

poultices, with the result that shortly a free discharge of pus escaped from the meatus. Relief followed, and the patient appeared better. The discharge continued to be free and abundant for a few days, when it became much scantier, and then disappeared almost completely. The result of this was that the patient began to complain of intense pain in some of the joints, more especially the knees. The temperature went up to 104° F., and the case had now all the appearances of rheumatic fever, but in view of the previous history one could not help associating the condition of the joints as well as the pyrexia with the stoppage of the discharge from the ear. With the renewed application of moist heat to the ear and the internal administration of salicylate of soda the discharge became more abundant, the pyrexia became less, and things looked generally more favourable, until a few days subsequently it was noted that there was considerable swelling, and some slight redness over the mastoid. The general condition of the patient was now not at all satisfactory. There were great anorexia, extreme debility, great pallor, and the discharge from the ear was not as abundant as one would have liked under the circumstances. In view of this state of matters, I became anxious to have a further opinion upon the case, and I determined to take the patient at once to see Mr. Richard Williams of Liverpool. Mr. Williams was impressed with the gravity of the case, and advised that the mastoid should be thoroughly dealt with. He proposed to cut down freely upon it, and if necessary to gouge the bone, and then to pass a drainage-tube into the opening thus made and bring it out through the external meatus. On the following morning the patient was put under chloroform, and Mr. Williams dealt with the case precisely as stated above, with the exception that the drainage-tube was not passed through into the external meatus. A considerable amount of pus escaped when the incision was made, the mastoid was gouged, and the diseased portion thus removed. A drainage-tube was inserted and the wound stuffed with antiseptic dressing. The improvement in the condition of the patient after this radical form of treatment was most marked in two or three days. The appetite returned, the pallor diminished, and the wound steadily healed up with healthy granulations from the bottom, and the discharge became gradually less, until in a very short time it disappeared completely. Within a few weeks the wound was completely closed, the hearing power was returning and slowly improving, and in the course of a few months the patient was as strong as ever and the hearing excellent on the affected side. This is the only case in my experience during the epidemic in which the mastoid became so seriously affected, and the general condition so grave in consequence; but I met with a considerable number of cases of influenza in which there supervened during convalescence great pain in the ear, followed by a purulent discharge therefrom, in persons who stated that they had previously no ear troubles of any kind, and who thus corroborated the experience recorded in THE LANCET of March 5th by my old teacher, Dr. Walker Downie of Glasgow.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

HUGH JONES, M.B.,

Late Resident Physician, Glasgow Western Infirmary.  
Dolgelly, North Wales, March 14th, 1892.

## "THE FUTURE OF THE HUMAN FOOT."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—This, as Mr. Clement Lucas tells us,<sup>1</sup> "would appear to be a gradual suppression from without inwards of the toes, and a further strengthening of the great toe line on the inner side. That this is all that is required is abundantly proved by observing the thousands who, even at the present time, use only the great toe as a means of progression." Kindly permit me to point out how remarkable it is, if this be true, that we do not find proof of it in hypertrophy of the muscles acting on the great toe, and in atrophy of those acting on the smaller ones. These latter move together each of them in the same vertical plane, and, even when closely packed against each other, may be firmly pressed downwards in every step. That such is commonly the case it would be easy to prove. The great toe, on the other hand, having as its position of rest an inclination upwards and outwards over the second toe,

moves downwards and inwards away from the others. It is clear that when fixed in the median-pointed boot the great toe cannot so move, and that the joint surfaces, which are prevented from following the course for which they are adapted, either do not move at all or do so only with irritation to the structure. And I venture to assert that if anyone will examine a large number of feet, as I have for many years been doing, he will find evidence of defect of function in the great toe more often than in the smaller ones. I except the little one, but cannot admit that even it, poor thing though it seems, is "useless." The metatarso-phalangeal joint of and the muscles acting on this toe are generally found to be in working order, and even when it consists of a continuous bone only, I maintain that it still coöperates with its fellows in relieving the pressure which falls on the heads of the metatarsal bones as the heel is uplifted and the body propelled onwards from the front part of the foot. Nor do I believe that it is "fast disappearing," hardly used though it be. A stunted form of it, I may remark, was an ideal, if not a reality, when the Venus di Medici was chiselled. I do not disparage the great toe. Seventeen years ago I wrote of it that "there is no more marked distinction between man and the lower animals." Then and ever since I have persistently enforced in THE LANCET (Feb. 9th and June 30th, 1884, and Sept. 25th, 1886) and elsewhere the importance of its functions. I plead only now that the smaller toes are also important and not likely to be effaced.

