YELLOW FEVER AT THE MOTHERBANK.

TWELVE months ago we had occasion to discuss the question of the carriage of yellow fever to these shores by the *Atrato*, *Tasmania*, and other ships of the Royal West Indian Steam Company. Again the *Atrato* and *Tasmania* have come to port with sick of yellow fever on board; and again, so far as we can learn, the objectionable arrangements respecting quarantine, which were carried out in 1866, are placed in force. What we wrote in November, 1866, may be repeated with equal truth now.

"So long as it is believed that the healthy as well as the sick have the power—it matters not how scanty and transient—to diffuse yellow fever, it is right that the former as well as the latter should be subjected to some measure of quarantine. But a measure such as that to which the passengers of the *Atrato* have been subjected, and which, both in duration and character, seems to set at nought the best known facts of the disease against which it is imposed, is an intolerable hardship. Again, to impose such a measure of quarantine, no just provision having been made for its legitimate execution so far as the healthy passengers and seamen were concerned, was to exaggerate the hardship into a needless cruelty."

ON Wednesday last, the 6th inst., the new appointment of ophthalmic surgeon to St. George's Hospital was filled by the election of Mr. Henry Power, M.B. Lond., F.R.C.S., to the office. While we congratulate Mr. Power upon the new position he has attained, we venture to think that both the hospital and medical school will gain a fresh accession of strength by this new addition to their staff. As surgeon to the Westminster Ophthalmic Hospital at Charing-cross, Mr. Power has had a large field for ophthalmic practice; and as lecturer on physiology at the Westminster Hospital, and editor of Dr. Carpenter's well-known work, he has attained a high scientific reputation. A distinguished student of St. Bartholomew's, and a graduate in the highest honours at the University of London, his name cannot but be attractive in a school prospectus. Mr. Power's new appointment will necessarily cause a vacancy for an assistant-surgeon at the Westminster Hospital, and the governors will have to find a worthy successor. We believe that the appointment was offered to Mr. Rouse, lecturer on anatomy at the school of St. George's, and assistant-surgeon at the Westminster Ophthalmic Hospital. It was declined, however, by this gentleman, because its acceptance would have rendered him ineligible as a candidate for the post of assistant-surgeon to St. George's Hospital which is about to become vacant.

MR. WILLIAM DALTON, of Cheltenham, has forwarded a proposition to the Council of the Royal Medical Benevolent College, Epsom, to the following effect:—"That a Memorial Fund be collected forthwith to an unlimited amount; and that, upon your treasurer receiving a sum of money exceeding £1000, the interest thereon shall constitute a Propert Memorial Scholarship, to be given to a foundation scholar on completing his education at the College, and for the express purpose of maintaining him with an income during his course of study at any London or provincial hospital, being a recognised school of medicine and surgery. Also that, when the Propert Memorial Fund, by its yearly increase shall reach the sum of £3000, I would then further suggest to your Council that premiums be granted to other foundation scholars, in whatever direction in their choice of a profession or trade their taste or abilities may decide."

MR. JOHN LEIGH reports to the Registrar-General that in his district, containing upwards of 20,000 inhabitants, and including St. Mary's Hospital, there was not a single death from childbirth during the last quarter; and he attributes this very noteworthy fact to the improved treatment of midwifery cases in the present day.

ON Wednesday, the 30th ultimo, at a general meeting of the Society for the Relief of Widows and Orphans of Medical Men, Sir William Fergusson, Bart., was elected a Vice-President, and Dr. Gull a Director, in the vacancies caused by the death of Mr. Propert and the retirement of Dr. Budd. We regret to hear that, owing to ill-health, Dr. S. W. J. Merriman, who has so long filled the post of secretary to the Society to the great satisfaction of the subscribers, and the benefit of the recipients, is about to resign the duties of his office. We trust that the Society will not fail to secure the services of some gentleman of standing and position, who will combine those qualities of head and heart for which Dr. Merriman is so distinguished. The advantages of the Society and the good it does are perhaps too little known, and we regret to learn that new subscribers do not come in so rapidly as unfortunate claimants for relief. We would ask the profession how it is that greater support is not accorded an institution which has been the means of rescuing numberless helpless relatives of deceased medical men from misery and want.

