hotel or lodging-house is still frequently a very small, ill-ventilated place, not unfrequently with only a borrowed light, having, what is now justly regarded as an insanitary abomination, the old pan closet, plastered thick with faecal matter, with most inefficient water-supply, and giving off an odour which is simply poisonous.

I should like to ask medical officers of health whether it is the duty of lodgers to report to them such defects as I have described, and if they have power to enforce the remedy? In these days of actions against medical practitioners it might be dangerous to suggest a "black list" of insanitary lodgings. But our brethren in seaside towns might ably assist the cause of sanitation by urging it upon such of their patients as let lodgings, and by only recommending to visitors such as are absolutely safe. Until some such guarantee can be had, I fear that we shall continue to hear of mysterious illnesses occurring during, or shortly after, a seaside visit, while many besides myself will contemplate a visit to the seaside with great anxiety.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

A PROVINCIAL SURGEON.

March 10th, 1885.

SUICIDE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your issue of Feb. 21st, you were kind enough to announce that I had delivered a lecture on "Suicide, Its Causes, and the Best Means of Prevention," at a meeting held in the Medical Society's Rooms. As I am still collecting statistics on suicides, attempted and accomplished, I should be glad if any of your readers will favour me with any information obtained by themselves of the "Relative Proportion of Attempted and Complete Suicides."

I am, Sir, yours truly,

WYNNE WESTCOTT, M.B.,

Deputy Coroner for Central Middlesex.

Torriano-avenue, Camden-road, N.W.

BIRMINGHAM.

(From our own Correspondent.)

WOMEN'S HOSPITAL.

THE annual meeting of this Charity was held on the 11th inst., when the report of the Managing Committee was presented; 294 cases had been treated as in-patients during the year, and 239 operations performed. The committee expressed their regret that the results obtained at the in-patient department did not compare favourably with those of the preceding year, 12 deaths having occurred among the 133 patients upon whom major operations had been performed. After declaring that the hospital arrangements were in every way satisfactory, and that these did not justify them in explaining the causes of the increased mortality, they say that they are forced to the conclusion that any variations in the results must be due to causes which are personal to the operating surgeons. There are but two of these, and it must be annoying to them to hear the chairman of the committee propound his opinion that, just as the greater success was due to greater skill, less favourable results were due to less skill. Some exception was subsequently taken to the wording of the report as it thus stood, and it was eventually resolved to alter the construction of the sentence, that it might read, "must be *mainly* due to causes which are personal to the operating surgeons," a reflection which is indicative of the authority under which the managing body hold their rule. An additional instance of the arbitrary nature of the tenure in which the professional staff hold office was shown in the adoption of the following law: "It shall not be competent for any member of the acting staff to accept or hold any acting medical appointment upon the staff of any other institution without the consent, in writing, of the Committee of Management." Truly, we live in an enlightened and liberal town, whose motto is "Forward."

HALFPENNY DINNERS.

A short time since attention was drawn to the working of the penny dinner movement for school-children, and it was shown that a palatable and nutritious meal could be provided for that sum with a margin of profit after all expenses had been

included. A step further has been taken in this praiseworthy direction, and an experiment is being conducted by which the very poorest children may be provided with a good meal for the modest amount of a halfpenny. As many as 303 children were fed on the first day, the number going up afterwards to 566. A choice within a certain limit is given, and care is taken to make the food agreeable and wholesome. The first course consists of a rich stew or bacon sandwiches, the second of bread and jam or bread and cheese. That the children find the dinners ample to satisfy their hunger is shown by the fact of their continued attendance and the little waste made. From the calculations it is demonstrated that, with the cook's wages, cost of gas, and implements excepted, there is no loss, and that they can be made self-supporting.

A WISE VERDICT.

At an inquest recently held in an adjoining town, it was shown that a woman, aged thirty, found in a canal, died from the effects of an attempt to commit suicide. The jury returned a verdict of "Death from shock to the system," a conclusion which affords considerable range to human probabilities in the form of death, and is remarkable for its vagueness. We are reminded of the ingenuous reply of the man who, when asked what his father died from, said that his death was due to a sudden fall from a scaffold early one morning while engaged in conversation with the city chaplain!

Birmingham, March 11th, 1885.

GLASGOW.

(From our own Correspondent.)

THE UNIVERSITY.

THE Lord Rector of the University, Dr. Lushington, gives his inaugural address to the students on March 26th, when he will doubtless meet with an enthusiastic reception. The Chair of Botany in the University has become vacant through the appointment of Dr. Bayley Balfour as Sherardian Professor of Botany in the University of Oxford. There are already at least three candidates in the field.

EXTRA HOSPITAL ACCOMMODATION.

The Public Works Loan Commissioners have granted the application of the Glasgow Local Authority for a loan of £28,000 for the construction of additional pavilions to the Hospital for the Treatment of Infectious Diseases at Belvidere.

MORTALITY OF GLASGOW AND ITS SUBURBS.

There has been under discussion lately a proposal that there should be prepared monthly a statement of the total death-rate in the city and its suburbs, so that a fair comparison might be made with the other large towns in the kingdom. It is very desirable that this should be done, as at present our vital statistics are very defective and misleading, the Glasgow registration district including only the central portion of a community, from which the circumferential part, divided from it in most cases only by a boundary line, is excluded.

EXPERIMENTS ON THE EFFECTS OF LOW TEMPERATURES.

At a meeting of the Glasgow Philosophical Society, Prof. McKendrick and Mr. J. J. Coleman gave an account of some recent experiments on the effects of low temperatures on the putrefactive process and on vital phenomena. They found that the continued exposure of putrescible fluids to a temperature of 120° below zero did not prevent putrefaction, showing that the micro-organisms causing putrefaction are not killed even by this extreme cold, a temperature probably lower than any prevailing in the Polar regions, so that micro-organisms may exist even there. They hoped to continue their experiments with an atmosphere at a temperature of 150° below zero.

CASES OF LEPROSY IN GLASGOW.

During the last few months practitioners in Glasgow have had an opportunity of studying two very typical cases of leprosy, in which the signs of all the varieties of the disease were manifest—the tubercular, macular, anæsthetic, and ulcerating forms. At one of the Societies also the leprosy bacillus has been exhibited.