

with the Board of Health, what guarantee have we that the board have accurate reports sent to them? Some practitioners regard every case of diarrhoea, with vomiting and spasms, as indicative of Asiatic cholera, and report it as such; others require the more important symptoms of collapse, with imperceptible pulse, coldness of tongue, &c., to be manifested, otherwise the case is not reported; so that the nature of each case is not considered at all necessary as an element in the records of the disease. Then, again, the policeman is the medium between the medical man and the Board of Health; through him the information is procured; he calls daily at the various surgeries in his district, and asks if there are any fresh cases of cholera; if the answer be yes, he replies, "Be kind enough to write the name, age, and residence on a piece of paper." This, I suppose, is the method generally adopted throughout the metropolitan districts. Can any system of collecting reports on an important subject be less calculated to afford useful results? Its perfect inutility is self-evident.

It is, Sir, a want of system and combination in all that regards medical affairs which brings such discredit on our body. Why should chemists' shops teem with cures for cholera, and newspapers advertise nostrums, *infallible, as they always are*, without a determined effort on our part to prove them to be nothing but "a delusion and a snare."

When things come to the worst they sometimes mend; it is to be hoped the time is not far distant when an efficient medical body shall rule over professional affairs.

"Inutiles false ramos amputans
Feliciores inferit."

Until this is accomplished, it is in vain to hope. But to proceed to the object of my communication. If you think the accompanying method of securing a useful record for the epidemic of cholera likely to answer the desired end, I shall feel obliged by your giving it insertion in your journal.

It is clearly desirable that we should know what amount of cases assume the severe forms of the disease, and what the mild. It would be also useful to know what proportion of diarrhoea also exists at the time, or during the invasion, of true Asiatic cholera; and it is above all things to be desired that the diseases diarrhoea and cholera should not be confounded; for, in the first place, we obtain inaccurate data concerning the disease; and in the second, the information relating to the value of remedies may be the means of misleading many individuals who would doubtless put faith in official reports. With a view, then, of obtaining correct and useful official reports, I would suggest the adoption of the following form, to be supplied to the profession in the same manner as the form of certificate of death. This would not interfere with the present mode of obtaining daily information; the policeman might still call for the report; he might see the book, receive the completed certificate, and copy any other details from uncompleted cases that might be required.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Wandsworth, 1849.

JOHN GROVE.

Cholera Report.

County.	Town or Village.		Square, Street, Place, &c.
Name or initials.	Age.	Sex.	
Diarrhoea.	Date and Remarks.		
Diarrhoea, Vomiting, and Spasms.	Date and Remarks.		
Collapse.	Date and Remarks.		
Sequelæ.	Date and Remarks.		
Result.			

RECENT PROCEEDINGS AT THE ROYAL MEDICAL AND CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—After perusing the bill of indictment preferred by Dr. Webster, at the anniversary meeting of the above-named Society, I was induced, by the Report contained in your last number, to examine the house list, to which reference is made, in order to ascertain the facts of the case, and thus form an impartial opinion. The name which first caught my eye was Dr. Burrows, elected on the council in 1839, made treasurer in 1845, and now vice-president. Next, Mr. Solly, elected librarian in 1838, on the council in 1845, and now vice-president. Then, Mr. Phillips, elected librarian in 1841, and treasurer in 1847, which office he still occupies; being, besides, a member of the committee of referees, and has been so since November, 1845. Lastly, Dr. Baly, elected on the council in 1845, librarian in 1847, and secretary in 1848, as at present. Other illustrations might be quoted of the mode in which matters are managed at this scientific corporation; but it will suffice to mention the most recent example supplied by the powers now paramount in that body—it is the president's nomination of Dr. Gregory, on the day of meeting, to fill the vacancy occasioned by the death of Dr. Leonard Stewart three days previously. There can be no objection, personally, to Dr. Gregory; he is an old Fellow, has contributed papers to the *Transactions*, frequently attends the Society's meetings, often takes part in the discussions, and is not a dummy, either in pen or speech, like some dignitaries. But it is against this apparent adherence to what is elsewhere called cliqueism, that objections are made; seeing Dr. Gregory was formerly secretary, and is now, as he has been, a member of the committee of referees, since November, 1844. So long as this breeding in-and-in system, or monopolizing of office, prevails, no wonder if dissatisfaction exists amongst those fellows who, although of some standing in the Society, take an interest in the proceedings, have written papers, and strive to promote its objects, nevertheless believe they are put aside, to make room for more favoured individuals belonging to particular schools. An alteration is therefore required, for after the marked display of feeling said to have been exhibited at the meeting on the 1st inst., there cannot be any doubt respecting the opinions animating a very large majority of the persons then assembled in Berners street. This sentiment, I can assure you, will become more general, unless reasonable concessions be made to just claims, or the new council disarm opposition by acting in a spirit of conciliation. That such may be fortunately the case is the sincere desire of an amicus curiæ, and

London, March, 1849.

