

Correspondence.

The Editor cannot hold himself responsible for any views expressed in this Department.

THE ST. LOUIS CONGRESS ON TUBERCULOSIS.

Open Letter to Mr. Clark Bell, for the American General Public and the Medical Profession.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am extremely distressed to learn from your letter that great dissension has occurred between the Medico-Legal Society, which has organized the Congress, and a great number of the medical profession. As a foreigner, I cannot know the reason, or the reasons, of the discontent of your medical profession. I cannot believe that the circumstance that the Congress was summoned by a Society which is not exclusively a medical one, is the main reason of this discontent. No person doubts that misery is the principal source of tuberculosis, and as it is an historical truth that prevention is better than cure, and as we may be sure that this truth is also prophetic, we must say that prevention of misery is the most efficacious help for tuberculosis. Prevention of social misery is surely not a special task for physicians.

To abolish misery we should raise the conditions of family homes of the poor, to make cleanliness possible and to accustom the poor to it. We ought to protect them from the use of infected bedding and body-linen. We should save the wretched from the injuries of cold and heat, from starvation, from prostitution through misery, from alcoholism through despair, etc.

For these duties we need the collaboration of philanthropists, of the representatives of communities, countries and states. We need money and laws for that purpose. We need a law to be able to separate an infectious phthistic from his family even against his own will. But we are then obliged to compensate the family for the loss of his earnings, if through such loss his relatives are in danger of perishing of misery.

The medical profession could not supply these duties from their own economical means.

I hope to prove at the Congress that the protection of tuberculous individuals, and principally in light cases, must be quite another than that of phthistics, and that we need for the protection of the first class a widely organized patronage. It is principally for phthistics that we need special and hospital-like sana-