At the meeting of the Annual Committee of Convocation of the University of London, held on Friday, the 1st inst., Dr. Fagge's sub-committee on the preliminary scientific examination for M.B. was reappointed; and a sub-committee was appointed, on the motion of Dr. Michael Foster, to report on any improvements desirable in the election of the Annual Committee. Views of the new University buildings were shown.

THE medical officers of health of St. George's, Hanover-square, have taken proceedings against the owner of a "fever den," and recently obtained a decision that the place is unfit for human habitation, and must therefore be closed until the medical officers shall have reported that the premises had been fumigated and purified.

THE first meeting of the Association for the Prevention of Contagious Venereal Diseases will be held at the Stafford Rooms, Tichborne-street, Edgware-road, on Monday, the 11th inst., at 7 P.M., when it is especially desired that all gentlemen (lay or medical) who may be interested in the question will attend and take part in the deliberations.

THE vacant junior Surgery to the West London Hospital has been filled by the appointment of Mr. Alfred Cooper. The other candidates were Mr. Bruce, Mr. Spencer Watson, and Mr. Cowell.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE NATURE AND THE MODE OF PROPAGATION OF CONSUMPTION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The statement that tubercle can be inoculated may well be left for experimenters to verify or otherwise by original observation; also the very remarkable paper of Dr. Wm. Budd, in which he propounds a novel theory of tuberculosis, might have been left unanswered until the opinions therein broached had been substantiated by facts. As, however, your journal has so wide a circulation amongst the profession, and the subject seems to be now under discussion, I beg leave to endorse all the opinions so well expressed in your last week's number by Dr. Cotton, at the same time having no doubt that similar views are held by most of the teachers in our schools. It will, therefore, behove a gentleman of Dr. William Budd's reputation to consider well what arguments he can put forth to overthrow the matured opinions of those who have thought long and laboriously on the subject.

I do not propose to offer arguments in favour of the generally received views; but state that the tendencies of medical teaching of late years have been in a direction quite opposite to that to which Dr. Budd's theory would lead. For my own part, every additional year's experience strengthens my conviction that most of the diseases which we have to treat have no claim to be considered as so many entities, or distinct quantities, which can attach themselves to healthy individuals from without, but rather that they are manifestations of some prior constitutional peculiarity.

In a very marked manner do the so-called specific or zymotic diseases differ from these. They are due to a specific poison introduced from without, which, working in the system, produces certain given changes in the body of a definite duration; leaving the patient well, unless he succumb to the process. All persons, as far as we know, are subject to the influence of these poisons.

Now it appears to me that if there be a disease which does not acknowledge a law of this kind, that disease is tuberculosis. I have been long in the habit of pointing out to my class the different temperaments or diatheses in the human subject, and the particular morbid changes of tissue which are likely to be developed in each. Amongst these diatheses, none, I conceive, is more marked than the tuberculous; it forms one of the most striking types of the varieties of social man, and the predisposition to phthisis can be asserted with much certainty, and such knowledge practically acted upon. This diathesis, like all others, may have been slowly brought about by a number of causes, such as climate, mode of life, &c., and these are probably still in operation; but at the same time it is clearly transmitted from generation to generation. So strongly impressed am I with this fact, that I believe it were perfectly impossible to give some persons tubercular phthisis; the negative or non-tuberculous aspect being equally striking. Deprive me of this fact, and I have lost one of my principal landmarks in the recognition of disease.

If tuberculous phthisis be a zymotic disorder, all persons are liable to its attacks; for I do not know of any condition of system which will preclude the effects of scarlatina, small-pox, or syphilis, if the body be exposed to contagion.

But I will not trespass further on your space, for I am only stating what I had always believed to be the fixed opinions of the profession, and based, as I conceived, on unquestionable facts. I should not indeed have said so much had I not been repeatedly, during the last few days, asked, both by medical men and students, what I thought of Dr. Budd's letter; as if at the present day we had learned nothing, and it were still an open question whether tuberculosis was a diathetic disease, or a mere accidental affair like small-pox, dependent on risk of contagion. I cannot consider this an open question; certain doctrines have been learned by us, and these again enforced upon others with the conviction strengthened by experience. Dr. Budd will have to combat these with all his well-known ability. If he overthrow them, we must submit; but in the meantime let it be known that the very opposite to his views is at present taught in the schools.

