

Correspondence.

I am glad to be able to address a Medical Journal of our own, wherein not only matters appertaining to medicine in general, but also events peculiarly of interest to the profession of the Maritime Provinces will be ventilated. May success attend your venture, and may it bring the members of the medical profession all over the province into closer and more friendly relations; and also conduce to that proper *esprit du corps* so ardently to be desired, but alas, not always attained, among the followers of the healing art in all our towns, villages and country districts. Preventive medicine notably requires the most friendly understanding and the most active co-operation of physicians, and is as much superior to the active treatment of disease in the saving of human life as that of the wise statesmanship which prevents wars, is to the highest generalships and the best equipped system of military service, with war in actual progress. This province of medicine which is yet but dimly understood and faintly realized by the public, is nevertheless destined, before long, to take the chief place among the means employed to save and prolong human life, and will, I am sure, form a prominent feature of your journal. To promote this end the first step should be to ascertain how and where we stand in the different localities of our provinces. No concealment should be practised: the mistakes of one locality and the failure or success of its corps of medical men in educating their respective constituencies to a proper sense of the duty of society to itself, will prove a warning or stimulus as the case may be, to your readers in other sections. With this end in view let me give you a birds-eye view of matters sanitary in Charlottetown:—Ratio of deaths per 1,000 of population, 1884, 14.09; 1885, 20.12; 1886, 15.9; 1887, 14.81; mean rate, 16.22. But this high death rate is exceptional, for it will be seen that 1885 far exceeds the average. The explanation is that in that year occurred a very fatal epidemic of small-pox, in the stamping out of which, a great and calamitous mistake was at the beginning made, a mistake, however, not in any way chargeable to the city health officer, Dr. Johnson.

An old and a long unused brick building was almost forcibly taken possession of by a posse of citizens. Into this damp and unsuitable building the patients were crowded, regardless of the warning of experience and science, and the poor victims died, at a rate unparalleled in the history, not only of small-pox epidemics, but even of the worst cholera visitations of modern times. Many of these patients died, however, not of small-pox, but of a contagious Pleuro-Pneumonia. Omitting, therefore, this disastrous and exceptional record of 1885, the other years give a mean ratio of 15.00, bettering slightly the latest records of London, Eng., viz.: 15.09, but much higher than that of Bristol, 11.1, or Brighton, 13.9. It goes without saying that we should beat the record of any old England Town. With our excellent soil as a deodorizer and purifier, our sea breezes and spendid climate, our cheap meats and foods of all kinds, enabling our very poorest classes to enjoy full and plenty,—all tending to produce a robust people. And so we shall when the teachings of sanitary science shall become actual facts to us. Our present records shew that preventable diseases figure far too largely in our death rate. Thus, in 1887 we find that zymotic diseases head the list, and every year the number of deaths of children, from all causes, and particularly from diarrhoeal diseases, is lamentably large. To account for this fact it will be sufficient to say that the slaughter house is still an institution in the very heart of our city; that the pig for the first time within the memory of pig or man, was this summer invited to leave the city during our hot months; that well water invariably bad, but in many instances redolent of human and other excrement, and also containing the contagium of typhoid fever is to the present time the beverage of many of our citizens; that privies were used of all depths, from surface ones to that of discarded and discredited old wells; and that we have no sewerage. The wonder, therefore, is that our death rate is so moderate, and the obvious inference is that with an improvement in all these respects, with an abundance of pure water now happily secured, and with a board of health other than the City Council, elected here as elsewhere, from all conceivable motives but that of public health, to strengthen the hands and carry out the suggestion of the health officer, the death rate of this City can be reduced to at least from 10 to 12 per thousand.

Our Island contingent of physicians as a whole, I am glad to believe, are not only keeping within sight and hearing, but fairly abreast of the tremendous and rapid strides which our noble science has been making within the last few years.

Antisepsis in Surgery and Obstetrics is all but universally the practice. But we occupy the most anomalous position of any body of medical men so far as I know anywhere. We have no medical registration Act, and thus, not only the profession, but what is far more important, the public, have no protection against the quack and the pretender. We ourselves are largely to blame for this, for we have no organization or society through which concerted action is possible. I hope sincerely that your Journal will prove a powerful aid, nay an inspiration, in the remedying of these defects.

I had intended to give you a short history of our two hospitals, but I fear space forbids. However, this and a report of cases successfully treated in them, will form interesting contributions from some of the attending surgeons, for subsequent numbers of your Journal. I again wish you the success which your project, calculated to greatly benefit every practitioner in the Maritime Provinces, so richly deserves.

CHARLOTTETOWN, P. E. I.

To the Editor Maritime Medical News:

SIR,—I congratulate you and the members of our noble profession in the Maritime Provinces, on the commencement of a journal in our interests. Every doctor I have heard speak of it hails it with delight.

There is a little matter which I wish to bring to the notice of the profession. I had wished to bring it up before but shrank from the lay press which, at least in this province, has had a surfeit of medical matters in the last four years.

In July I examined a woman for the Lunatic Asylum. Upon my certificate, and that of another physician, she was received and became a city charge. I sent in my bill to the city and in lieu of payment received an elaborate opinion from the City Recorder. I believe the other physician was treated likewise. His Honor the Recorder says, besides other things: "There is nothing in the law that makes the City of Halifax liable to pay for any medical certificates. The practice pursued by the Government in the case of Pauper Lunatics is to pay for these Certificates and charge the Municipality with them, but there is nothing in the law to warrant them doing so. It may be the party has ample property to pay all expenses. I am of opinion the City is not liable unless they have requested the medical gentlemen to give such certificates, and the Government cannot charge the City with it."

From the above it appears that the Government had been acting in an unwarrantable manner all along, and that now the City of Halifax is either to have certificates provided for nothing, or name the physician who shall supply them. As regards the party having "sufficient property to pay all expenses," if that be the case why does the city pay for maintenance in the Asylum. Or perhaps the Recorder means that she may have sufficient to pay for the certificate only. It seems to me that it is rather a fine point to determine, whether a party has just enough to pay for a medical certificate, and nothing left to bear part of the expense in the Asylum. Then it seems to me that if the City must say who should examine, a good deal of trouble and awkwardness might sometimes arise. A man may become violently insane with suicidal or homicidal tendencies. Instead of the friends or neighbours being allowed to call in the nearest available physician to make out a certificate, a lot of red-tapism must be gone through, and in the meantime the man commits some outrage. Besides, suppose a rather poor family have a physician upon whom they always call, when in need of one. In case any member of the family becomes insane they must set aside the family physician, who knows most about the family, and call in two strangers.

I think the profession should clearly understand the rights of this matter, even if legal advice requires to be taken for that purpose.

When a physician is working for charity he likes to know it at the time.

F. W. GOODWIN.

HALIFAX, Oct. 23rd, '88.