ALEXANDRIA'S HEALTH.

THE GOVERNMENT'S INTERVENTION.

MUNICIPAL REMISSNESS.

The Government evidently is determined to take the sanitary administration of Alexandria out of the hands of the Municipality, in a way strongly urged in the report of Colonel Andrew Balfour's Public Health Commission, and according to the letter received by the Municipality from the Minister of the Interior the new controller of the public health of the city should be quite independent of the Municipality, although he would be paid by that institution, and his appointment would be made directly by the Ministry of Public Health, which it is to be hoped will soon be formed. On Wednesday next the Municipal Commission should have the opportunity of discussing the matter, and we venture to forecast that the counsels of Colonel Andrew Balfour's report will triumph over any petty local opposition and the "via inertiæ," which has for some years past been such an unfortunate characteristic of the official municipal attitude towards any reforms in its sanitary services. The evidence of municipal remissness is too patent and the sejious state of affairs brought to light by the Balfour Commission is so grave that the Municipality will have to give way before the Government.

A FEEBLE DEFENCE.

The criticisms of the Balfour Commission were so strong that it was felt necessary to make some defence, and Dr. Granville, as Vice-President, has written a note on the subject, which takes up six closely-typed folio pages. Dr. Granville begins his apology by remarking that "It is to be regretted that the Municipality of Alexandria has received the recommendations of the Health Commission, which was charged with the future organisation of the Department of Public Health in the form of a French translation of a short extract from the Commission's report, accompanied by a short letter from the Minister of the Interior."

This is an amazing observation, and not a single implication contained in these words of Dr. Granville bears examination. For example, it was as long ago as June 5 last year that the Municipality decided to seek counsel from the Balfour Commission, and it shows extraordinary slackness that it has waited until February before asking what were these counsels, assuming, of course, that the Municipality has a due regard for the health of the city. But the whole of the Balfour Report was published many months ago in the "Egyptian Gazette," having been issued by us during July and August of last year, since Colonel Andrew Balfour considered that it should receive the widest publicity.

How is it that Dr. Granville now ventures to infer that up to now, six months after it was published it, the Municipality has had no opportunity to see the report and regrets that only a French translation of a single extract has been put before the Municipality by the Government? The criticism thus implied on the Ministry of the Interior must strike any impartial person who has a full knowledge of the real facts of the case as peculiarly disingenuous.

As to the criticisms on the public baths, Dr. Granville observes, "I note that the Health Commission makes criticisms, but suggests no remedy." Perhaps, like the Municipality, it sees that there is no easy solution. Among all the conquero r of Egypt, supplied the four thousand public baths of Alexandria for six months with the contents of the famous library of Alexandria, and even this desperate remedy was merely temporary."

Dr. Granville's statement above-quoted is as erroneous in its allegation as to the findings of the Balfour Commission as it is unhappy in its historical allusion. Dr. Granville says that that Commission suggests no remedy, and yet the report declares that the remedy consists in a thoroughgoing change of the entire system of the Municipality.

"It is essential in the opinion of the Commission that a controller be appointed by the Ministry of Health. He would act as Sanitary Adviser to the Municipality and its Director-General and should be seconded from the Ministry of Health for this purpose. Further, it is advisable that all public health appointments should receive the approval of the Ministry of Health. By this means the Municipality will obtain the services of a competent, up-to-date in their work and interested in their profession. No half-measures will serve; if the Municipality of Alexandria desires to see the stigma on the city removed, it must be prepared to take action as here indicated."

Surely a remedy is suggested here, and we are at loss to understand what Dr. Granville means by saying that none is suggested.

What was the use of dragging in the allusion to Amrou unless it was to remind the Municipal Councillors with the learning of their Vice-President. Unfortunately if Dr. Granville had taken the slightest trouble to consult the latest authorities he would haev found that the alleged vandalism of the great conqueror of Alexandria is considered to be a myth, and that Professor Bury holds that "the origin of the story is perhaps to be sought in the actual destruction of religious books in Persia. Ibn Khaldun, as quoted by Hadji Khalifa, states that Omar authorised some Persian books to be thrown into the water, basing his decision on the same dilemma, which, according to Abulfaraguis, he enunciated to Amrou. It is credible that books of the Persian religion were destroyed by Omar's orders; and the incident might have originated legends of the destruction of books elsewhere."

