

stimulating my brother medical officers to aid in the cause I have penned these few observations, and shall be glad if they prove worthy of a place in your widely-circulated journal.

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

FREDERICK SMITH GARLICK.

Cheapside, Halifax, May 15th, 1854.

P.S. The town address of Francis Pigott, Esq., M.P., is 5, Montague-place, Montague-square.

LOCAL MEDICAL REGISTRARS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to submit to you that a very indispensable thing to the establishment of a complete system of Medical Registration would be the existence of *local officers*, by whom the lists should be made and kept corrected, irrespective of the voluntary acts of the medical men themselves. It appears to me that the Registrars of Births and Deaths constitute such a body. They come in daily contact with the surgeons of their respective districts; any fatal cases attended by unqualified persons are at once brought under their notice, and, in every other respect, they appear well qualified to carry out the details, subject to any central supervision that may be contemplated by the act.

I am, Sir, your very faithful servant,

M.R.C.S.

May, 1854.

THE NORFOLK AND NORWICH MUSEUM, AND THE GIFT OF CASTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having read the letter of Mr. Donald Dalrymple, in THE LANCET of this day, in reference to certain casts presented to the Museum of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital, by the committee of the Free Hospital for Incurables, in which he has entirely exonerated that committee from the imputation cast upon them—viz. “the palming upon the museum of the former institution casts which were *known to be inaccurate*,” I should, as a member of that committee, have rested perfectly satisfied with what might be implied from the contents of that letter, as regards the inaccuracy of the casts in question, had not Mr. D. D., in his attempt to explain away his own misstatements at the quarterly meeting of the Governors of the Norfolk and Norwich Hospital on the 8th ult., endeavoured to shift his ground, shirking altogether the statement promised, as to the reasons which actuated the museum committee in returning the casts, and descending to insinuations incapable of proof, and unworthy of him.

From this I conclude that the casts were not rejected because one of them was known to be inaccurate, but because Mr. D. Dalrymple and the members of the museum committee presumed to question the propriety of the operation itself. Now sir, as one of the surgeons present at the operation, and consequently incurring some part of the responsibility, I beg to acquaint those gentlemen that the operator has been fully borne out and justified by the circumstance of the patient having survived nine months. Mr. Paget, a high authority in such matters, fixing, if I remember rightly, from nine to twelve months as the probable period life is generally prolonged in such malignant cases—and is this nothing? Will Mr. Dalrymple presume to tell me there is no merit in snatching a fellow-creature from the jaws of death, and giving him time for making those arrangements of his worldly affairs, which the misery previously endured by him, had perhaps prevented; moreover, I am informed, and I believe Mr. D. is aware of the fact, that the man was, speaking comparatively, as to his former condition, comfortable to the last.

I now claim from you, Mr. Editor, an insertion of the facts of the case.—On August 5th, 1843, Mr. Webber operated on William Forder, at the Free Hospital for Incurables. The tumour was not, as stated by Mr. Donald Dalrymple, of poly-poid growth, but it was a malignant disease, and distinctly stated to be so to Forder, not only by Mr. Webber, but by all the other surgeons present. He was told that it was anything but improbable that he might die on the operating-table; and even should the operation succeed, it was not likely he would enjoy any long immunity from disease, and that it was a question entirely for his consideration whether he would avail himself of the slight chance offered to him, by the only means left. He intimated to all present his desire that the operation should be performed, as he came into the hospital

for that purpose. The tumour was *entirely removed*, including a large portion of the hard palate, and of the upper jaw, from which the disease had originated.

At a meeting of the subscribers to the Norwich Hospital for Incurables, held at the Swan Hotel, on the 17th of September, 1853, William Forder was present, he was not exhibited as a cure, although a large number of persons there, who knew what his condition was prior to the operation, expressed astonishment and delight at the triumph of art and skill over rapidly-destroying disease.

In conclusion I wish to observe, Mr. D. Dalrymple, having discarded the word *inaccurate* from his vocabulary, would have exercised a sound discretion, and secured for himself a more creditable and gentlemanly position, if he had abstained from detraction, and given to the medical public that *truthful* information he is known to possess—but

“Vœ meum

Fervens difficili bile tumet jecur.”

I am, Sir, a subscriber for thirty years’ standing.

SPENCER FREEMAN, L.A.C., and M.R.C.S., 1827.

Stowmarket, May 13th, 1854.

IMPERFECT CORONERS’ INQUESTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR.—I presume that I am in the same coroner’s district with Mr. Meadows, whose note you published in your last number: at any rate, the “crown’s quest law” is administered here with the same utter disregard and contempt of medical testimony; as the two following cases, one of them occurring only last week, will prove.

A man, aged forty-one, apparently in good health, on returning home from his work on Wednesday evening, the 10th inst., complained of severe pain in the abdomen, and was attacked with vomiting and purging: these symptoms continued throughout the night; and at five A.M. of Thursday I was hastily summoned. On my arrival at a quarter to six, I was informed that the man had been dead about half-an-hour, and was told the history of the case, and shown a quantity of bloody and mucous matter which he had voided. Of course I was unable to give a certificate as to the cause of death, therefore an inquest was held on Saturday, to which I was not summoned, and where a verdict was recorded of “Death from natural causes,” without any medical testimony.

In October, 1851, I was called one morning to see a child reported to have died suddenly in an adjoining park. I found him lying on the path quite dead, with a dark, turgid face, and viscid mucus running from the mouth. I learnt from his playmates that they had been picking up chesnuts, acorns, &c., when he suddenly complained of pain in the stomach, vomited, and fell down: he moaned for a few moments, and when they went to him he was dead. An inquest was held; no medical testimony was considered necessary, and the wise verdict returned—“Died by visitation of God!”

In both instances the summoning officer told me he had no instructions to require my attendance; adding, in the latter case, because I did not see the child before death.

Surely, sir, there is some culpable mismanagement here: what motive can the coroner have in thus opening a door for the escape of possible guilt; certainly of very strong suspicion? The only obvious one is that which Mr. Meadows indicates—the desire to carry favour with the magistrates by producing as light an account as possible to the item of inquests; at the expense, however, of public justice and public morality.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Oxted, Surrey, May 15th, 1854.

CHARLES ROBERT THOMPSON.

THE ARMY AND NAVY MEDICAL SERVICES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The following has been moved for by Colonel Boldero in the House of Commons:—

“Returns of the actual number of vacancies for assistant-surgeons, whether in ships of war, or in hospitals. And the number of candidates, (qualified), to fill up such vacancies,—together with the number rejected from the 1st of January, 1853, to the 6th day of March, 1854. Of the number of surgeons appointed to hospitals to do the duty of assistant-surgeons; together with the number of druggists’ apprentices recently employed at naval hospitals to compound medicine,—a duty hitherto performed by junior assistant-surgeons. And of the number of vacancies for assistant-surgeons in the army; and the number of candidates, (qualified), to fill up such va-