spain, while there is an absence of restrictions, smoking is not much practised among the lower classes by youths under 15 years. In Russia the pupils of public schools are not allowed to smoke in the school premises or in the streets and public places, and smoking is forbidden to the pupils of all military schools while the pupils are still of tender age. With regard to Italy, the British Consul at Rome states that tobacco is a State monopoly; that in naval and military colleges smoking is allowed in recreation hours, the pipe, however, being prohibited; that smoking is not allowed in schools, but that there are no regulations for universities and seminaries. In Portugal smoking is a punishable offence on board the training ships for naval petty officers, as well as in the case of military cadets of tender age. Cigarette smoking, however, is almost universal in Portugal with all ages and classes.

A Novel Claim.

It occasionally occurs that a claim for compensation is made by a patient in a case of asserted malpraxis when our sympathy with the medical man does not prevent us from understanding the methods of reasoning which have led the patient to believe in the justice of his claim. But a claim which has just been made in all seriousness against the Blairgowrie town council is absolutely unrivalled for its lack of logical basis. The claimant was formerly a public official in Blairgowrie and he demands from the town council £2320, being at the rate of £80 per annum since 1876, in consequence of blindness alleged to be due to the treatment of a medical gentleman, now deceased, who was at that time chief magistrate of the burgh.

August 22nd.

IRELAND.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENTS.)

Richmond District Asylum.

AT the monthly meeting of the joint committee of management of the Richmond District Asylum held on August 17th a report was read from the visiting committee of the Portrane institution dealing with the possibility of a water famine. The report stated that the situation with regard to the water-supply to Portrane Asylum had become serious. Alderman M'Carthy, the chairman, added, however, that the present crisis would be only a temporary one and could never occur again, as long before next summer they would have the main and the new reservoir in full operation with a storage of twenty million gallons. Dr. J. O'C. Donelan said that they were pretty safe so far as the general supply for this season was concerned. The months of September and October have always been full of peril, but instructions have now been issued for the strictest supervision in order to economise so far as possible the present available supply.

Medical Officer to the Rathdown Union.

At the last meeting of the guardians of the Rathdown union Dr. D. J. Roantree of Sligo was elected by a large majority.

Infantile Mortality in Belfast.

Dr. C. J. Clibborn, medical inspector of the Local Government Board, attended at a meeting of the Belfast public health committee on August 17th and suggested the desirability of issuing instructions regarding the feeding of infants owing to the high death-rate from a preventable disease—diarrhoea. The necessary instructions were given to the medical superintendent officer of health to do this and steps have also been taken to obtain information from