

were dressed antiseptically. Some urine escaped from the wound, but caused no appreciable irritation. Three days after the operation urine was passed naturally per urethram, rendering the catheter unnecessary. None appeared subsequently at the wound. The abdominal incision was completely healed in three weeks. The temperature rose slightly after the operation and was never high.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

HERBERT W. G. MACLEOD, M.D., M.C. Edin.,

Surgeon-Captain, late H.M. Bengal Army.

Victoria-square, Clifton, Bristol, May 29th, 1893.

ARMY FIELD HOSPITALS IN WAR.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Your sympathetic article in THE LANCET of the 20th inst. about the Army Medical Service has given much satisfaction. I beg to point out that the deputation which addressed the War Minister seems to me to have omitted some important matter. They made no reference to our utter ignorance of our field hospital equipment and working. These hospitals are packed away in the arsenals, are never mobilised except on the outbreak of war, and we know nothing of their good or bad points. The artillery batteries exist in peace, the engineer companies do the same, and the Army Service Corps simply expand their peace companies when war occurs. We have to begin *ab initio* with strange officers, strange men, strange equipment and strange transport. How can we help but fail? Neither gods nor men can succeed under such conditions. I have myself been hurried into the field and under fire with such scratch organisations, and I can never cease to protest against this "organisation of failure." All classes of society to whom the matter is explained are shocked at this condition of affairs and still we seem paralysed in carrying out the idea of a field hospital as ready for war as a field battery. With such hospitals at Aldershot, Woolwich, Portsmouth, Dublin and the Curragh how efficient we might become. If you can realise this hope for us you will do a real good to our service.

There is another burning point that needs discussion. I mean the increasing, never-ending changing of the Principal Medical Officer in districts in England. Anything to equal it does not exist in the army, and the Principal Medical Officers are practically non-existent. They come and they go, and where can efficiency be? The remainder of the military staff of a district stay for five years certain. Our chiefs are ever on the run to far-away colonies or Indian garrisons, and the home efficiency of the department is in jeopardy. It is monstrous to allow the Netley Principal Medical Officer to change every few months. We can hold no one responsible for the place, we can blame no one, praise no one, and do not know who is chief there, as perpetual change is the rule. The Sandhurst Governor stays seven years, the Woolwich Academy Governor does the same; likewise the Staff College Chief remains seven years. At Netley, where our young men are trained, an unceasing flow and ebb of Principal Medical Officers recur, and we do not know who controls the place or sees into the thoroughness of the teaching and the work. We seem ignorant of the first principle of administration, which is well-defined and localised and means personal responsibility of one man for one place or duty. Indian pay, Indian service and all the rest of it are valueless if the very foundations of our training and administrative teaching are being undermined by change, change, and never-ending change. The Director-General, who seems to be also Inspector-General of Hospitals in England, is busied with a mass of detail in London, but should he not be constantly on the move inspecting the districts? If he would decentralise the overburdened London office and throw on the districts part of the work that overweights the head-quarter offices, then he could see his department and know its working. None of these points were brought to notice by the recent deputation. I beg you will not ignore them. They lie deep down at the foundation of our efficiency, be it as Corps or Department.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

May 23rd, 1893.

N. D. F.

"THE MISTRAL AND THE RIVIERA."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of May 27th the reviewer of Dr. Linn's "Health Resorts of Europe" takes objection to the author's optimistic view of the mistral and as a clenching

argument asks him whether he never heard of the old Provençal "ditty"—

"Le Parlement, le mistral et la Durance
Sont les trois fléaux de la Provence."

But in what this "ditty" applies to the Riviera I am unable to see. Neither Cannes nor Nice formed part of "Provençal Parlement"; even in prehistoric times the Durance could never have damaged the Riviera; and the mistral, although it does occasionally blow on this coast, is not the *fléau* which is connected with Provence. From Oct. 1st, 1892, to May 28th, 1893—i.e., during eight months—we have had five days only during which the mistral has been at all felt. To call this a *fléau* is to use a very big word for a very small thing. Doubtless during that period in the old "Provence" it may have blown for many days and with great violence, but we are, fortunately, separated from the wind-swept region of Provence by several mountain ranges, and it is but comparatively seldom that the mistral reaches the Riviera itself.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Cannes, May 28th, 1893.

H. BLANC, M.D., F.R.C.P.

BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The Health of the City.

THE report of the medical officer of health, Dr. Hill, is elaborate and instructive. It is evidently compiled with much care and the special report as to the large infant mortality is suggestive. There is no doubt that the high situation of Birmingham and the amount of breathing space it possesses contribute largely to the low death-rate in comparison with other great towns. It was 20 per 1000 in 1892, which, it must be admitted was very moderate. When the infant mortality of this town is reviewed it will be seen that Birmingham shares the discredit attaching to the majority of large towns in respect of the large proportion of deaths at this early age. 169 per 1000 born is a lamentable ratio. The frequent want of adequate protection and general care, with injudicious feeding, is mainly responsible and still leaves much to be desired. In spite of philanthropic efforts and the attempts to spread an intelligent knowledge on these subjects there is still a huge amount of ignorance and indifference to be overcome before the mortality can be lessened.

Cruelty to Children.

As bearing upon the preceding remarks there has lately been some activity shown by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children in prosecutions directed against parents for neglect of the commonest instincts of humanity. In one instance a man and his wife were sent to gaol for a month for neglecting their children in 1892. This had a good effect on the husband, but the wife was lately charged again with the same offence and was committed to gaol for a period of two months. It is difficult to predict the future of children brought up, or rather allowed to exist, under such unfavourable conditions. The State suffers, whilst the benevolent public take the responsibility of prosecuting the parents and protecting the children.

Prevalence of Small-pox and Scarlet Fever.

The number of cases of small-pox still increases. At present there are 109 cases of small-pox and 236 cases of scarlet fever under treatment in the City Hospital. Medical officers of health in outlying districts are on the alert, and, in spite of all precautions, express their apprehension that there will be a considerable addition as time goes on.

Medical Benevolent Society.

The annual meeting of this Birmingham society was held on the 26th inst. under the presidency of Mr. Garner. The report, which was very satisfactory, showed that the invested funds amount to £11,736, and that there was a balance of £148 at the bank. The number of assistants is fifteen. The society numbers 350 members—a smaller number than there should be in proportion to the profession in the district. Various votes of thanks were passed and Dr. Wyer of Leamington was elected president for the ensuing year.

Singular Stabbing Cases.

The residents of the suburbs have been very much exercised in their minds by the presence at large of a supposed lunatic, whose sudden appearance here has created much alarm and some injury. Pouncing unexpectedly upon passing ladies he