It will thus be seen that Dr. Granville is as unfortunate in his reference to Amrou ibn el-As as he is to Colonel Andrew Balfour's Commission.

THE REMEDIES.

Of course, such a world-famous bacteriologist as Dr. Andrew Balfour and the able medical men who served on his Commission could not be expected to go into all the innumerable petty details for the reform of the institution of which Dr. Granville is the Vice-President, but from the words of the Commission's report given above it is obvious that a root-and-branch reform is the only one suggested, and it is clear from the letter of the Ministry of the Interior, as quoted in our issue of Friday last, that the Government also fully shares those views.

There are countless minor remedies. We see one Municipal doctor acting as a tout for pharmacists, while another is practically the head of the whole city by refraining from notifying cases of typhus in order to please private clients. The system of certain Municipal doctors, who while enjoying an official salary, made use of their position on the Municipal to fish away clients from non-Municipal medical men roused the leading physicians of Alexandria to take action in 1917 and to write to the Director-General to ask him to make a regulation to debar the Municipal doctors from private practice. One of the most fatal drawbacks to the effective administration of the municipal sanitary services is the favoritism prevailing in giving Municipal posts to nominees of some influential Councillor. It would be interesting to learn how many of the assistants of Dr. Valensin Pasha, for example, have been appointed to positions as Municipality doctors. Municipal doctors are often appointed without the slightest acquaintance with public hygiene. A gynecologist, for instance, is given a post although he may have no acquaintance with contagious disease, while another, who has failed in the manufacture of phials for hypodermic injection, is appointed to a position as Municipal doctor where it is essential that he should have a knowledge of exanthematic fevers. Still more extraordinary is that a native coal merchant, Mansour Pasha Youssef, is appointed to assist in selecting doctors for the Municipality. Still more curious is it that it is stated that there are cases among the doctors of the Municipality, who have not even the right to practice in the country where they made their medical studies. The whole staff of the doctors of the Municipality will have to be remodelled is clear if the city is no longer to be a prey to epidemics, and it is essential under the new system that Alexandria should have men thoroughly acquainted with infectious diseases, instead of specialists in urinary complaints, such as Dr. Kohn, or that another Municipal doctor, Dr. Kenawy, should describe himself as the proprietor of the "Pharmacie du Phare" in addition to his official duties.

A SAMPLE OF REMISSNESS.

Dr. Granville, in his reply to the criticisms of the Balfour Commission, says that as long ago as 1913 Sir Armand Ruffer, then Vice-President of the Municipality, together with the Director-General had prepared a scheme for recruiting medical men for the service of the Municipality.

We were to give all their time to the work and would not have been allowed private practice. Furthermore, they were only to be chosen after an examination and were to be holders of a public health diploma.

This is a curious example of the inactivity of the heads of the Municipality. Six years ago Dr. Granville, when Director-General, collaborated with the late Sir Armand Ruffer in drawing up a scheme for the reformation of the sanitary administration of the city, which if carried into effect would have obviated all the criticisms that have since been levelled against that service and yet for six years no effort was made to carry it out. The excuse is that on account of the outbreak of the war doctors with a public health diploma would not have been easy to find. But this was no excuse for holding up all reforms of every sort and kind, and it would have been quite simple for the Municipality despite the war to have made a good beginning by increasing the official salaries of city doctors while debarring them from private practice. But influences were at work to prevent any such reform being carried out and pressure was brought to bear so that this simple reform should be indefinitely hung up as the doctors were very much against giving up their private work. This shows the hopelessness of expecting that the Municipality will ever attempt any internal reform on its own initiative, and the absolute necessity for the Government taking over the public health services.

SOME OF THE REMEDIES.

The necessity for reforms grows more and more pressing with each day that passes.

Exanthematic typhus is again threatening Alexandria and during the week ending February 25 there were no less than fifty-one cases and four-and-twenty deaths. This epidemic, if not taken in hand, may again reach a total of from three to four hundred cases a week, as was the case last year, if the Government allows the Municipality to do nothing to fight this annual epidemic, which has proved so fatal to the city during the past few years. At its next meeting the Commission should take immediate steps by increasing the salaries of the Municipal doctors by L.E.10 monthly each and debarring them from private practice, so that they may have all their time for fighting disease. There is no excuse of lack of money since the Municipality only a fortnight ago agreed to give L.E.2,500 a year to the Kuttabs, so that L.E.1,080 a year to the doctors cannot be considered excessive. Moreover, unless the medical services are not improved and the health of the city does not get better the Kuttab grant will in a great measure be wasted since the Kuttabs would have to be closed, if the epidemic of exanthematic typhus grew very serious.