I am, &c.,

SAMUEL WILKS, M.D.

St. Thomas's-street, Southwark, Nov. 2, 1867.

THE PHYSIOLOGICAL ACTION OF ALCOHOL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I propose, with your permission, to publish, in an early number of THE LANCET, some further remarks on the action of alcohol in health and disease, and shall, therefore, reserve to that occasion some remarks which I shall have to make upon various topics started by your correspondents, Dr. Barnes and Mr. Mordey Douglas, and by the writer of your leading article.

But I wish, without loss of time, to mention an important fact. Dr. Parkes has kindly directed my attention to a paper published last year, in Germany, which I had, curiously enough, quite overlooked. It is a series of researches by Dr. Schulinus, on the question of the supposed elimination of alcohol in an unchanged form. The experiments (which may be found in the *Archiv f. Heilkunde*, 1866), are very careful and elaborate, and they conduct their author to the following conclusions:—1. That the effects of alcohol upon men and animals is a uniform one. 2. That the largest portion of any ingested dose of alcohol is always in the blood, and not in the

nervous centres or liver. 3. That the greatest portion of any dose of alcohol which may be taken is always *decomposed* in the organism. 4. That the proportion of alcohol which escapes unchanged in the breath, the sweat, and the urine, is trifling relatively to the amount which is utilised in the body.

Anyone who takes the trouble to read Dr. Schulinus' paper will see at once that my own experiments must have been entirely independent of those of the German physician. This greatly strengthens the position which I have always assumed on this question. I have never, for a moment, admitted the validity of the conclusions which MM. Lallemand, Duroy, and Perrin had drawn from their experiments, which, though apparently elaborate, really lacked the most important requisites for a fair examination of the question whether alcohol is a food or not.

It may now be fairly stated, I think, that the independent evidence of M. Baudot, of Dr. Schulinus, and of myself (assisted as I was by the great experience and chemical knowledge of Dr. Dupré), has finally dismissed the total-elimination theory.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Wimpole-street, Nov. 5th, 1867.

FRANCIS E. ANSTIE.

ON THE USE OF CARBOLIC ACID.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The elaborate communication of Sir James Simpson in to-day's LANCET may seem to require some reply. But as I have already endeavoured to place the matter in its true light without doing injustice to anyone, I must forbear from any comment on his allegations. In the forthcoming numbers of your journal, I have arranged to publish, with your permission, a series of papers fully explanatory of the subject in question, and your readers will then be able to judge for themselves how far the present attack admits of justification.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

Glasgow, Nov. 2nd, 1867.

JOSEPH LISTER.

ON THE FLEXIBILITY OF THE SPINAL COLUMN IN RELATION TO LATERAL CURVATURE OF THE SPINE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I should be obliged by your permitting me to correct a misstatement of my views as to the flexibility of the spinal column in the dorsal and lumbar regions, made by Mr. Barwell, in the last number of THE LANCET, in a communication by him on Lateral Curvature of the Spine.

After three fragmentary quotations, in the first of which an important part of the sentence is omitted without the usual sign (.....) to indicate such omission, Mr. Barwell states that "the author" (alluding to myself) "has thus come to the singular conclusion that the spine is all but a stiff column." Now, probably, very few of your readers would believe that I could hold any such opinion, nor do I believe anyone but Mr. Barwell would accuse me of promulgating "a theory which, in order probably to justify the application of steel splints, would endeavour to prove the spine all but immovable."

Not content with a misstatement of my views, Mr. Barwell thinks proper to add an unworthy motive for such views in reference to the treatment adopted. I am at a loss to understand Mr. Barwell's motives for making such an imputation in the columns of THE LANCET, but will now ask any of your readers, who may be sufficiently interested in the subject, to refer to my recent work on "Lateral and other Forms of Curvature of the Spine," from pages 26 to 48, where they will find the subject of horizontal rotation, and the flexibility of the spine in different directions and in different regions, fully discussed, and the observations of the highest recognised authorities referred to.

As my object is simply to correct a misstatement, and not to enter into any controversial discussion upon points in Mr. Barwell's communication, I beg to say that I shall not further reply to any observations that may be made upon the subject.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

WILLIAM ADAMS, F.R.C.S.

Henrietta-street, Cavendish-square, Oct. 22nd, 1867.