

guard the public, and be acceptable to the general practitioner."

Of these "carefully-considered alterations" we heard nothing either at the preliminary committee meetings or at the meeting itself. And how can this statement be made consistent with this society's delegates (including Dr. Sturges) having composed and signed the following, which is an extract from a letter which accompanied the invitation to the meeting?

It is the opinion of the large majority of medical men, and particularly of general practitioners, who see most and know most of the class of work the Midwives Bill is intended to legislate for, that it is a measure likely to effect incalculable harm. Even if it provided, as it does not, for restricting to natural cases of labour only the legalised attendance of midwives, the harm would not be guarded against, for a natural case of labour requires complete scientific knowledge to diagnose, and may become urgent and dangerous at any time between its commencement and completion. Since the study of midwifery has been changed, chiefly owing to the labours of the late Sir James Simpson and the Edinburgh School from a despised art to an honoured science, the saving of life and suffering has been immense (as statistics will show), and the genus Mrs. Gamp, so powerfully exposed by Charles Dickens, has been disappearing by the ordinary process of evolution. That being so, the evil which we all recognise to exist seemed to be gradually curing itself, but the effect of this legislation, we fear, will be to revive it in a more dangerous form than ever existed before.

The Medical Acts, which were drafted in the interests of the public, wisely ordained that medical men, who are licensed to practise in any one branch of medicine or surgery (including midwifery), must show a thorough knowledge in all. Going absolutely against this principle, the Midwives Bill will give a State-guaranteed qualification to women who can at most possess the little knowledge that is dangerous, which will deceive the public into thinking that in employing a midwife they are employing a properly qualified person to whom they are justified in entrusting their lives. We feel very strongly that this Bill has not been properly considered, or the effect it will have sufficiently weighed; and although we wish all who follow the calling of nurse to the sick could be properly trained, and even certificated by law, we are convinced that no measure which provides for the attendance of lying-in women without proper medical supervision can fail to be productive of a largely increased death-rate among women and infants, and also do much to encourage criminal practices.

This is the rational and consistent position which we still hold, and the one from which they have apparently been washed back by the dogmatic ground-swell of medico-political orthodoxy.

Sydenham, June 17th.

F. LORIMER HART.

#### MEDICAL DUELS.

SIR,—In your note on "Medical Duels," in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of June 16th, you refer to the duel between Dr. Mead and Dr. Woodward, the Gresham Professor, and quote Woodward's celebrated retort, which has appeared in very numerous versions. Perhaps it may interest your readers to see Woodward's own account of the duel, and his own version of the retort as given in the *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer* for June 20th, 1719, a copy of which is in the library of this College.—I am, etc.,

J. F. PAYNE.

College of Physicians, London, S.W., June 18th.

*Dr. Woodward's Relation of the Duel between him and Dr. Mead.*

On the 10th instant, about eight in the evening, passing on foot, without a Servant, by the Royal Exchange, I there saw Dr. Mead's chariot, with him in it, and heard him bid his Footman open the Door. But Dr. Mead made no sign to speak with me, nor did I in the least suspect that he would follow me. I walked so gently that, had he intended to have come up with me he might have done that in less than twenty Paces. When I came to the College Gate, which stood wide open, just as I turned to enter it, I received a Blow, grazing on the Side of my Head (which was then uncovered) and lighting on my shoulder. As soon as I felt the Blow I looked back and saw Dr. Mead who made a second Blow at me, and said I had abused him. I told him that was false, stepped back, and drew my sword at the instant; but offered to make no pass at him till he had drawn, in doing which he was very slow. At the Moment that I saw he was ready, I made a pass at him; upon which he retreated back about four foot. I immediately made a second, and he retired as before. I still pressed on, making two or three more passes; he constantly retiring, and keeping out of the reach of my Sword; nor did he ever attempt to make so much as one single pass at me. I had by this time drove him from the street quite through the Gateway, almost to the middle of the College Yard; when, making another pass, my right Foot was stopped by some Accident, so that I fell down flat on my Breast. In an Instant I felt Dr. Mead, with his whole weight upon me. 'Twas then easy for him to wrest my Sword of my Hand, as he did; and after that gave me very abusive Language, and bid me ask my Life. I told him I scorned to ask it of One who, through this whole Affair, had acted so like a Coward and a Scoundrel; and at the same Time, endeavoured to lay hold of his sword, but could not reach it. He again bid me ask my Life. I replied, as before, I scorned to do that; adding Terms of Reproach suitable to his Behaviour. By this time, some persons coming in, interposed and parted us. As I was getting up, I heard Dr. Mead amidst a Crowd of People, now got together, exclaiming loudly against me for refusing to ask my Life. I told him, in answer, he had shown himself a Coward, and 'twas owing wholly to chance, and not to any act of his, that I happened to be in his power. I added, that had

