

ALLEGED EXEMPTION OF JEWS FROM CHOLERA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the number of THE LANCET for December 30th is a letter from Mr. Tucker in relation to the exemption of Jews from cholera. The first step in this inquiry is to ascertain whether the Jews really did enjoy exemption from cholera; and, as far as my own experience extends, they have not enjoyed any such immunity. In the year 1849, when the cholera was prevalent in North Shields, a family of Jews, residing in Reed-street, took the disease, and, out of nine individuals, seven died—a rate of mortality which I never heard of being equalled in any family. I have also vague recollections of others amongst the Jews falling victims to the disease, both in that year and in 1832, on which occasions I was President of the Board of Health; but if Mr. Tucker or any other gentleman should wish for more accurate information on this subject, it may easily be obtained by applying to John Mayson, Esq., the present Mayor of Tynemouth, in whose possession the books of the Board of Health are lodged.

The next step in the inquiry is, *supposing* the exemption of the Jews to be admitted, whether the daily use of olive oil as an article of food can act as a prophylactic; and, in this case, I should decidedly say not, as it is well known that in the south of Europe, where olive oil forms a very important part of the food of all classes of the community, the cholera was more than usually fatal.

The next inquiry is regarding the use of vinegar and lemon-juice, and this is very soon answered. All emigrant ships are liberally supplied with both of these articles of diet, and yet we see how fearfully these vessels are visited by this disease.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Newcastle-upon-Tyne,
Jan. 1855.

EDWARD GREENHOW, M.D.,
F.R.C.P. Edin.

SURGEONS AND ASSISTANT-SURGEONS OF MILITIA REGIMENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Government is making an attempt to force upon us the gratuitous performance of those extra duties for which remuneration has been made from time immemorial. The recruiting-sergeants of the Grenadier guards have had orders from the Horse Guards not to give the usual fee for examination of recruits enlisting from the militia into the line.

No class of her Majesty's subjects has worked more zealously and willingly for the efficiency of the army (as far as the narrow circle of our duties permitted) than ourselves, and the fees of the surgeons, for the "passing" 100,000 men (each man eventually costing more than £100) would be found to be almost nominal. At the first enrolment we frequently travelled from forty to fifty miles per day (from six in the morning till six at night), and examined from thirty to sixty men—certainly an offensive if not almost a degrading duty—for the sum of 11s. (from 2*l.* to 3*l.* per man), our locomotive expenses being barely covered, and an insufficient allowance made for refreshments on the road. The *present* duties occupy myself, an assistant-surgeon, and a dispenser, each four hours a day. The arrangements are incomplete and inconvenient, and a large proportion of the men are invalided; and is this the time, and these the circumstances, when we are to have extra work forced upon us?

We are in a different position to that of surgeons of the line: they have a permanent appointment and pay; ours only exists from day to day, and we cannot neglect our present means of subsistence—that is, the private practice of our profession, in which we should be seriously damaged if our time were occupied in performing any kind of extra service that it might suit the purpose of Government to impose on us; and having served the turn required, we should be dismissed and stranded, in vain endeavouring to conciliate our neglected patients. If the Government *permanently retained us* in any way as district surgeons, on the staff or in regiments, they would then have a legitimate claim on our services.

I call on gentlemen, then, to decline to do extra work without the *hitherto* invariable remuneration. I doubt whether Government has the power to enforce such duties on militia surgeons, and certainly any obligation on us to perform them cannot even be most distantly inferred from any reading of "Militia Acts" or "Regulations."

We are not agitators, and least of all would we for a moment, even in our humble capacity, oppose the Government, or fail

in our duty to our country: we have amply proved our readiness to promote the welfare of the service, and, in some instances, even where the Government has turned a deaf ear to reasonable suggestions for the benefit and comfort of the men.

Jan. 1855.

AN OLD SURGEON OF MILITIA.

MILITIA MEDICAL OFFICERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A medical contemporary recently published an unvarnished statement of the wrongs inflicted upon this branch of the service by the present Government, communicated by a sufferer, and prefaced it by an observation that the Editor dissented from some of the statements, which he promised to controvert in his next number. Being a fellow-sufferer, and knowing those statements to be true, I had some curiosity to see how he would execute the somewhat difficult task of proving black to be white. That he had failed would not have surprised me; but that he has attempted only by repeating all the statements of his correspondent, (except the crowning grievance entirely evaded,) without one solitary word to negative them, is more than could have been expected from a journalist, whose readers are supposed to be of the educated class. The correspondent complained that militia surgeons were compelled to reside at head quarters, to inspect volunteers there whenever required, for a less sum than is awarded to private practitioners, and to accompany their adjutants on tours of inspection, often extending over many consecutive days, without any retaining allowance for those duties which curtailed their freedom to gain a livelihood by private practice, and that these requirements are contrary to all precedent in militia, or any other service. The Editor of the journal in question, by way of contradicting them, reiterates these statements as his own version of the exactions, and instead of standing by the order which supplies his bread, has the hardihood to assert that men of good practice should not hold militia surgeoncies. "But the militia presents eligible occupation to the young surgeon for a few years at the commencement of his career; he sees more of general society than he otherwise probably would!" &c. I envy not the scribe that could have penned such a sentence, nor the War Secretary that has such a tool for his advocate. From what class do his young surgeons come, that they are inadmissible into the best society, except through a militia appointment? Are they the old loblolliboys from the pounding shops on the other side of the Tweed, that they are only fit for the cockpit? Or is it to be tolerated that a regiment, 1200 strong, is to be handed over to the raw inexperience of a youth, not ready to enter upon his career, and unused to the society of gentlemen? Are there no peculiarities in military practice that render experience not only politic, but essential to the well-being and efficiency of regiments? Will Mr. War Secretary, in his place in Parliament, father the ungenerous and disreputable crudities of our contemporary?—or will he not rather despise the advocate who has not good feeling enough to stand by his order, and claim bare justice for the profession to which he belongs? But admitting the new idea, that experienced men ought not to hold militia surgeoncies, it must not be forgotten that many have held those appointments for twenty or thirty years, have made sacrifices, and formed habits in full faith that a return to former regiments would equitably and certainly be accompanied by a return to former retaining allowances. Must they turn out to make room for young surgeons not yet prepared to enter upon their career, and who want the passport of a militia appointment to introduce them to society to which they would not otherwise be admissible? Is it wise that those officers should be changed every "few years," when they have just acquired the peculiarities of practice and the minutiae of regimental duties?—or is it fair, is it honest, that many surgeons and assistant-surgeons should be deluded into making arrangements by partnerships, or otherwise, and going to Ireland, or into garrison on permanent duty, in full faith of the treatment their predecessors experienced, and then be met by a declaration, that "nothing in this Act contained shall be construed to entitle any surgeon, assistant-surgeon, &c., now or hereafter serving in any regiment, battalion, or corps of militia now or hereafter to be embodied, to any allowance on the disembodiment of such regiment," &c. What has the medical profession done that it should receive treatment not applied to any other officer under the crown—viz., to charge him with liabilities that restrain his freedom of action in his calling, and give him no remuneration for such restraint? I will not pretend to divine where the fault is, but fault there must be somewhere. Are our colleges