Another reform is that the Municipal doctors should be highly trained medical men, and as their main duties are confined to this native population it is better that they should be Moslems, since owing to the religious prejudices of the mass of the population the injunctions of a Moslem doctor carry far more weight than the advice of the most world-famous European practitioner. Any of the latest Cairo graduates, see better than the European Kism doctors, who only enter the service of the Municipality after failing as private practitioners.

DR. GRANVILLE'S DEFENCE.

It is impossible to deal with the lengthy reply of Dr. Granville to the report of the Balfour Commission in detail, but the arguments in many cases are very poor. For instance, in answer to the criticisms of that report to the effect that the Municipality do not visit the city from the point of view of health inspection at least once a year or, at any rate, those parts which are badly neglected, Dr. Granville asks how the members of the Commission do not know that this is not done? The obvious answer is that this has only to visit those quarters to see that no Municipal Councillor with any sense of what public hygiene requires can have made any inspection, for if he had done so he should have at once made his voice heard on the Municipal City and never ceased clamouring for reform.

Another line of defence adopted by Dr. Granville is to point to the death-rates of Cairo and Alexandria in order to show that the health of the latter city is much superior to that of the capital. This fallacious argument is not just. In the first place the climate of Cairo is less healthy than Alexandria's and sub-tropical and tropical diseases are more prevalent there, as one can see from the official figures as to malaria, dysentery, kala azar, bilharzia, ankylostomiasis, pelagra, filariasis, Egyptian splenomegaly, abscess of the liver, and so on. Again, Alexandria is a far more hygienically built city than Cairo and in proportion to its small population in comparison with Cairo's gigantic death-rate the number of Europeans, who have a far smaller death-rate than has the native population. Further, in the summer the mortality of Alexandria is artificially increased owing to the great numbers of visitors from Cairo and provinces who flock thither for the bathing. The rate of 45.4 for Cairo and of 40 for Alexandria during last year does not in any way reflect on the Public Health Department of the Government, and Dr. Granville's attempt to whitewash the Municipality by these statistics does not prove his case.

Towards the end of his note Dr. Granville urges the Government to think of the future of the Municipality's doctors, as he evidently does not believe that they are able to earn their living like all the other doctors of the city by their professional skill. But there is no sign of this lack of efficiency among the officials. Dr. Levy rides about the city in a coupé with two horses, which must cost at least £20 monthly, while Dr. Sgrouras has a very neat turn-out, and to all appearances these doctors are doing remarkably well as regards their fees, whether in private practitioners, and the same is true of others we could mention.

THE BALFOUR REPORT.

The following is the text of the Balfour Commission report, as regards Alexandria. We published it last August, but as many readers, even from Public Bodies, have asked for copies and the issue containing it is out of print we herewith republish it:—

Alexandria is a Municipality which is not controlled by the Public Health Department under normal conditions as regards public health matters; the latter, however, has power to intervene, if epidemics arise. This would not be so great a drawback if care was taken in the selection of the public health staff of the Municipality and also that their efficiency was maintained; unfortunately this has not been the case in the past. Further, although according to agreement, the Public Health Department has limited powers of control it has only exercised them on very rare occasions when, for example the prevalence of epidemic disease in Alexandria threatened Egypt as a whole. This is a weak position for the body responsible for the public health of Egypt and it is regretted that the city has been permitted to fall into such a state that it is now a subject of adverse comment in the press and that distrust and discontent are apparent.

PRESENT INSANITARY CONDITIONS.

The Commission has, thanks to the courtesy of the Director-General of the Municipality, had an opportunity of becoming familiar with the insanitary conditions which prevail, and it can only say that they do not redound to the credit of a city of Alexandria's length and importance.