he been to have given me any of his Physick, I would rather, than take it, have asked my Life of him; but for his Sword, it was very harmless; and I was far from being in the least Apprehension of it.

Gresham College, June 13, 1719.

J. WOODWARD.

(From the *Weekly Journal or British Gazetteer*, Saturday, June 20th, 1719.)

#### INOCULATION FOR TYPHOID FEVER.

SIR,—It is satisfactory to find so capable an observer as Dr. Washbourne giving his attention to this important matter. In the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of June 16th, p. 1456, he says, regarding inoculation, "So far as I can judge, it does not have a marked effect in mitigating the attack. Two of our patients who died of enteric had been inoculated." That is really what might be expected; for the foundation of the treatment is a hypothesis which is inconsistent with fact. The idea is that, as one attack of typhoid gives immunity from a second, temporary if not lasting immunity might be acquired by inoculation of an attenuated dose of the poison. But one attack of typhoid does not give immunity from a second. Second attacks of typhoid are as common as, by the ordinary doctrine of chances, they ought to be; more common, for instance, than second attacks of pneumonia, in about the same proportion that first attacks are more common. If one attack of the fully developed disease does not give immunity, inoculation with an attenuated dose of the poison can scarcely be expected to do so.

The idea being started it was right that it should be put to the proof. But do not let men be inoculated with the idea that they are thereby made proof against typhoid; for this false sense of security may tend to make them careless. It is moreover an unnecessary addition to the grief of those mourning the death of a son from typhoid to feel that if he had been inoculated he might have been saved. In one or two instances of late I have been able to take this edge off a parent's sorrow by stating my honest conviction that it would have made no difference. The explanation that one attack of the fully developed disease does not give immunity from a second is even to the lay mind an adequate reason why the slight ailment which inoculation causes should not do so.—I am, etc.,

Cadogan Place, June 16th.

T. J. MACLAGAN, M.D.

#### NON-POISONOUS (SO-CALLED) ANTISEPTICS.

SIR,—I have read Dr. Walton's letter concerning a case of poisoning by "salifer" (silico-fluoride) with much interest but I do not think the case should prejudice the use of this drug in surgery. The symptoms described are as one would expect—those of extreme irritation of the mucous membrane, laryngeal and intestinal, with death from exhaustion. There are many drugs, properly styled non-poisonous, which would produce similar symptoms in a 2-year-old child if given in a dose of 80 grs. The fact that so large a dose had no direct effect on the heart or nervous system of this young child is a proof to me of the non-toxic nature of the drug. Solid salifer is extremely irritating to the tissues, and it is about as suitable for internal administration as powdered glass, but in a saturated solution, more or less diluted, I believe it to be the safest of antiseptics. I have frequently used it in uterine cases with the best results, and it is my favourite solution for the irrigation of the middle ear.—I am, etc.,

Coventry, June 20th.

F. FAULDER WHITE.

#### THE "WELL QUALIFIED" UNQUALIFIED ASSISTANT.

SIR,—I am certain that a vast majority of the profession will feel not only pleased but indebted to Dr. Brown, of Bacup, for his letter which appeared in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of June 16th.

The employment of nurses possessing no legal qualification (pharmaceutical or medical) for the purpose of dispensing is, to say the least, a gross abuse of the public confidence, and to employ them to assist in dressings, midwifery, or even occasional taking of temperature is sure to meet with the strong condemnation of the General Medical Council.—I am, etc.,

Earlstown, June 16th.

WALTER LATHAM, L.R.C.P. Edin.

#### THE MIDWIVES BILL.

SIR,—In last week's issue of the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL I pointed out that by Sections VIII and IX of the present Bill, the "local supervising authorities" could be composed of