A FELLOW.

ON THE TREATMENT OF ULCERS BY PRESSURE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your well-known desire to promote the interest of the profession, and to make known to it and the public any novelty or modification calculated to promote the general weal, induces me to hope that you will kindly permit me, through the medium of your columns, to call attention to a modification of the ordinary laced stocking, which, if it have nothing of novelty to recommend it, has at least this advantage—viz., that of placing within the reach of the humbler classes an efficient and valuable adjunct in the treatment of varicose and other chronic ulcers, and in giving due support to varicose veins.

During the past year, 194 such cases have been treated at the Free Hospital for Women and Children, and we have had little or no difficulty in healing the ulcers by the following plan—viz., painting half an inch round the sore with a strong solution of nitrate of silver, dressing the wound itself with chalk ointment, spread on lint, the size of the wound, enveloping the whole, and three or four inches above and below, with plaster spread on linen, (composed of equal parts of strong mercurial ointment, yellow wax, and soap cerate, with the addition of one drachm of camphor to each ounce of the compound,) and binding the leg from the toe to the knee with wet cotton bandages, taking care that the dressings were not changed more than once per week. Under this treatment, the average period of cure has not exceeded two months—i.e., eight dressings; but the great difficulty experienced has been in retaining them sound when the patients have been allowed to apply their own bandages; and although the ordinary laced, or the elastic stocking, offered a desirable substitute, yet the price placed it beyond the reach of the poor. At length, by the assistance of an ingenious young

mechanist—Mr. Spratt, of Brook-street, Hanover-square—by substituting jean in place of the ordinary material, introducing elastic web, metallic eyelet-holes in place of the needle-worked holes, and cotton lace, &c., we have obtained a very efficient stocking, of which twenty-eight are now in use, the expense of which is less than half of the ordinary laced stocking, and which, I am happy to say, answer remarkably well.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,
Orchard-st., Portman-sq., 1849. W. JONES, M.D., M.R.C.S.

MEDICAL CORONERS.—MEMORIAL OF THE MANCHESTER MEDICO-ETHICAL ASSOCIATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A vacancy in the coronership of this city having recently occurred, the committee of the Medico-Ethical Association thought it a favourable opportunity of advocating the claims of the profession to this office, and accordingly presented the accompanying memorial to the mayor and corporation, with whom the appointment rests. The committee will be obliged by your publishing the same in the pages of your journal.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

R. ALLEN, } Hon. Secs.
J. AIKENHEAD, }
Manchester, March 16, 1849.

To the Mayor, Aldermen, and Councillors of the City of Manchester, in Common Council assembled.

ON behalf of the Manchester Medico-Ethical Association, we, the undersigned medical practitioners, burgesses of the city of Manchester, submit to you the following considerations in reference to the advantages that may be expected from the appointment of a medical man to the office of coroner, vacant by the resignation of Mr. Chapman.

We are aware that the practice has usually been, to elect a member of the legal profession to fill this office, and were it one having relation only to technical law, a lawyer alone would be capable of holding it.

The duties of a coroner, however, are little, if at all, influenced either by legal precedents or by the usages of courts of law in general; they have chiefly regard to the cause of death under suspicious circumstances, and therefore commonly partake more of a medical than a legal character. We hold, that, for this latter reason, a medical and surgical education is a most important qualification for the discharge of the first duty of a coroner—viz., that of deciding whether, in any given case, an inquest is required at all, and if so, whether or not it is necessary to employ medical evidence to determine the cause of death. It is unquestionable that occasionally a medical coroner would, from his own professional experience, be enabled to remove unfounded suspicions, so as to render it unnecessary to hold a formal inquest; whilst in other cases, really doubtful circumstances, capable of detection by a medical coroner only, would not escape observation.

An inquest being found necessary, one duty of a coroner is, to view, in company with the jury, the body of the deceased, and after such united inspection, to make his remarks upon the appearances which it exhibits. None, however, but a medical coroner is competent to comment on the morbid appearances, and to judge of their bearings upon the case before them.

The coroner has to direct the inquiry into the cause of death, to examine witnesses, to elicit, receive, and reject evidence, separating what is pertinent and valuable from what is irrelevant, and finally to sum up the whole to a jury in such simple terms as shall enable them to arrive at a just verdict.