What "the future of the human foot" is to be will depend, to some extent, on how those who, in the present, have to advise with respect to its use and to the prevention of troubles arising from misuse. For myself, I regard it as an organ of the body having its own proper physiology, as definite as that of the eyeball, so that to speak of the joint at the base of the great toe as not equal to the strain upon it, while its functions are almost always exercised under conditions involving irritation, seems to me to be unfair. Moreover, I cannot without regret observe that Mr. Lucas continues to associate a common deformity (flat-foot) with "immoral practices"—he has spoken more plainly elsewhere.<sup>2</sup> It is really due, as I contend, to defect of function, and, as I know, it can, by renewal of function, be repaired. Anyway, the wide prevalence of it, in varying degree, among all classes, in both sexes, and at nearly all ages, appears to me to forbid, for the present, the prediction of "a further strengthening of the great toe line" as a prospective development.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Gloucester, March 4th, 1892.

T. S. ELLIS.

## HEREDITARY SUPPRESSION OF FINGERS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Mr. Clement Lucas, in his interesting paper on Suppression of Digits in THE LANCET of the 27th ult., refers to the frequent occurrence of contracted little finger, accompanied by contraction or malformation of the toes. This subject has received some attention of late from Mr. Adams<sup>3</sup> and Mr. Anderson,<sup>4</sup> but I believe that the occasional association of contracted little finger with hammer-toe was first pointed out by my friend and colleague, Mr. Fisher, in his article on the treatment of deformities in the "International Encyclopædia of Surgery." Mr. Lucas attributes this not very common deformity of the little finger and the commonly ill-grown little toe to the same cause—the fact that they are not wanted. Now, Sirs, I venture to think that, however well we may get on without a little toe, thanks to the highly artificial circumstances of the foot in most civilised countries, those of us who use our hands would miss the little finger very much indeed were it to be removed, and so far from expecting this digit to disappear I should expect, if usefulness and evolution are related, that it would become more developed rather than less, for the civilised man (such, for instance, as the musician) uses his fingers independently of each other more than does the savage. I am inclined to the belief that the little toe is well formed in most newborn children, but that the early and continuous use of boots prevents its growth and development. If, however, it be in course of elimination as a useless appendage, I

<sup>2</sup> Brit. Med. Jour., May 3rd, 1884.

<sup>3</sup> Transactions of the Medical Society of London, vol. xiv., p. 119.

<sup>4</sup> THE LANCET, July and August, 1891.

should like to ask Mr. Lucas whether he would explain this as the effect of design, or on the Darwinian hypothesis that the individual with an ill-formed little toe has the best chance in the struggle for life; or would he, following Lamarck, attribute its suppression to the hereditary transmission of an acquired peculiarity.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,  
Park street, W., March 2nd, 1892. E. MUIRHEAD LITTLE.

## BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

### *The General Hospital.*

THE annual meeting of the governors of this hospital was held on the 16th inst., the mayor, Mr. Lawley Parker, being in the chair. The 112th report was read, in which it was shown that the total number of patients was: In-patients, by ticket, 548; without ticket—i.e., accidents and urgent cases—3529; out-patients, by ticket, 14,153; without tickets—i.e., accidents and urgent cases—34,105; total number, 52,335. The total income from all sources has been £18,181 19s 3d.; the deficiency in the funds, which at the beginning of the year amounted to £6073 1s. 8d., has, thanks mainly to the receipt of £5000 from the musical festival, been reduced to the amount of £2458 6s. 8d.—a fact which the committee regard as a matter for sincere congratulation. The Earl of Dartmouth was elected president for the ensuing year. A meeting of the general committee was held on the 8th inst. to receive the report of the building committee upon the competitive plans, and to select the architect for the new building. There were twelve competitors. The committee, with Mr. Waterhouse, R.A., as consultant, recommended three plans for the prizes of £150, £100, and £50 which had been offered. The first prize was unanimously awarded to Mr. William Henman, who has already done good work in various parts of the country.

### *The Jaffray Suburban Hospital.*

The committee have just issued their sixth annual report. During the year 208 patients had been treated. The average stay of the patients in the hospital was fourteen weeks. The epidemic of influenza interfered with the working of the hospital, the matron and several of the nurses having been affected. Twenty-four patients had been treated according to Koch's method for tuberculosis, and generally the utility of the hospital according to its objects had been fully maintained.

