

EDITOR'S LETTER-BOX.

THE JUBILEE OF THE DENTAL CHARTER.

SIR.—The dental surgeons have shown themselves desirous of commemorating the jubilee of their charter, and the Royal College of Surgeons of England, as the first examining body to grant degrees in dental surgery, has endeavoured to show its interest in this branch of the profession, first, by accepting the trust of the Odontological Museum, which is now accommodated in a room adjacent to the Hunterian Collection, and secondly, by entertaining the leading members of the profession at a dinner within the precincts of the College. I would venture to suggest that this movement might well be directed towards a more permanent memorial of the jubilee of the dental charter by establishing a research scholarship and demonstratorship in connection with the Dental Museum.

There are already two small endowed prizes, the Tomes and Cartwright prizes, administered by the College, the one awarded every third and the other every fifth year; but the dental profession is deserving of something of a much wider scope than these for the stimulation of research and for the higher teaching of its scientific branches.

My own view favours a far more ambitious scheme than anything in the form of a mere prize, whether awarded after examination or conferred in recognition of original work completed. I would ask for the modest sum of £10,000 to endow a research and teaching demonstratorship in connection with the Dental Museum. In this way not only would a scientific worker be secured, but he would by his demonstrations attract the students from the various dental hospitals to study in the Dental Museum. Such a sum could, I am sure, be easily collected from among the dental surgeons alone; but if they were to impress upon their patients the necessity of endowing dental research there need be no hesitation in raising the sum I have suggested to £50,000, whereby not only research and teaching demonstratorships might be established, but travelling scholarships might be founded which would be of great advantage in keeping English dentistry in touch with that of foreign countries.

It is some twenty-five years ago since I first began to advocate the bringing of the dental surgeons back within the pale of the profession, and giving them the same opportunities as ophthalmic, aural, and other specialists—one could scarcely have anticipated so encouraging a development as has occurred within so short a period. The dental surgeons have not been slow of late to seize the occasions for better recognition; and by placing the Odontological Society under the aegis of the Royal Society of Medicine, and by handing over their superb museum to the care of the Royal College of Surgeons they have shown their desire to be associated with the general body of the medical profession.

Now I think the time has come for the further development of the scientific side of the branch, in which direction several members have already gained great eminence. Should my suggestion find favour with the dental section of our profession, I should be pleased to co-operate with any interested in this project; but it must be distinctly understood that I write quite unofficially, though I have little doubt that the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons would give its consent to the administration of such a research demonstratorship as that proposed, if the money were forthcoming for its endowment.

I am, sir, yours faithfully,

R. CLEMENT LUCAS.

London, W., November 30, 1909.

"OFF THE LINE."

To the Editor of THE HOSPITAL.

SIR.—You are mistaken. I have no wish whatever "to ride off from the position" which I took up. I admit the accuracy of your quotation, and I abide by that as well as by everything else in my speech. But what I said in the particular sentence quoted is not, so far as I am concerned, the point at issue between us. My letter was written not because you criticised that sentence, but because you misrepresented the speech of which it formed a part, and, indeed, denied my right to deliver the speech at all. You now very calmly suggest that I should do in your columns what you censured me for doing at the dinner of the Hospital Officers' Association—discuss on its merits a matter of hospital high politics. That would indeed be to travel "off the line" of the present controversy.

The points dealt with in my previous letter arose directly out of your notes, and if they are "petty" and "personal" the responsibility rests, I fear, with you, who were the first to introduce them. The first point was the question of my right to speak on the subject of municipal or State control, in view of certain advice given in an editorial in the November issue of the *Hospital Gazette* relating, not to the present state of affairs, but to a future condition which has not come into existence. That right, which I fancy the Editor of the *Gazette* would be the last to dispute, concerns, not me alone, but every member of the Association. I have given my views of the matter and you have asserted the exact opposite. My only qualification for offering an opinion is that I happen to have known every development of the Association from its foundation, to have been uninterruptedly a member of its councils, and to have served in the majority of its executive offices. But, after all, the question is one which neither you nor I can decide. The Association, to which it probably belongs, will know how to deal with it, and will settle it, you may be sure, without any extraneous advice or assistance whatever.

The only other point in my letter to which I need return is the last. I said that I should wait patiently for some better explanation of your journalistic methods. It seems that I am to wait in vain, and from your further comments it is fairly obvious (though you do not actually admit it) that you had no knowledge of my speech apart from the one quotation which you gave. Yet you allowed your readers to gather from your criticisms and arguments that you had either heard or read the speech, and that it contained a defence of the policy of destroying the voluntary hospital system. It may please you to call this point "petty" and "personal." It is indeed "personal," for it involves your honour as a journalist. You might, it is true, have written as you did through inadvertence; but since my letter and your further comments this can no longer be believed. As apparently you cannot explain and will not apologise, I leave it to those who have followed the matter thus far to judge if your honour emerges from the controversy altogether unstained.

Yours faithfully,

WALTER ALVEY.

As Mr. Alvey admits the accuracy of our quotation, our honour as a newspaper is beyond dispute. We commented on what he said, not on what he intended to say, and confined our remarks to the subject-matter of the quotation. Reported speeches are news, and as such are matters for comment. In any case the real thing which has tripped Mr. Alvey is the old attempt to enjoy public position without accepting responsibility. When an association gives a public dinner at which its vice-president speaks it is idle for him to plead private opinions in extenuation of utterances that lay down the law on official questions. It becomes both idle and foolish when such utterances contravene the official policy of his association and its organ. Even were this excuse valid, however, the association that accepts it must be wrecked by such indiscipline among its officials.—ED. *The Hospital*.