We would submit, therefore, that a knowledge of the manner in which an immense variety of causes, mechanical and chemical, produce death is requisite for extracting from witnesses the essential circumstances of the case, and that in many instances even the evidence elicited can neither be fully appreciated by the coroner himself without preliminary medical training, nor can its true value be rightly represented by him to the jury. It is notorious that the evidence of an incompetent medical witness, unchecked and uncorrected by a non-medical coroner, has led to serious misdirections of the jury, and consequently to an erroneous verdict.

The office of coroner is said to be strictly judicial, and it is argued that a medical education would render him liable to exercise the functions of a witness as well as of a judge; we would reply, however, that his office is rather of an intermediate character—viz., that of the inquisitor, the searching investigator of the truth, who must be well versed in the subject which he seeks to elucidate by the testimony of others.

It has been maintained that legal experience is necessary

for securing formal precision in the depositions. If this were true, it follows that all justices of the peace should be of the legal profession, these functionaries having multifarious forms and technicalities to observe in the execution of their duties. We believe, that in this respect, all that is really needful may be readily gained by any one possessed of good common sense and habits of business.

This remark applies even more forcibly in respect to a knowledge of the law of evidence, for it must be remembered that the object of the coroner's court is to examine into matters of fact, and not into matters of law. In proof of this, we would observe that the office of coroner has been often held by persons who have received neither a legal nor a medical education, yet whose technical duties have been ably executed in a legal point of view, whilst serious errors have resulted from their medical incapacity.

In soliciting your attention to the foregoing suggestions,

We have the honour to be, your obedient servants,

JAMES L. BARDSLEY, M.D., President.

R. ALLEN, }

J. AIKENHEAD, } Hon. Secretaries.

THE SO-CALLED MEDICAL MEETING AT THE FREEMASONS' TAVERN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As one deeply interested in all that tends to ameliorate the position of my professional brethren, I attended a meeting on Monday night at the Freemasons' tavern, to witness, once more, how a want of unity of purpose and of action amongst the ranks of medical men render well-intentioned efforts fruitless, if not prejudicial, to the advancement of the cause espoused; and how much more likely they are to perpetuate than to remove the hydra-headed evils which beset the cause of medical reform, and to turn away from an onward movement even old and enthusiastic reformers, cautious from experience, and taught to distrust alike the secret ambush within the camp, and the more open but less dangerous foe without.

On my arrival in the room, I attempted in vain to collect some information as to what branch or section of the profession (if any) had brought us together, and, when assembled, what we were expected to do.

All was Cimmerian darkness, until the respected chairman, in a few introductory remarks, showed that the grand objects of the *soi-disant* "Meeting of the Medical Profession" were to glorify the Medical Protection Society, and sing with it an *Io pean* over the remains of a German graduate—to extol apothecaries as the *summum bonum* of professional excellence—to mingle tears on mutual difficulties in procuring bread-and-cheese—to counter-irritate their own half-brother, the chemist and druggist—and, finally, to come down with a sterling test of sincerity by a donation to the coffers of their newly-discovered Alma Mater, *in law*—the Medical Protection Society.

I have not the honour to know the parties at the head of this institution, but I have been given to understand it is a private speculation, and as such, bound, before all things, to advance its private trading interests. For aught I know, such interests may or may not be in unison with those of the medical profession; but of this I have no doubt, that nothing could justify any section of the medical community, and least of all such an insignificant assembly as that of Monday night, in presuming to confide those interests, so dear to every honourable man, to any Society whatsoever.

We saw before us at this meeting evidence strong enough to convince the least suspicious person that "the Society" knows well what is its own interest, and is also determined to carry it out, with singular simplicity depending on the moderate subscriptions of its 800 members to maintain a costly staff required at head quarters, together with numerous agents throughout the country. We saw, also, *credat Judæus!* a solicitor and a barrister vie with each other, and give "Advice gratis from seven to nine."

We heard, Sir, broached by no less an authority than the chairman, the strange doctrine, that it was the bounden duty of his hearers to uphold and support, by every effort in their power, a law, even when considered prejudicial to the character and respectability of our profession. I, for one, with great respect, dispute the conclusion thus arrived at, and I dare maintain, that men of intelligence are not prepared to adopt so monstrously absurd a doctrine even for the noble purpose of perpetuating Rhubarb Hall; but that, on the contrary, every upright man feels it his bounden duty to cast down and trample into ruin remnants of barbarism inconsistent with the honour and dignity characteristic of the legitimate practice of