

Medical Matters.

MEDICAL FEES.



NOTHING seems to surprise the public more than to find medical men demanding to be paid what they are owed, and for the frame of mind which is thus disclosed, the medical profession is, itself, very largely to blame. It has so habituated the public to look upon doctors as philanthropists at large, that it should not logically be surprised if it is taken an undue advantage of. The result is, that persons who would consider themselves insulted if one slipped half-a crown into their hand, accept medical charity to an unlimited extent without compunction. Yet, it is difficult to understand why they should do so. One never hears of a lawyer working for nothing, and, according to our experience, a favourite text of clergymen refers to a labourer being worthy of his hire. For everything else that people want, they expect to pay, with the solitary exception of medical advice. Is it not about time that the doctors turned over a new leaf and demanded fair play for themselves? A case which occurred recently, lends colour to the belief that it would be better for them if they did so. A well-known specialist undertook to perform an operation on a nobleman's son for thirty guineas. Apparently, there was no dispute as to the skill with which the treatment was carried out, but on the ground that he was not satisfied with the result, the nobleman declined to pay more than a third of the sum agreed upon. The surgeon brought an action against his patient and won his case—and his full fee. It is significant that these cases have become much more frequent of late years, and, in time, the result may be that medical debts will be paid as promptly as others.

THE GREENWICH EPIDEMIC.

If the extraordinary outbreak at the Workhouse at Greenwich be due to Cholera, as seems to be supposed, and not to some obscure form of poisoning, which appears, under all the circumstances, at least equally probable, there are two facts which are clearly proved. The first is that London is at last faced with the possibility of an immediate epidemic of the disease; and the second, that not only is the season in our favour, seeing that all experience shows that with the advent of the cold weather the Cholera bacillus loses its potency, and that, therefore, if an epidemic did commence, it would almost

certainly be of very short duration. But there is also the consolation that London is perhaps better equipped than almost any other town to meet the insidious onslaught of the enemy. So far as Nurses are concerned, there seems reason to believe that an abundance of workers would be found ready at a moment's notice if their services were required. There is certainly no cause for alarm. Everything now points to the probability that the recent wave of Cholera is receding from Europe; but if it does appear in epidemic form in these islands, we are much better prepared to meet, treat, and defeat, it than was the case in any previous outbreak.

CHARGES AGAINST HOSPITALS.

DURING the last fortnight, our contemporaries have contained charges made against two Metropolitan, and one Provincial, Institutions, and the manner in which they have been met, deserves the thoughtful consideration of the authorities of all similar Institutions. At the first—one of the most important Hospitals in this country—the medical superintendent attended an inquest on a child, who, it was alleged, had been neglected; and, after the inquiry had been concluded, he thanked those who had made complaints, and promised that these would receive the most careful consideration and investigation; and the matter immediately ended. At the second, there was shown some disposition to prevent an inquiry, but after some discussion, it was decided to have a full investigation, and, here again, in all probability, the good work and value of the Hospital will be made plain, and it will thus gain in public estimation and support. In the third instance, the charges against the Institution were privately inquired into by the Committee of Management, who reported that they were without foundation. The matter aroused a great deal of feeling. The Committee was called upon, and refused, to produce the evidence upon which it founded its judgment; and, finally, an independent committee of inquiry was appointed to inquire into the whole matter, and public confidence in the Institution is said to have been much shaken. The moral is obvious—that a public institution should court publicity, and, if it desires to retain the confidence of its subscribers, that it should seek, rather than attempt to evade, inquiry into any charges which may be brought against its management.

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