

shop appears will immediately let me know of it, so that arrangements may be made for the distribution of leaflets to counteract its influences.—I am, etc.,

STEPHEN PAGET,
Honorary Secretary, Research Defence Society,
11, Chandos Street, Cavendish Square, London, W.1,
September 8th.

TERRITORIAL MEDICAL OFFICERS' DINNER.

SIR,—As it is not possible to send notices to individual officers I shall be obliged if you will allow me to announce in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL that the dinner of the Territorial Force Medical Officers' Association will take place on Thursday, October 30th, at 7.30 p.m. at the Holborn Restaurant. The charge for tickets (wine not included) is 12s. 6d.

All Territorial officers can attend and bring guests. Application for tickets should be made to me at 37, Russell Square, London, W.C.1.

September 8th.

D. L. HAMILTON, Lieut.-Colonel.

SUDDEN DEATH UNDER AN ANAESTHETIC.

SIR,—I am sorry to say that I have not been so fortunate as Sir R. H. Woods in that I have lost a case under an anaesthetic, and moreover under ether by the open method. Twice previously I had administered an anaesthetic to the child, in each case ether by the open method. At the third operation, which was carried out to complete a radical cure for extroversion of the bladder, the operation being carried out in stages, the child suddenly ceased to breathe, although I had ceased to give her ether and was allowing her to come round, as the surgeon had finished his work. Despite restoratives, artificial breathing, direct insufflation, and heart massage, she never recovered.

At the *post-mortem* examination the findings were consistent with the condition known as status lymphaticus—namely, persistent thymus, fatty changes in the myocardium, and a general overgrowth of the lymphoid tissue; and I may say that I saw the *post-mortem* examination myself, so am satisfied that the findings were not the fevered imaginings of a pathologist anxious to screen the delinquencies of a professional brother. Perhaps some advocate of the virtues of chloroform will now come forward and state that status lymphaticus is also a euphemism for ether poisoning.

Advocates of the substitution of ether for chloroform as a general anaesthetic will not welcome such sweeping and quite unproven statements as those made by Sir R. H. Woods in his letter of August 16th as being likely to help them much in their campaign.—I am, etc.,

H. PINTO LEITE,

Honorary Anaesthetist London Throat Hospital,
National Dental Hospital, Evelina Hospital
for Sick Children, etc.

London, W., Aug. 26th.

MEDICAL DEMOBILIZATION.

SIR,—Is it not time that steps were being taken to release temporary medical officers in Mesopotamia who are now threatened with being kept out there till April, 1920?

Most of them have been in that country at least two years without one day's leave, and the only leave spoken of is leave to India, which they cannot now afford. Compare this with the medical officers in France who had leave every six months at least, also medical officers from France are being demobilized who have less service than the former.

Take the position of those who are married. They have not seen their homes for over two years. Their pay is now barely sufficient to keep themselves and a home in England owing to the rise in value of the rupee, the high cost of living at home, and the fact that the purchasing value of the rupee in Mesopotamia has not altered. Surely the term "national emergency" cannot now hold when peace is signed, and did not mean looking after Indian and Arab coolies who are engaged on (?) military work, as they are now doing. Cannot medical officers from France junior in service, or recent graduates, be called on (as promised) and sent out to replace them? Ought these men not to have preference over young medical officers who have fewer responsibilities and only a few months' more service?—I am, etc.,

September 5th.

A. B.

R.A.M.C. CONTRACTS.

SIR,—The editorial in the JOURNAL of August 2nd, p. 144, referring to the new contract of service in the R.A.M.C. is timely, and fairly adequately expresses the attitude of non-regular officers still serving. Unquestionably the prime factor influencing men who have served against the new contract is a distrust of the War Office, begotten of service under it. It would be well if consultation with the Association as to the terms of service by the army medical authorities preceded the issue of any further contract.

It is doubtful whether any new voluntary contract will be attractive unless:

(a) Clinical ability in the various specialist branches is recognized as a ground for considerable increase in pay over the flat rate of remuneration.

(b) A serious effort is made, by enabling men to serve in their "home" area, to make army service less of a blind alley.

(c) Preferential treatment of regular officers in matters of appointments carrying extra pay, leave, living out, and decorations is abolished.

My personal experience has been that extra duty pay as operating surgeon during 1917 worked out at 1½d. per operation; that I have been away from home for nearly five years; that nine decorations have been awarded to my five commanding officers, while my bosom remains unadorned; and that it is ten months since I had any leave.—I am, etc.,

NEARLY FIVE YEARS OF IT.

. The new terms and conditions announced this week by the War Office are given at page 355.

Obituary.

CHARLES ARTHUR MERCIER, M.D. LOND.,
F.R.C.P., F.R.C.S.