### *The Athletic Institute.*

This new institution is vigorously pursuing its work, and already doing much good. "Purity of life in relation to athletic vigour" was the subject of a lecture given on the 10th inst. by Mr. C. G. Wheelhouse. A large and attentive audience listened to this discourse, and frequently showed their appreciation of the lecturer's remarks by the applause given. The next of the series is to be given by Sir Dyce Duckworth, on the "Value of Athletic Exercises as Counter-agents to Sedentary Pursuits." The series embrace a number of free lectures which the Council has been able to arrange by the kindness of the President, Mr. H. Mitchell. The institute will doubtless become popular and useful in promoting exercises and amusements conducive to health and interest.

### *The Water Scheme.*

The attention of our rulers still continues to be given to the solving of this great problem. The expenditure involved in the proposed new supply involves some six millions of money. No wonder that some economists and captious critics view with alarm this enormous outlay. Alternative schemes have been mooted and some opposition raised to the original plans. The need of providing for the future supply of the city is the paramount necessity which governs the action of those who know most about it, and it is more than probable that Parliament will sanction the undertaking as at present propounded. The suffering ratepayer will have to sacrifice his sentiments and his pockets to the general good of the community, and continue his grumblings as heretofore.

March 16th.

## NORTHERN COUNTIES NOTES.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

### *Newcastle Convalescent Society.*

THE annual meeting of the Convalescent Society for Newcastle and for the counties of Northumberland and Durham has been held. Dr. Philipson submitted the report for the thirty-second year of the association, which showed that the admissions to the Prudhoe Memorial Convalescent Home at Whitley would bear favourable comparison with those of previous years. The number admitted in 1891 was 1495. The total number of patients admitted since the institution was opened in 1869 was 23,217, of whom over 95 per cent. received benefit.

### *Diphtheria in Durham County.*

Owing to the late epidemic of diphtheria in the Aycliffe district of the Darlington sanitary authority the Local Government Board have requested the authority to instruct the medical officer for the district (Dr. Hardy) to prepare a report on the outbreak, in which he says that there were fifteen cases up to Jan. 15th, of which six proved fatal. Several scholars had suffered from sore-throat, and when seen were affected with paralysis. After the school was closed there were no more cases, but on its reopening fresh cases occurred, which he thought pointed to the school as an infected centre. On inspection of the school nothing amiss was found. I mentioned in a previous note the outbreak in the Houghton-le-Spring sanitary authority, which has now in most part subsided. In order, as far as possible, to prevent a fresh outbreak or a continuance of the disease, all the school books, maps, &c., to the value of about £120, have been burnt.

### *Newcastle Health Society.*

The lectures under the auspices of this Society have been continued, Dr. J. W. Smith's subject being "The Nature of Disease and the Purpose of Medicine." Mr. Frederick Page, I believe, finished the course for the session last Saturday, his subject being "Human Parasites in relation to Food and Disease." The lectures have been very well attended.

### *Middlesbrough.*

Middlesbrough has again made a feature of its Hospital Sunday, the processions to the various places of worship being headed by the mayor, members, and officials of the corporation. The Durham Rifles and other volunteers attended, also the Tees Submarine Miners. The collections were for the North Riding Infirmary and the North Ormesby Cottage Hospital.

### *Important Accident Assurance Case.*

At the Carlisle Assizes last week an action was brought by a widow, and was decided in her favour, involving some very fine medico-legal points. Her late husband had taken out a policy, one of the conditions being that the deceased was suffering from no physical infirmity which rendered him peculiarly liable to accident. Now the deceased had lost an eye twenty years previously from an explosion, and the Lord Chief Justice held that the company could not repudiate their liability, as the loss of the eye must have been obvious to the agent of the company. The deceased met with another accident by which he lost the other eye, and from the effects of which he ultimately died. The widow stated that no conditions were read over to him when he made the assurance proposal, and that if they were he could not understand them, or do more than sign his own name. The jury returned a verdict for £500, and his lordship refused to grant the stay which was applied for.

### *Interesting Hospital Cases.*

I have seen a case in the Royal Infirmary in which Mr. Frederick Page performed Mikulicz's operation (in a patient suffering from chronic dilatation of the stomach) on the 2nd inst. So far the case is doing well. I believe there is no record of this pyloro-plastic operation having been done in this country before. Mr. S. Macaulay has a curious case of objective tinnitus at the Newcastle Throat and Ear Hospital, which I have also seen. The patient is a little girl aged nine, who has not suffered from any other affection of the ear. On listening with the unaided ear a cracking sound is heard, such as would be produced by cracking the