fication of that agitation may be found in the fact that two such eminent judges as Lords Hatherley and Selborne, after a careful consideration of the evidence on both sides, decided in accordance with the strongly expressed opinion of the large majority of the in-patient medical staff. As to the article itself, with the exception of a single carelessly-worded paragraph, there is nothing in it I see any cause to regret, and nothing I would not willingly have substantiated by my name, had such been the custom of British journalism. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Curzon-street, Mayfair,
May 11th, 1874.

W. S. PLAYFAIR.

British Medical Association, General Secretary's Office,
37, Great Queen-street,
May 7th, 1874.

DEAR SIR,—I herewith subjoin a copy of resolution passed at a special meeting of the *Journal* and Finance, and subsequently confirmed by a special meeting of the Committee of Council, relative to your communication of the 17th ult.

I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

Dr. W. S. Playfair.

FRANCIS FOWKE.

Resolved—"That the Committee regret the circumstances referred to in Dr. Playfair's communication, and are of opinion that they arose from a misunderstanding. The Committee are of opinion that the most careful precautions are and ought to be always taken to preserve the confidential character of all editorial communications."

* * That the most careful precautions ought to be taken to preserve the confidential character of editorial communications to the *British Medical Journal* no one, we think, will doubt; that they are taken seems unquestionably a bold statement in the face of the facts that gave rise to this resolution.—ED. L.

REGISTRATION OF DEATHS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The custom of giving death certificates in the usual official form is surely foreign to those accurate habits of mind and expression which should characterise medical practitioners. I should like to bring before your readers a simple alteration which I usually make when I have not seen the corpse—viz., by inserting the words necessary to make the certificate read, "*I am informed that he (or she) died...*" Also, if there be any doubt about the diagnosis I usually certify "*the cause of death was I believe,*" &c., or "*probably*" &c. I venture to think that the habit of using the ordinary form unaltered, sanctioned as it is by authority, countenances and thereby encourages too much pliancy in regard to other certificates. There are patients who seem to expect a medical attendant to testify their inability for duty, just as suits their own convenience, and to antedate or postdate by the same rule. On the other hand, it is instructive to hear how lightly medical certificates are regarded in some quarters.

In reference to the results of registration, could not death certificates be easily made to furnish a valuable mass of evidence as to the habits of life which favour the prevalence of various diseases?—viz., by stating the "*occupation*" or "*condition in life*" of the deceased.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully.

W. WILBERFORCE SMITH.

Eastbourne-terrace, May 12th, 1874.

PUERPERAL THROMBOSIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your interesting report, published on Saturday last, of the meeting of the Obstetrical Society of London, I find Dr. Playfair, in reply to the observations made on his paper on Puerperal Thrombosis, remarking as follows:—"There was not a single English text-book on Midwifery in which it (puerperal thrombosis) was even alluded to, not even in the recent and admirable work of Dr. Leishman." Now, I shall not answer for the learned Glasgow Professor, but I feel bound to point out to Dr. Playfair that in my work on Midwifery I have devoted a whole, though brief, chapter to it.—I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Edinburgh, May 11th, 1874.

ALEXANDER MILNE.

BIRMINGHAM.

(From our own Correspondent.)

IN spite of the undoubted prevalence of an epidemic of variola, the death-rate of Birmingham (24 per 1000) is not unusually high; in fact, according to the recently-issued annual report of Dr. Alfred Hill, the medical officer of health, it is less than the average for the whole year 1873. The rate for the past year was 24·8, and it is rather remarkable that the death-rate for the ten years 1861–1870 is identical with that of the single year 1873. Dr. Hill recommends the immediate establishment of a hospital for the reception of cases of zymotic disease, and his recommendation, supported as it has been by the Midland Medical Society and by the general concurrence of the profession throughout the town, is about to be carried into effect to some extent by the Town Council. A building for patients (other than paupers) suffering from variola is to be at once opened, and doubtless it will hereafter be available for those affected with other kinds of infectious disease.

The Town Council have recently made arrangements for securing the gas-works of the town, and are now entering into a negotiation with the directors of the water-works company with a view of getting the water-supply into their own hands. Although opinion is divided as to the advisability of the corporation undertaking the manufacture of gas, there is no question that the water-supply, being one of the first requisites for the health of a town, ought to be in the hands of a responsible body elected by the ratepayers, and we hope that the efforts of the Mayor to bring about so desirable a result may be rewarded with success.

At the last meeting of the Midland Medical Society, Mr. Thomas showed an enchondromatous cyst which he had removed from beneath the right masseter of a female aged twenty-four. Mr. Lawson Tait demonstrated the formation of myelin tubules, and also exhibited a specimen of cholesterin prepared from beans. Mr. Wilders exhibited a large aural polypus removed from the wall of the meatus, close to the membrana tympani. Dr. Johnston afterwards read an interesting paper on the treatment of rheumatic fever, and quoted numerous cases showing the value of alkaline injections into the rectum.

At the final meeting of the Hospital Saturday Committee it was stated that the total amount collected this year was £4161, and that the amount available for distribution among the charities of the town was £3800. Towards this fund contributions were received from 1456 manufactories, showing an average of £2 12s. 9d. from each factory.

The Queen's Hospital Committee have decided to appoint an acting ophthalmic assistant for a period of twelve months, with the view of ascertaining whether there is a necessity for the establishment of a special ophthalmic department.

There have recently been two successful cases of ovariotomy at the Women's Hospital, under the care of Messrs. Bracey and Tait respectively. In Mr. Bracey's case the cyst was unilocular and free from adhesions; and in Mr. Tait's the cyst was multilocular, and had large omental adhesions, which were secured with silk ligatures, and returned into the abdomen. Wells's clamp was used in both instances, and perchloride of iron employed to dry up the pedicle. Mr. Tait speaks highly of the elastic ligature for deep fistulæ in ano. Mrs. Louisa Atkins, M.D. Zurich, who has done good service as house-surgeon for nearly two years, is about to leave with the view of entering upon private practice.

Lithotomy has been the most frequent operation at the General Hospital of late, and all of the cases have done well. Mr. Pemberton, who usually performs the median operation on children, was obliged, on Saturday, to resort to the lateral for the removal of a large stone, weighing four drachms, from a boy aged eight. Mr. Bartleet was fortunate with a lateral lithotomy in a child aged four, who was greatly emaciated by the irritation of a calculus which weighed six drachms, and also by protracted pertussis. The same surgeon has under his care a boy, aged eight, whose foot he removed at the ankle-joint on April 20th, by Jules Roux's method, and as he has in this, as in many previous cases, met with good results, it is worth while to