Consulting Physician for Mental Diseases, Charing Cross Hospital;
Past President of the Medico-Psychological Association.

With deep regret we have to record the death at Bourne-mouth, on September 2nd, of Dr. Charles Mercier, whose brilliant intellectual gifts adorned the profession of medicine. For many years past Dr. Mercier's health had been very bad, but his indomitable spirit rose above all physical disabilities. Although for long an invalid his mental powers remained unimpaired, and his wit shone as brightly as ever.

Charles Arthur Mercier was born in 1852. His father, the Rev. L. P. Mercier, was of Huguenot descent; at his death the family was left in straitened circumstances. After a few years at Merchant Taylors' School, Charles Mercier went to sea as a cabin boy, and worked for a time as warehouseman and clerk in the city before beginning the study of medicine at the London Hospital, where he had a brilliant student career. He obtained the M.R.C.S. diploma in 1874, and four years later the F.R.C.S. and the M.B. degree of the University of London. In 1896 he became a Member of the Royal College of Physicians, and in 1904 was elected Fellow. He proceeded to the M.D. degree in the following year, winning the University gold medal for special distinction in mental science. His practical knowledge of insanity began during his tenure of the post of medical officer first to the Bucks County Asylum, near Aylesbury, and later to the City of London Asylum. Dr. Mercier was for many years resident physician to a private asylum near London, and became lecturer on insanity first in the Westminster Hospital Medical School and subsequently at Charing Cross Hospital, to which he was appointed physician for mental diseases. He was for long a member of the Council of the Medico-Psychological Association of Great Britain and Ireland, of which he was sometime president. He was examiner in mental diseases in the University of London, and at the annual meeting of the British Medical Association at Oxford, in 1904, he was president of the Section of Psychiatry. He was a member of the Departmental Committee on the Treatment of Inebriety and contributed largely to the report. He also gave expert evidence before the Royal Commission on the Care and Control of the Feeble-minded, representing the Royal College of Physicians of London.

The legal side of mental disease made a strong appeal to

Dr. Mercier's acute and subtle intellect, and for many years he took a close interest in the work of the Medico-Legal Society. In 1909 the Royal College of Physicians awarded him the quinquennial Swiney Prize, for the best work on jurisprudence, for his book on *Criminal Responsibility in the Insane*, and this honour was again conferred upon him this year in recognition of his work on *Crime and Criminals*. His other published works on lunacy and its legal and social relationships were: *Sanity and Insanity*, *The Nervous System and the Mind*, *Lunacy and Law for Medical Men*, *Psychology Normal and Morbid*, *A Textbook of Insanity* (now in its second edition), *Crime and Insanity*, and *Conduct and its Disorders*; the last a book which has not yet produced its full effect. In 1913 he delivered the FitzPatrick lectures on "Astrology in Medicine," and about the same time appeared his striking essay *A New Logic*. It was written with all his accustomed vigour, but it failed to convince his old enemies the formal logicians. Nor indeed did he expect that it would, though to it and to his writings on conduct he himself probably attached most importance. Two years ago he published *Causation, with a Chapter on Belief*, a piece of most original work, clear and sparkling. In *Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge* he drew an astonishingly able parallel between the evidence for spiritualism and the evidence for witchcraft. One of his last published works was a little book, *Spirit Experiences*, mocking the absurdities of the cult of spiritualism, of which a burlesque review appeared in a recent number of the JOURNAL. Dialectics fascinated him; he was ready to join issue on any and every subject, and with anybody. Sometimes, indeed, "he also argued round about him." In our columns for many years his controversial letters were the delight of countless readers and as often as not the despair of those who crossed swords with him. Occasionally, too, he could be induced to contribute to our editorial columns; but he was a wayward contributor and would not write unless the subject happened to take his fancy. All that he wrote was lucid, trenchant, and precise.

We are indebted to Sir BRYAN DONKIN for the following appreciation:

Dr. Mercier—Psychologist, Physician, Logician.

It would be hard for any one who had the privilege of knowing Dr. Mercier as intimately and as long as I have to write an adequate and just account of his scientific and literary work, and also of his character as a man, within the necessary limits of a weekly journal. But to refuse the opportunity of paying a slight tribute to his memory was impossible, though I feel I must confine myself chiefly to an appreciation of his personality and ability and of the general character of the abundant work he achieved, and dwell only for a moment on the contents of his psychological and other treatises, which will be his main, but not his sole, title to a lasting reputation.

