PENGE AND BECKENHAM.

THE *Globe*, in a well-considered article, approves of the attitude taken by the profession at Penge. It says: "They (the doctors) hold, and no doubt correctly, that many men take advantage of the benefits of the doctor's fund who are not justified in so doing, as they are earning wages which would easily enable them to call in the medical man on their own account; and, moreover, they consider the 4s. is but a miserable pittance to receive for attending one family for a whole year." Speaking of the wage limit it says: "Perhaps the limit of 35s. per week is too low, but certainly 4s. a year seems an absurd sum to pay for the constant attendance of a skilled medical man, when the costly education of the doctor is taken into consideration. Even 6s. a year is only a fraction over rd. a week—a small enough sum in all conscience to pay for such a benefit. The simplest way of arranging the dispute would be to raise the subscription of the members to 6s. a year, and to make the limit of the weekly income at least £2."

Such a suggestion appears to be worthy of consideration, and it is at least satisfactory to find the general press throughout the country is beginning to recognise the justice of the doctor's claims.

THE REWARDS OF CHEAP PRACTICE.

THE contract, or club system, has now reached such proportions in this country as to threaten in many places the existence of private practice. It is becoming every year more urgent that the present club rates should be revised, and steps taken to prevent the abuse of friendly societies by wealthy members that is, as far as the doctors are concerned. In a recent report of the proceedings at a county court a medical man, who was being sued for debt, pleaded inability to pay; and on being questioned by the judge as to his means, said that his practice chiefly consisted of a club of 910 members, each of whom paid him ½d. a week.

A NEW DEPARTMENTAL COMMITTEE.

THE MANAGEMENT OF FEEBLE-MINDED CHILDREN.

It has been said that an effective way of shelving a vexed or difficult question is to appoint a Royal Commission or a Departmental Committee to inquire into and report on it. On the other hand, there can be no other course open for a Government or a Department which wishes to take wise action than to appoint a responsible body to inquire into the matter to be reformed, and to make such recommendations as their information and experience induces them to think advisable. This week we welcome the appointment of such a Committee, which will take into its consideration all that concerns feeble-minded children or those afflicted with epilepsy.

The *personnel* of the Committee leaves perhaps little to be desired, although we might have felt more confidence in its decisions had it included a larger proportion of medically-trained members, whether men or women. The medical profession is, however, represented by Dr. Shuttleworth, whose large experience and deep interest in the subject will now be brought into the arena of practical politics; the Rev. T. Sharpe, C.B., Her Majesty's Senior Chief Inspector of Schools; Mrs. Burgwin, whose work for the backward children under the London School Board is well known; Mr. Pooley of the Education Department; and Mr. Newton, one of Her Majesty's inspectors, with Miss Douglas Townsend, form the Committee, the latter bringing much actual personal experience to the subject from having been closely connected with a small but exceedingly successful home for feeble-minded girls, which has, under the medical supervision of Dr. E. S. Tait, been carried on for many years at Highbury.

The Committee has been appointed by Sir John Gorst as Vice-President of the Committee of Council of Education, and will, we understand, proceed with its labours without delay. It is not well to anticipate its conclusions, but we venture to predict that aggregation will be found as disastrous in its effects on the imbecile or feeble-minded children as on those of normal intelligence, and once more obedience to the immutable laws of Nature will be declared to be the wisest as well as the most humane course. It has been facetiously said that as children were not born in layers they cannot be reared in lines. The weakly mind, the uncertain volition, the variable temper, the flickering conscience of what is known as a feeble-minded child requires the service of devotion, and that can only be rendered by an individual to an individual. We welcome this new Departmental Committee, for the subject is

one on which the knowledge attainable is very imperfect, and we willingly tender to it the offer of such help as it is in our power to render.

PARLIAMENTARY BILLS COMMITTEE OF THE
BRITISH MEDICAL ASSOCIATION.

THE SALE OF CARBOLIC ACID.

THE following letter has been received from the President of the Privy Council:

"Privy Council Office, Whitehall,
"January 4th, 1897.

"SIR,—I am directed by the Lord President of the Council to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 2nd instant, enclosing a copy of a memorandum presented at the last meeting of the Parliamentary Bills Committee of the British Medical Association with regard to the sale of carbolic acid; and in reply I am to inform you that the question of placing restrictions upon the sale of carbolic acid is now under the consideration of the Privy Council, with a view to legislation on the subject.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

"C. L. PEEL.

"ERNEST HART, Esq.,
"British Medical Association,
"429, Strand, W.C."

CONCESSIONS TO ARMY MEDICAL OFFICERS IN
INDIA.

WE are informed that some of the just grievances of army medical officers serving in India, to which the attention of the Secretary of State for India has been called by the Chairman of the Parliamentary Bills Committee, will be remedied by the following concessions being granted:

Increase in the rates of pay of Brigade-Surgeon-Lieutenant-Colonels, Surgeon-Captains, and Surgeon-Lieutenants. To the officers in the first-named rank a substantial increase of Rs.150 a month, to the others such increments to pay as will put them on an equality with other branches.

The tour of foreign service will be, as of old, five years.

THE PLAGUE IN INDIA.

Death-rate Increasing in Bombay.—A Type of a Plague-stricken Household.—Inutility of Disinfectants.—Incorrect Returns.—A Possible Remedy.—Latest Telegrams.

WE have no better news from Bombay. The death-rate increases daily until at the present moment it averages for the week ending December 26th, 1896, 70 cases a day. The town is well nigh deserted, servants cannot be obtained at any price, and the death of a few Europeans—among whom, we regret to learn, has to be numbered Surgeon-Major Manser, the Senior Physician to the Native Hospital, who, it is reported by a Central News telegram, died of the plague on January 6th—adds to the general scare. In the Hong Kong epidemic the Chinese servants in European houses enjoyed a marked immunity, and there was never any scarcity of domestic servants. The house of a European was looked upon as a sanitary haven of immunity, but even this does not obtain in Bombay, where there seems no safety except in flight. The danger of such a procedure is but too evident, and we are quite prepared to hear of baneful results in the surrounding districts.

A graphic picture of what an epidemic of plague means is conveyed in the following story, published in the *Daily Mail*, which must be but one of scores of similar incidents: "A Hindu clerk went to the 'burning ground' for the purpose of cremating the body of his father, who had died of plague. On his return he found that in the meantime his mother had sickened and died, while shortly afterwards his wife was attacked, and in a few hours was dead also. The clerk himself and an uncle of his are now down with the disease." At the Bombay Club two servants died of plague, although the place is smothered with disinfectants. This is con-