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Letter from England

A stranger coming across the title "The Horse Shoe Club" might be forgiven for thinking it was a striptease. Actually it was formed about twenty years ago by several distinguished members of the profession to welcome American and Canadian doctors on a visit to London. Cocktail parties are held twice a year or so when doctors of the two countries can meet. The chief object of the club was at the start to facilitate exchanges for post graduate study and the like. Much good work has been achieved in this respect. Young English doctors wishing to work in the United States have been helped to overcome the red tape that exists in the National Health Service here and American doctors wishing to find places here for study or post graduate work have been helped to find suitable posts. The good work continues and it is perhaps the only club which does not exact a subscription from its members. A lot of its success is due to the work put in by Dr. Nicol of St. Bartholomew's Hospital and its committee which meets regularly in the office of "The Practitioner," 5 Bentinck Street, London 101. In passing it is worthy of note that "Barts," as the hospital is generally known, is over 700 years old and was founded by a Monk, Rahere!

Contrary to what one might be led to believe by the writings and utterances of our leftist intellectuals, students, and politicians, English people have a genuine concern for the welfare of America, our ally of two World Wars, this has been particularly noticeable during the past year when both financially and politically the USA was encountering heavy weather. Of course England has experienced all these troubles in the great Empire days, now these are a thing past. The most pressing problem is to accommodate in a small country the remnants of its far flung dominions. An area the size of Warwickshire changes from a green and pleasant land to cement each year. London is gradually becoming semi-Asiatic in its population. Small wonder that many of our young Catholic doctors are in revolt against "Humanae Vitae." The population problem is acute enough, not counting immigration.

"March comes in like a lion and goes out like a lamb" so runs the old saying. Our National Health Service on the contrary came in like a lamb but is now going on like a lion. Every phase of medicine from education to retirement comes more and more under bureaucratic control, so much so that a doctor is dictated to as to where or where he may not practice. Politicians are not slow to make profit from it when occasion arises, taking off drug charges one day, passing a bill to legalize abortion another. Little did Beveridge, whose brain child it was, think that the cost to the nation would top 2000 million sterling and still go on rising. Yet Lady Stocks, among others, reckons it is the best health service in the world. From personal experience we would agree with this but then a doctor has the great advantage of being able to choose the specialist who will look after him. On the last occasion we were in hospital, one of the nurses, a French Canadian and a nun, one of the best nurses we have met by the way, said "You are very lucky to have such a health service, when I was a child my mother had to have an operation. We had to sell all the stock on our farm to meet the costs." So there are advantages and disadvantages. S. S. Cosmas and Damian would no doubt approve of patients not having to pay when they are ill, but would take a poor view of the doctors joining the general hue and cry for more money that is increasing inflation and making life very hard for pensioners and others on fixed incomes.

As a previous editor we regret the non appearance of the Catholic Medical Quarterly. It is now nine months since the last issue. The Guild is seeking means to remedy this and hope an issue will soon be in the hands of subscribers.

W. B. J. Pemberton