employment of steam under pressure "necessitates the services of skilled engineers," but "that the use of high pressure steam involved a *certain* amount of engineering knowledge and skill." Surely this is not overstating the case where the use of a safety valve and the control of a pressure gauge are involved.—ED. L.

A HEAVY FŒTUS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—A fœtus exceeding in weight even that recorded by Dr. Bennett in THE LANCET of Jan. 11th was observed by me while I attended in the maternity department of the Berlin Charité in 1891. It measured 55 centimetres (nearly 21½ in.) in length and weighed about 7 kilogrammes (15½ lb.). The mother was considered to be at the full term of pregnancy about six weeks before her actual delivery, and the diagnosis of twins had been made by all the physicians who had seen the case. It was the fifteenth child of a strongly-built woman a little over the average height. The labour proceeded rapidly and without any complication, and within three hours from the first appearance of the pains the child was born without instrumental help and the placenta expelled. I am, Sirs, yours truly,

HEINRICH OPPENHEIMER.

Crossfield-road, Belsize-park, N.W.

"THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Our attention having been called to the article in your issue of the 18th inst. associating *The Church of To-day* with the publication of improper advertisements, we must ask you to give equal publicity to the fact that the paper on which your remarks were founded was issued without our authority and without our knowledge, and that we decline to be held responsible for its contents.

Faithfully yours,

THE EDITORS OF "THE CHURCH OF TO-DAY."

The Church of To-day. Offices: 144, Fleet-street, London, E.C., Jan. 22nd, 1896.

. We have received the above letter from the editors of *The Church of To-day* in reference to an annotation that appeared in our last issue, entitled "The Religious Newspapers and Immoral Advertisements." Our comments were founded upon a copy of a newspaper bearing the title *The Church of To-day*; the date was Jan. 3rd, 1896, and the imprint of the publisher was as follows: "Printed and Published for the Proprietors at the offices, 144, Fleet-street, London, E.C." As the offensive paper emanated, or purported to emanate, from the same address as that from which the editors of *The Church of To-day* now address us we may be allowed to express mild wonder at their ignorance of the circumstances under which it was issued.—ED. L.

THE BATTLE OF THE CLUBS.—XVIII.¹

(FROM OUR SPECIAL COMMISSIONER.)

(Continued from p. 200.)

CLUB PRACTICES IN RURAL AND MINING DISTRICTS.

IN the course of this investigation it has been necessary to exercise considerable discretion so as to avoid compromising the medical officers of clubs, &c., who very courteously gave me the information required. The dependent position of some of these medical officers made it impossible for them to

face the risks of publicity. They would have been dismissed from their employment had it been known that they had complained. Though under-paid and often rudely treated, yet they were not in a position to sacrifice their club practice. Nor was there any reason to incur such a risk. No good purpose would have been served. Other medical men, unfortunately, could readily be found to take their places. Thus, when describing the state of affairs in various towns I have mentioned but few names, and as these towns were large and the clubs and medical aid societies numerous, it has not, I trust, been easy to trace the precise sources whence I derived my information. But in the present instance such concealment would be absolutely impossible; as this time I have to deal, not with a town, but with a village of from 4000 to 5000 inhabitants. In this village there is but one single practitioner, and therefore but one medical man from whom I could have obtained the greater part of my information. Under these circumstances I am obliged to refrain from mentioning the name of the village in question; and when I have fully explained the position of its medical practitioner the need of such reserve will be still more apparent. Therefore, I will speak of, let us say, Dr. Dash, the sole medical practitioner in the village or little town of—we will call it—Woolwick. Dr. Dash has to attend, not only the inhabitants of the village where he dwells, but those of the outlying districts, making in all a population of about 6000 persons situated within a radius of three miles. This necessitates a drive of six miles to cross from one end to the other of the locality. In this rural district there are lodges of the Oddfellows' and the Foresters' Friendly Societies. There is a local friendly society which admits both men and women members and a family club which is purely a medical aid society, for it gives no financial benefits. The subscription to this family club is 9d. per quarter. Out of this sum the medical officer has to pay 5 per cent. to the collector, and the members also pay the collector an additional ½d. per quarter. There are in this village no less than eight medical aid clubs or societies, and Dr. Dash insisted that if he did not have all these clubs he could not earn a sufficient livelihood. There is also the Refuge Life Insurance Company, which has organised medical aid for its members, and the National Medical Aid Company, which does not scruple to put sick children on its books for ½d. per week. Dr. Dash described to me the case of a child who was put on the books on a Monday and died before the week was out, so that for visiting this child at its own house two or three times, and giving a death certificate, he received the munificent sum of ½d., the amount of the one week's subscription.

The club practice is so extensive that, apart from the numerous patients who came to his surgery, Dr. Dash has frequently to make fifty visits in the course of a single day, and barely a quarter of these are to private patients. To get through the work it is necessary to keep three horses and an assistant. During the influenza epidemic the pressure was so great that he had to see patients when his own temperature was at 102° F., and was only allowed to leave off work when he became delirious. As a result of this epidemic his health was shattered and he found himself out of pocket. For such a practice it was necessary to have the constitution of a horse and a very thick skin so as to support the insults and rude messages constantly received. Yet it would be impossible to refuse to do the club work, for three-quarters of the entire population are members of the clubs, and the remaining quarter would not provide sufficient private practice. Most of the club members pay their medical officer three shillings a year. They are entered as members without any medical examination; the medical officer's advice is never sought. Thus persons suffering from tuberculosis are placed on the books and become patients from the very first week of membership. Nor are any stringent measures taken to see that they pay their subscriptions regularly. If the subscription has lapsed the member simply secures another card, presents himself as a new member, and thus avoids paying anything at all when in good health. Dr. Dash has no control over the lists given to him. Some of the members have paid regularly all the time, and some have only paid for a week or two when they call him in. The addresses of the members entered on the medical officer's list are not given. It is impossible to verify such lists. Dr. Dash must accept everything on trust and is entirely at the mercy of the collectors, for it would be suicidal to complain.

¹ The previous articles on this subject were published in THE LANCET on the following dates: (1) Aug. 24th, 1895, Brussels; (2) Aug. 31st, 1895, Brussels; (3) Sept. 21st, 1895, Portsmouth; (4) Sept. 28th, 1895, Portsmouth; (5) Oct. 5th, 1895, Eastbourne; (6) Oct. 12th, 1895, Lincoln; (7) Oct. 26th, 1895, Lincoln; (8) Nov. 2nd, 1895, Grimsby; (9) Nov. 9th, 1895, Bexhill-on-Sea; (10) Nov. 16th, 1895, Hull; (11) Nov. 23rd, 1895, Hull; (12) Dec. 7th, 1895, York; (13) Dec. 14th, 1895, Northampton; (14) Dec. 21st, 1895, Fermanagh Medico-Ethical Association; (15) Dec. 28th, 1895, Northampton; (16) Jan. 4th, 1896, Birmingham; (17) Jan. 18th, 1896, Birmingham.