

hakims (herbalists) were prevalent, and he wished me to be with him rather than in Cabul, where there were no diseases with which the hakims are not familiar. My orders were that I was to see the Shazada every day, and to write to his father by every mail concerning the health of the party. This I have done, and have received the kindest letters in reply from both the Ameer and the Sultana, in which they have alluded to my services in the past."

#### ON INFECTION BY KISSING.

MR. LENNOX BROWNE, F.R.C.S., sends the following interesting "Historical Note" to the *Provincial Medical Journal*:—

"Your ever interesting and usually most accurate contributor, 'Pyramid,' gives fresh currency to the belief that 'Princess Alice, Grand Duchess of Hesse and mother of the Empress of Russia, lost her life by kissing her little daughter, Mary, dead of diphtheria.' I venture to offer a few historical facts which may modify acceptance of this particular example.

The following communication was inserted by request in *The Times*, November 26th, 1878.

'Darmstadt, November 15th. Concerning the appearance of diphtheria in the Grand Ducal family, we are able to state the following facts:—

The first symptoms of Princess Victoria's indisposition showed themselves on Wednesday, the 6th of November. Immediately after she had seen the doctors she was completely isolated from the whole of the Grand Ducal family. The time, however, which elapsed between the falling ill of Princess Victoria and the appearance of the first symptoms in the subsequent cases coincides with the time which, according to experience, usually passes between infection and indisposition. It therefore appears to be beyond a doubt that the disease had already been communicated to those who afterwards fell ill, before Princess Victoria had occasion to call in medical advice.'

That the above statement is not entirely warranted by fact will be gathered from the following table showing the dates at which the various members of the Grand Ducal family were respectively attacked:

DATE.	NAME.	AGE.	REMARKS.
Nov. 6 ..	Princess Victoria ..	.. 16 ..	Recovered
" 11 and 12 ..	" Alice ..	.. 6 ..	"
" 12 ..	" Mary ..	.. 4 ..	Died Nov. 19.
" 12 and 13 ..	" Irene ..	.. 12 ..	Recovered
" 13 ..	Hereditary Duke Ernest Ludwig ..	.. 11 ..	"
" 14 ..	Grand Duke (father of above) ..	.. ..	"

An incubation period of five days for attack by contagion is decidedly a long one for diphtheria, and it would not be reasonable to say that the young Princess Alice—attacked between November 11th and 12th—took the disease from her elder sister 'completely isolated' on November 6th.

At the same time such a cause might be responsible for the infection of the three other children and of the Grand Duke himself, all of whom were attacked within a period of three days of each other.

It is true that the *Berlin Clinical Weekly*, published on Saturday, December 7, 1878, stated that in the opinion of the three physicians-in-ordinary to the Royal sufferers, the disease had been communicated by kissing; the sanitary arrangements of the palace being said to be perfect. But this article could not refer to the Grand Duchess, who was attacked the day after its publication—viz., on Dec. 8, the twentieth day after the death of Princess Mary; Her Royal Highness died on Sunday, the 14th.

Two explanations are offered of this sad occurrence; First—which is consonant with our present knowledge of the long persistence of the bacillus in a virulent form, in patients recovering from diphtheria—that the infection was taken from either the Grand Duke himself, or from some of the children who survived. Secondly, as I have seen it asserted, that the infection came through handling, by the

bereaved mother, of toys and clothes belonging to the little Princess Mary who died.

Whichever is true, 'Pyramid's' warning as to the danger of kissing the mouth of the victim of an acute infectious disease, whether living or dead, is one the importance of which cannot be over-rated, and the foregoing remarks would also emphasize the risk of similar contact with those who are recovering from such diseases, or of handling toys, clothes, or food-vessels used by those who have been infected.

With regard to contagion by food-vessels, I have authentic information of a case in which a Nurse was believed to have contracted diphtheria from partaking of some jelly with the same spoon as used by her little patient. The jelly was afterwards sent to the table of the Resident Medical Officer, who was also infected. Here, of course, there was an additional danger, in that the jelly constituted a peculiarly suitable medium for rapid culture of the micro-organisms."

## Reflections

FROM A BOARD ROOM MIRROR.



THE first list of those who have consented to serve on the general committee for the purpose of establishing a memorial of the late Mr. Huxley is published. The Prince of Wales has accepted the honorary presidency of the committee.

\* \* \*  
The Annual Meeting of the British Association was opened at Ipswich on Wednesday, the 11th inst., when Sir Douglas Galton, K.C.B., was elected president for the ensuing year.

\* \* \*  
The Local Government Board have addressed a circular to each Board of Guardians throughout Ireland calling their special attention to the alleged insufficiency of the nursing, and requesting that the medical officer of each workhouse might be called upon to furnish a report on this most important matter. The board also state that they considered that the whole subject might with advantage be referred to the visiting committee of each union for a report, after consultation with the medical officer, as to any changes or improvements that might be carried out in the hospital.

\* \* \*  
An International Physiological Congress was opened at Berne on Monday. The majority of the papers read dealt with mental physiology.

\* \* \*  
It is a bad age for genius, says the *Pall Mall Gazette*. Lombroso associates it with criminality, Nordau taxes it with degeneration, and now Sir James Crichton Browne has saddled upon it a suspicion of epilepsy. In that charming and poet-

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