I began to know Mercier from a correspondence that occurred between us in the early eighties on a coincidental similarity of ideas expressed in some articles written by him and myself to different medical publications. Shortly afterwards he was appointed, on the recommendation of Sir James Crichton-Browne, as medical superintendent to a private asylum near London, where he remained for many years until, owing to ill health, he was forced to resign. It was there that the disease (osteitis deformans) set in from which he suffered severely until his death. During this period of nearly forty years he and I maintained a friendship unbroken by many disputations. Unless actually incapacitated by pain or other intercurrent ailments which from time to time confined him to bed, he never ceased working at his professional duties or devoting himself at all spare times to his scientific and literary pursuits. From first to last his mental powers never failed him, and even during the last few years, when he had become well-nigh deaf and blind, in addition to his almost complete incapacity for moving about, his memory, even for recently acquired knowledge, was but little impaired.

He was, as is well known, vigorous and trenchant in controversy, and this caused some who knew him slightly and more who knew him not at all, to look on him as a fighter merely for fighting's sake. There was, perhaps, some little excuse for this misconception. He doubtless enjoyed, more than most men, the actual glory of mental conflict, and, when not otherwise deeply engaged in original work,

he often seized on opportunities to crush what he deemed to be important errors of fact or thought. He certainly did not suffer superficial thinkers gladly. But no rancour or personal animus ever marked his attitude to those with whom he fought, however strong the literary expression of his criticisms might be. In all his publications or speeches controversial or otherwise, he was straight, courageous, clear, and logical, and but rarely allowed himself to be led astray by his exuberant joy of battle, or to write either in attack or defence without due consideration of the subject in hand. There are several men with whom, to my knowledge, he fought strenuously, sometimes on the losing side, with all his available weapons on certain biological and philosophical questions, between whom and himself there remained a mutual and warm regard until the end.

Quite apart from his well-known works on psychology, conduct, logic, causation, and others treating of his special subject of insanity in all its bearings, all of which are of the highest degree of importance and value, especially to every serious student of mental disorder, his two books, entitled *Criminal Responsibility* and *Crime and Criminals*—both winners of the Swiney Prize in 1909 and 1919 respectively—are rightly regarded by authorities on both those subjects as of high scientific and practical value. And his truly remarkable versatility and rare literary craftsmanship are illustrated in his small volume named *Temperaments*, which from their style and matter give him a place by the side of our best modern essayists. I can mention no more of his smaller works than his recent book on *Spiritualism and Sir Oliver Lodge*, which is an excellent example of his strict adherence to the true scientific method of attacking a subject and the irresistible force of his logical argument.

With regard to Dr. Mercier's philosophical opinions and the biological views that more or less underlie some, and especially the earlier, of his writings, it must be borne in mind that he assimilated very early the doctrines of Herbert Spencer and the personal teaching of Hughlings Jackson. His leanings towards a free use of the deductive method in his scientific writings, as well as towards the so-called "Lamarckian" doctrine of evolution, as particularly set forth by Spencer, may be thus accounted for. But it should be noted that there are several signs in his later writings that he had considerably, if not altogether, changed his opinions on some questions of biological evolution, and that, in spite of the use he made of deduction in the process of his reasonings, he was but very rarely chargeable with forsaking the scientific method by omission to seek, by means of further observations, fresh verification of his conclusions before adopting them. But this interesting aspect of Dr. Mercier's work cannot be further considered here. Suffice it to say that the somewhat obscure dictum, in a recent obituary notice of Dr. Mercier, that "the quality of his mind might best be styled forensic and analytic" seems to me to be gravely misleading, as far as it is intelligible. Dr. Mercier's "forensic" or debating power was certainly forceful, but he was none the less pre-eminently a searcher after truth; and whatever the word "analytic" may mean in this context, his philosophical treatment of thought would, I take it, be far more appropriately described as "synthetic."

Mercier's literary "style" was almost unique in the purity of its English and its freedom from such peculiarities of phrase or word as mark the writings of most of our best-accredited authors. He had been taught but little Latin and no Greek, but was acquainted more intimately and widely with the best examples of English writers of prose than many professors of the literary craft. Hence it came about that for all the purity and clarity that doubtless raises him as a prose writer above the immense majority of his medical contemporaries and places him highly in the ranks of all other writers of the day, he never penned anything in a literary style that could possibly be named after him.

Sir WILLIAM OSLER writes:

May I bring the tribute of a few words to the memory of Dr. Mercier? Though not of Oxford, and a sharp critic of her methods, the university had a great fascination for him, and of late years he not infrequently would spend a few days at the Randolph seeing old friends. It was a rare treat to have him dine in Hall and afterwards in Common Room start a discussion on the need of reform in our methods of education. He had very clear and sound views, and argued with great ability upon the uselessness of logic as at present taught. He delighted to shock the classical don by unmeasured abuse of Aristotelian

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(British Medical Journal, Sept. 13, 1919, ii, 364-5.)

CHARLES ARTHUR MERCIER. OBITUARY.

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