It would be an excellent rule if the Municipal Councillors inspected the city at least once a year; this would be instructive and the need for reform would be evident. They would appreciate how the lower classes live and work, how faulty are their conditions governing the preparation and sale of food, except in so far as the Municipal abattoir is concerned, and in the case of bakeries, bakehouses, etc., the which have been under Army control. They will understand why typhus is so prevalent, and see for themselves the entirely inadequate means of disinfection. A visit to the baths is likely to come as a revelation to them, for places, the town refuse is utilised as fuel, and as no proper system of storage is in vogue, anything more objectionable from a public health point of view than the piles of decaying vegetable matter and other refuse it is difficult to conceive. They will no longer wonder at the prevalence of typhus in certain localities when they see these collections, the method of disposal of latrine bucket contents and sewage sludges at Mex and Gabbari; and the insanitary conditions of the back streets and "bahadeer" within the confines of the city itself. This should be seen in foreign ports and it can only be checked by a radical change involving increased expenditure.

SUGGESTED REMEDIES.

It is essential, in the opinion of the Commission, that a Controller be appointed by the Ministry of Health; he would act as Sanitary Adviser to the Municipality and as Director-General and should be seconded from the Ministry of Health for this purpose. Further, it is advisable that all public health appointments should receive the approval of the Ministry of Health. By this means the Municipality will obtain the services of a competent, up-to-date in their work and interested in their profession. No half-measures will serve; if the Municipality of Alexandria desires to see the stigma on the city removed, it must be prepared to take action as here indicated."

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THE REMEDIES.

Of course, such a world-famous bacteriologist as Dr. Andrew Balfour and the able medical men who served on his Commission

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SALE OF HORSES.

(To the Editor, "Egyptian Gazette.")

Sir, Your correspondent, "Cavalry," is justified in supposing that every right minded man must be pleased to hear of something that some better fate might be found for the horses who have so faithfully and patiently sustained their part in the war, instead of that which awaits them if they are sold in this country. There is still time to save the wholesale sacrifice of these poor animals, whose sufferings must be doubly hard in as much as they have been accustomed to kind treatment and understanding treatment. But meanwhile, numbers have already been sold into slavery, and practical measures are needed on their behalf. The Societies for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals, in Cairo and Alexandria, are the most suitable Egyptian bodies organised and active. Could not a fund be now placed in the hands of these Societies for the purpose of several British inspectors — many a demobilised man would like the job — whose duty it would be to see that, by a watchful eye on these British horses and protect them as far as possible from acts of wanton and continuous cruelty? I imagine the Fund would find generous subscribers among the men who are now feeling the bitterness of parting from their old and trusty friends. Many are willing to purchase their charges — but the Government will not allow them to take them Home. In some cases, personal friends resident in Egypt have accepted responsibility for the horses of officers, until such time as arrangements can be made for their transport. Could not this hospitality be extended? There must be many Englishmen in this country who would be glad of the use of a good horse. Could not the Societies above-mentioned form an agency to bring residents, who would be willing to take horses on such conditions, into touch with their owners?

Yours, &c.,
"Humanity."

Alexandria, February 27.

THE NEW WAITER.

(To the Editor, "Egyptian Gazette.")

Sir, — Your anticipating correspondent, "British Waiter," is a little hypochondriacal in his letter of February 22. Indeed, there is no special reason why the complaint should be limited to the letter of that date. He usually reminds one of Beethoven when he sat in the little beer cellar reading the evening paper, when, if anybody sat near him, he glared at them and spat upon the floor. Now I wonder if poor dear B.W. has been long in Egypt? And does he know that the warm sun has an inspiriting effect if skin and skulls are not normally thick?

It is really too bad of "British Waiter" to accuse himself of talking humbug; more especially as I am far too polite to contradict him much as I should like to do at times.

When he speaks of a "business proposition" I am afraid I don't quite follow; he proposing to me I do not know what, I am afraid. There is a danger that I might be found wanting as an ideal wife when weighed in the balance.

As I write there is a smile on the face of that "Cheerful Waiter" at the end of Perai will allowed to remain long enough with us to contribute a few more of those charmingly inspiriting and instructive letters which we have just begun to enjoy.

Yours, &c.,
"Epicurus."

Cairo, February 28.

QUAIL SHOOTING AT MARIUT.

(To the Editor, "Egyptian Gazette.")

Sir,—An article appeared in your paper last year to the effect that a license was necessary for the shooting of quail at Mariut. As nothing has yet been said on this subject this year, it would be gratifying to know if the Licensing Authorities have relaxed the regulations.

Yours, etc.,
Sportman.

Alexandria, February 28.

