

disease which by consent of the majority of those medical men of all countries who are best qualified to pronounce an opinion is of the greatest value in the treatment of that disease. Yet of this disease the children of the poor are still allowed to die in their hundreds annually in this wealthy city of London, largely for want of the remedy. Why this should be is worthy of the most careful inquiry. Dr. Cobbett is to be thanked for drawing attention to the fact.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Homerton, Dec. 4th, 1898. E. W. GOODALL.

AN ENTERPRISING AGENT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have sent a copy of a printed letter to each of the practitioners here and am sending one now to each at Tewkesbury, Upton-on-Severn, Bromyard, Ledbury, and Kempsey, which contains the following passages:—

Two practitioners here have informed me that the following offer has been made to them by a man representing himself as an agent of an insurance office. In return for placing the practitioner's name on a card as medical officer the agent would use his influence to obtain patients for such medical officer, offering 1*d.* per week for each male or female adult, and $\frac{1}{2}$ *d.* for each child, without any wage limit or other restriction. This offer has been absolutely declined. I send this circular to you that you may learn what has been done and confidently suggest that no self-respecting member of our profession would accept such terms.

Had the terms offered been accepted it would have followed that the practices of neighbouring practitioners would have been exploited for the good of the medical officer. I hope you will be able to expose such a nefarious scheme in the pages of THE LANCET.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
St. Michael's, Malvern, Dec. 6th, 1898. STANLEY HAYNES.

* * We do not know that further exposure is required from us. Readers of THE LANCET know that this is a method of tactics which has been adopted by certain medical aid associations. We commend Dr. Haynes's prompt action. After receiving the circular letter no medical practitioner in the neighbourhood can accept the enterprising agent's proposals without knowing that he is defying the opinion of his professional brethren.—ED. L.

BRITISH MEDICAL BENEVOLENT FUND.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I shall be much obliged if you will kindly insert this appeal in your columns. For many years I have received and distributed articles of clothing for men, women, and children and am now practically without. I should be glad to have anything that can be spared, such as hats, jackets, dresses, or underclothing for women, or blankets, boots and shoes, old furs, overcoats, or anything, in fact, that has some wear in it and likely to be useful.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

16, Upper Berkeley-street, W., Dec. 3rd, 1898. EDWARD EAST.

"THE CONSCIENTIOUS OBJECTOR."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I do not agree with Dr. Woodward's remarks on vaccination certificates in THE LANCET of Dec. 3rd.

Though strongly opposed myself to this new Act—one of the most mischievous, I think, which the present Government has passed—still I do not consider it is right for our profession to suggest to magistrates a series of questions which will make it even more difficult than it is now for conscientious applicants to obtain their certificates.

The very fact of many such applicants being so often willing to lose half a day's work plus the fee for certificate when they could have their children vaccinated entirely free of any expense should tend, I think, to make one believe in the earnestness of their convictions and so shield them from being unnecessarily heckled. Much as I should rejoice to see this Act repealed, yet so long as it is in force magistrates have only to administer the law (which was evidently meant to bear a liberal construction) without allowing their private opinions in any way to bias their judgments to the detriment of the petitioner. I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Dec. 3rd, 1898. J.P., F R.C.P.

AN ACADEMIC GOWN FOR THE MEMBERS OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I much regret that through the lateness of the hour my somewhat hurried sentences prevented clearness of expression and that you failed to grasp my reasons for the utility of a distinctive academic garment for the operating surgeon. I certainly did not say or do I think that a "flowing robe" would be desirable *per contra*; I said "not in the flowing gown of the learned Roman nor exactly in the surplice of the clergyman," but I thought some suitable white washable garb for the operating surgeon was both desirable and *needful* and would be a great improvement to the somewhat gruesome appearance of many of our operating surgeons in their private practice. I have seen very hideous coverings worn by operating surgeons and the "mackintosh apron" you speak of is quite the exception. One surgeon I know used to wear his old worn-out dressing-gown for hospital operations. A proper recognised operating costume would, too, be not only cleanly but of hygienic value. For State occasions some different and more scholastic gown would be appropriate, I opine, for I believe I have read of the toga prætexta with its purple border, the toga virilis, the toga picta of the classic Roman, sometimes embroidered with gold, and I think there was nothing unseemly in my suggestion that the Fellow should have a purple hem or some other distinction from the ordinary Member denoting his special rank. Better thus than that the line of demarcation should still further be widened and that the Fellow should be given collegiate dress to the exclusion of the more numerous and scarcely less worthy and intelligent Members.

The time will doubtless come when every physician or surgeon will as a matter of routine don his gown and his academic sash will be on his table when in his consulting-room. The utility of this will be even to you, Sirs, probably obvious, although you may not have felt, as I have felt, the inconvenience or experienced the unfriendly gaze of your patient who has consulted you when you have been clad in boating or cricket costume, to saying nothing of the hunting field or the familiar suit of the cyclist or even of our plain evening dress. These frivolities are not *contra bonos mores* or against professional skill and diligence; yet who has not at times felt he would have been glad to have hastily covered these signs of avoiding or trying to avoid dull care or gloomy thoughts by hastily donning the academic robe and assuming at once the naturally thoughtful expression and sagacious countenance of the successful and friendly medico which will so fittingly become the scholarly rôle of your future surgeon?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
THE SECONDER OF THE RESOLUTION FOR THE
ACADEMIC GOWN OF THE M.R.C.S.

Dec. 5th, 1898.

THE SICK AND WOUNDED AT OMDURMAN.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—As the medical officer in charge of one of the barges which left Omdurman on the morning of Sept. 4th and on which the wounded received attention from the 2nd, will you allow me to answer the letter of Major-General Russell which appears in the *Times* of to-day, and I will take the statements he puts forward *seriatim*. Firstly, the wounded were not packed like sardines but had ample space, the mere fact that the angarebes or native beds on which they were lying measured in some instances more than 3 ft. across making it an impossibility to accommodate more than a limited number on the deck. Secondly, native beds were at hand, and were in excess of the requirements, and were used in every case on my barge where I considered them necessary. Thirdly, the operations performed by myself and my junior officer (amounting in all to 12) whilst on the way down the river were performed on a special operating-table which I had with my field hospital during the entire march and subsequent action, and which was thought by us to be of so good a pattern that it was used subsequently for every operation that was performed at the Abadia Hospital. Fourthly, my operating space on the barge was in the stern and it was carefully screened off and enclosed on both sides