may be only perforated by a minute opening after ten days' strangulation, when serious cardiac disease is present; that it is better when the stricture has been tight to incise it freely rather than incur the necessity of using the slightest force in reduction. There is good reason to believe that the operation would have been successful if performed at an earlier period.

Reviews and Notices of Books.

Results of the System of Separate Confinement as administered at the Pentonville Prison. By JOHN T. BURT, B.A., Assistant-Chaplain. 8vo, pp. 287. London: Longmans.

THE volume whose title heads this notice is a laboured panegyric of the separate system of discipline first established at Pentonville Prison, followed by much reasoning and some statistical details, quoted to prove that a marked decrease of reformation has resulted from the altered and more mild treatment recently introduced at this establishment. After a careful perusal of this sometimes wordy publication, we must state that the writer's arguments have not produced conviction in our minds respecting the position he has attempted to establish. On the contrary, although severity and kindness were originally combined at Pentonville, in a higher degree than at any other prison throughout Great Britain, Government introduced a series of important changes in 1848, which have been subsequently, and by their direction, also so much changed, that each distinctive characteristic of the original system has been impaired. This proceeding of the supreme authorities sufficiently expresses the opinions entertained, at head quarters, in reference to this prison, notwithstanding our reverend author appears to deplore, with much earnestness and feeling, any abatement in the rigour of the former discipline. When discussing various points, the writer frequently employs the words "if, perhaps, and probably." This may be a convenient mode of interlarding long-winded phrases, and rounding periods which sometimes lead to no very definite meaning, but it is not certainly the best way to produce conviction in the minds of readers. As a specimen of this mode of reasoning, the following paragraph is quoted from page 105, when speaking of delusions:

"If these slight affections may in some cases be *probably* (*sic* in the text) attributed to the discipline, it is not less probable that means might have been employed for correcting the danger without infringing the fundamental principles of the separate system."

What may be the inference the learned divine proposes to lay down by such obscure enunciations, hair-splitting casuists must determine, since to ordinary mortals, like ourselves, the task becomes so exceedingly difficult, that we refrain from attempting an explanation. Notwithstanding the statements and references to official documents contained in this publication, there cannot be a doubt that the best mode of secondary punishment, with a view to the ultimate reformation of criminals, still remains the great problem to be solved.

Urinary Deposits; their Diagnosis, Pathology, and Therapeutical Indications. By GOLDING BIRD, M.D., F.R.S., Assistant-Physician to Guy's Hospital, &c. Fourth edition, revised and enlarged. London. 1853. pp. 473.

THE new edition of Dr. Bird's treatise exhibits—so far as we have been able to discover—very few emendations or additions in the body of the work. A new chapter has been appended to it—viz., on "Blood Depuration by the Kidneys as a Remedy in Disease." This, indeed, is the chief novelty of the new impression, if we except the "Analytical Index." The author alludes in his preface to the fact, that he may appear not to have noticed some of the more recent contributions to the literature of the profession, on the now popular subject of urinary pathology. He offers as his excuse that they have not been supported by his own observations. Now this is an excuse which can only avail within very particular limitations, for if a writer upon organic chemistry is to reject all testimony which does not square exactly with his

own investigations, he will often deprive his readers of that knowledge with which it is but fair and requisite they should be made acquainted.

And yet, with these drawbacks, where can we look to any other work on the subject which contains the information which we find in Dr. Bird's treatise? Certainly nowhere; and it deserves to be the handbook of every practitioner.

THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND LIFE ASSURANCE OFFICES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I request the favour of your inserting the following correspondence in your journal; in explanation of which I inform you that on March 15th I received a letter from the West of England Insurance office, Exeter, signed Charles Lewis, secretary, requesting an early reply to sixteen "communicated" questions relative to the state of health of a patient of mine who wished to insure his life in that office.

The result proves that offices cannot assure lives without a medical report, and it remains for the profession to determine if it will give, without a fee, professional opinions to parties so well able to pay and so interested as insurance companies.

One part of the sub-agent's letter is well worthy of note, showing an animus requiring no further comment; it was scored in the original, and to mark it, I shall be obliged by your printing it in italics.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Taunton, March, 1853.

C. H. CORNISH, F.R.C.S.E.

Taunton, March 15, 1853.

SIR,—I have this day received from you a printed form, containing many questions (to be answered by me) relative to the health of my patient, Mr. ——. I shall feel much pleasure in replying to those questions on being informed by you that the usual fee will be paid me for so doing. I live by my profession; the information you require is wholly professional, therefore I require remuneration for it.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

To Chas. Lewis, Esq., Secretary,
West of England Assurance Office, Exeter.

C. H. CORNISH,
F.R.C.S.E.

Reply to the above by the Sub-Agent.

Taunton, March 18, 1853.

MY DEAR SIR,—The West of England Insurance Office has written to me to get Mr. — examined at the expense of the office before some surgeon, *but not before you*, and I am to pay him his fee.—Yours truly,

To C. H. Cornish, Esq., Surgeon.

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COMPULSORY VACCINATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My experience of some twenty years has convinced me that this country never will have the full benefit of vaccination unless it is made compulsory, however great the exertions of public vaccinators.

A correspondent in THE LANCET of the 5th inst. (Mr. Thompson) appears to believe that the thing could be accomplished by enabling people to employ, without expense, their own medical attendants as vaccinators. How is it, then, that the private patients of the public vaccinators themselves are so obtuse and unmanageable? The gratis *ex officio* gentlemen, too, find that the prejudices against vaccination have no reference to the persons of the vaccinators, and are not to be removed by freely offering the benefit on any terms. In my neighbourhood any one can be vaccinated without expense by any surgeon here; and I believe that few localities are less protected by vaccination. I am quite sure that no arguments—that no measures but *compulsion*, will render the adoption of vaccination anything like general.

Yours most obediently,

F. C. HOWARD,
District Vaccinator.

OBITUARY.—At his residence, Western-road, Cork, DANIEL SWEENEY, M.D.—At Grenville-street, Mountjoy-square, Dublin, ROBERT LAW NIXON, M.A., M.D., F.R.C.S., and one of the examiners of the Royal College of Surgeons, Ireland, for the last eight years.—At Aberdeen, ALEXANDER PATTERSON, M.D.—On the 21st ult., at Merrion-square, Dublin, Dr. GREAVES, one of the most distinguished medical practitioners in Ireland.