A GREEK CONTROVERSY.

(To the Editor, "Egyptian Gazette.")

Sir,— In the statement of the controversies between Greek and Turkish Nationalists in the Greek Community of Alexandria, published in your issue of to-day, I am represented as having written in the "Telegraphos" that the new members of the Community are Liberals, who declare to be Venizelists. I do not ask for the Community to be enabled to control its affairs. As the characterisation of the new members as "Liberals" may be taken in a political sense, I wish to say that what I wrote meant that among the new members of the Community there are not only anti-Liberals but also Liberals, in the political sense of the word. I, myself, am one of the former. But, I added that in the real sense of the words—and not the political which some have catchwords—the real Liberals are not called so, as the greater part of the members of the Committee of the Community. Such are calling to be controlled, but those who are clamouring for control.

Yours, &c.,
Stathis Caravias.

Alexandria, February 27.

PURIFICATION OF ALEXANDRIA.

(To the Editor, "Egyptian Gazette.")

Sir,— Reading the correspondence in your columns under the above heading, I find myself day by day, striving to arrive at a definite conclusion as to the exact aim. Deviation from the original main point is frequently, seemed to bring into ridicule, a suggestion made with every apparent good intent. May I enquire, whether, it is now intended to purify Alexandria or Tommy? If it is seriously intended to apply the purification process to the former, "Tommy" will heartily endorse the proposal and would be delighted to see it (Alexandria) turned inside out, both morally and materially, by whatever means and utilise the effort continuously. "Tommy" will give encouragement to the scheme, he even wonders why it was not done, long; long ago. He can also afford a little charitable forbearance towards the reformers of a few, but he opens his eyes wide when he finds himself expected by people who have for years had close acquaintance with vice in all its blackest aspects, and disgusting environments. He is getting a little tired of being told how he is exploited by teetotal fanatics, vice-produ- and virtue traducers. "Tommy" set out for Egypt with the sole intention of doing his bit for the homeland, and his calumniators can rest assured, that, he will regard "his bit" as being more completely done, if Alexandria is successfully purged of its many gross iniquities, even if it is at the expense of a false and derderdly appreciation of his ideals and pursuits in life, either before, or after he returns home, whilst he is not keenly anxious to renew acquaintance either under new or existing conditions. One might be pardoned however, if one make a suggestion viz: A little more local interest in the welfare of the thousands of waifs and strays, who, otherwise, will probably go to swell the ranks on the future hunting ground of the profiteer behind the prostitute. What is the future prospect of the girl of tender age, who nightly crawls from bar to bar, offering sundry articles for sale, or is it, in all cases an absolute family necessity? I need say no more. Cleanse, purify, if you will, but don't forget that each evil act has a beginning, and may be forestalled by a good one. Do this and you will earn the eternal gratitude of thousands, including the much maligned "Tommies."

Yours, &c.,
Henry Chaigneau.

Alexandria, February 20.

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E.S.R. EMPLOYEES.

The Railways Administration gave orders yesterday for the transfer of a number of workmen of the Rebel Zeitoun Works to other places. This is believed to be due to the labourers' movement which is still on foot. As a result of the new order the workmen have met and decided to protest against the step taken by the authorities, on the ground that they are doing nothing of a nature to cause harm to the work in which they are engaged. They are only anxious to organise an association for themselves. We have received a telegram from the men to the above effect.

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PURIFICATION OF ALEXANDRIA.

(To the Editor, "Egyptian Gazette.")

Sir,— Some of the correspondence on the above subject expresses unnecessary sympathy with the demi-mondaine. I am sure that 90 per cent of the prostitutes, are prostitutes because they are too lazy to work. A few days back I saw two of these women alighting from a carriage in the Boulevard-de-Ramleh, at the time when several shop girls were proceeding from the places of business for lunch. The two demi-mondaines were of course "dressed to death" and the shop girls when passing regarded them with curious eyes. If the Municipality or Police of Alexandria made these women of ill-fame remove out of the principal street, it would minimise the temptation both for the Britain soldier and also the shop girls.

A British N.C.O.

Alexandria, February 25.

EPIDEMIC OF HICCOUGH.

At Vienna a fresh illness has broken out among the masses, which takes the form of an epidemic of hiccough. It appears to be a nerve complaint, evidently consequent upon nervous underfeeding. It is causing serious complications.

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