

distributing the 36 fatal hospital cases, the Registrar-General reports that 7 of the deceased small-pox patients had resided in Lambeth, 5 in Bow, 5 in Islington, and 4 in Paddington. It is noteworthy that no less than 20 of the 61 deaths from small-pox were of children under five years of age, of whom fifteen were certified to be unvaccinated, and the rest "not stated" as to vaccination. Since the commencement of the present epidemic 722 children, aged less than five years, have died from small-pox in London, affording conclusive evidence either of the neglect of vaccination or of inefficient vaccination. There is too much reason to fear that certificates of successful vaccination are frequently issued when the vaccination has been far from satisfactory or of a character to afford trustworthy protection from small-pox. These defects in the administration of vaccination can only now be remedied by a careful inspection of the vaccination marks of children in elementary schools, which may be regarded as the only reliable evidence of true successful vaccination. Of the twenty-five deaths from small-pox registered last week in private dwellings, three occurred in Islington, three in Walworth, and three in Peckham.

In the outer ring of suburban London eight deaths from small-pox were registered, of which five occurred in West Ham, one in Stratford, one in Acton, and one in Hendon.

THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

THE accompanying extracts from *The Times* of June 4th, concerning the famine in Southern India, fully bear out the remarks on the same topic which appeared in THE LANCET of May 12th.

"Our correspondent in Southern India writes under date Madras, May 5th:—There is no change for the better in regard to famine prospects. In fact, in most districts affairs are becoming critical, and nothing but an early and plentiful rain can avert disaster. Since my letter of the 28th of April the sky has been almost without a cloud, and no sign of rain has appeared to cheer the hearts of the drooping peasantry. Prices of grain are advancing, and it is feared that the principal part of the Burmese rice crop has been secured for the European markets, and it will only be diverted to Madras under the stimulus of advancing rates. It seems doubtful whether Bengal and our own northern districts are capable of sending much more grain to the famine tracts, and if Burmah cannot help, I fear the food-supplies will be very deficient in the course of the next three or four months. Our local merchants are beginning to be anxious, and to think that present stocks will not long hold out if the up-country demand is likely to increase. It is interesting to note, in connexion with the deteriorated health of the people, the official returns of mortality in the famine districts. These have been published in the *Gazette* for the months of December and January—that is, for the period of the commencement of the famine,—but the later returns have not yet seen the light. The death-ratios of the afflicted districts for the two months were as shown below for every 1000 of the population. The ratio for each month is, of course, the annual ratio of mortality.

District.	Dec., 1876.	Jan., 1877.	District.	Dec., 1876.	Jan., 1877.
Kurnool . .	148·3	78·2	Chingleput . .	36·6	78·1
Bellary . .	53·5	67·4	Nellore . . .	59·1	97·1
Cuddapah . .	58·7	118·7	North Arcot . .	37·3	83·1
Madras . .	62·2	112·9	Salem	42·9	62·6

Now, the usual death-rate, or registered deaths, in these districts for the same season of the year does not average more than 20 per 1000 of the population. There is no evidence of any value, I think, to show that the population in India is beyond the capacity of the land to support. It must be remembered that every pound of grain consumed in the famine tract of the south during the present scarcity has been supplied by India itself, and that the transfer has been accomplished mainly by the railways and ocean steamers; and while an enormous local failure of crops over an area inhabited by 20,000,000 of people has prevailed, India has still been able to add largely to her exports of wheat to Europe. There is nothing in the con-

dition of the famine-stricken district of this presidency to point to over-population, and when the famine is over it may be found that the districts are suffering from want of people to till the soil."

SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION.

The Council of the Association has presented the following resolutions to the Secretary of State for the Home Department:—

Coroner's Courts.

1. That in the opinion of this Council a Parliamentary inquiry into the mode of appointment, the office, duties, and jurisdiction of coroners, is imperatively demanded.

2. The Council draw attention to the fact that the office of coroner is one of high antiquity and great utility; that it has been the subject of much and intricate legislation, and has come in process of time to be attended with inconveniences in respect to the constituency by which the coroner is elected, the manner of election, the abolition of a standard of qualification, the mode of remuneration, the procedure and place of holding the courts, as well as many points relating to functions, procedure, and responsibility. The Council are of opinion that in consequence of various social changes since the time of the original creation of the coroner's office, the expediency of retaining the coroner's jury, either at all, or at least in its present form, the existing relations of the coroner to the justices of the peace, and the provisions for the use of expert witnesses, have become matters demanding fresh and special arrangements.

3. That the question of inquiry into the cause of fires is one of urgency, and should be considered in regard to the appointments, duties, and functions of coroners.

River and Canal Population.

That in the opinion of this Council the condition of the canal and river population is such as to demand the early attention of the Legislature in order to prevent—(1) Over-crowding. (2) The spread of infectious diseases. (3) The evasion of the Acts for the Registration of Births and Deaths and Vaccination. (4) The neglect of education and the deterioration of morality, as necessarily prejudicial to health and social advancement.

SPIRILLA IN TROPICAL FEVERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to announce that in the blood of individuals who are attacked with fever at the present time in Bombay, there may often be found numerous and active spirilla. Commonly, but not quite invariably, the presence of these minute organisms is limited to the periods of high temperature, and in my experience hitherto the spirillum may always be found in those fevers which present a clear tendency to relapse, after an interval longer than any yet recognised amongst intermittents so-called. From a number of instances, however, which have come before me, and of which I possess full notes, it is already evident that also in types of fever which ordinarily would be termed "remittent," or possibly "intermittent" (for intermediate grades are many), the blood may sometimes be found to contain the spirillar filaments. The latter here closely resemble those alluded to by Dr. B. Sanderson in his summary on European relapsing fever, printed in the Health Reports of the Privy Council (New Series, No. iii., London, 1874), and I may add that further inquiries are now in hand regarding the import of this new observation.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Bombay, May 14th, 1877.

H. VANDYKE CARTER, M.D.

"STRIKING THE FLAG."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to thank you for having inserted my letter on the 2nd June in your pages, and for your flattering observations regarding myself.

I trust, however, you will permit me to say that you have

in your remarks, under the above heading, misunderstood the spirit and object of my letter.

I do not disbelieve in the influence of the infinitesimal, nor do I abandon the application of the law of similars. On the contrary, I believe, with the chemists, that the one-millionth part of ammonia can be detected in a given quantity of water; and I believe with Spallanzani, that the millionth of a grain of frog sperm can impregnate the ovum.

But while I believe in the action of infinitesimals in nature, I at the same time believe that palpable doses of medicine are generally more efficacious in the treatment of disease than infinitesimal doses; and further, seeing that Hahnemann's doctrine of infinitesimals has been the chief barrier to the investigation of the law of similars, I think it wise to abandon, as far as possible, their use in the treatment of disease.

Further, in my letter, I hold, with Hippocrates, that some diseases are best treated by similars and some by contraries; and this being the case, I hold that those who so practise cannot correctly call themselves homœopathists.

I do not in my letter surrender myself as a captive on unconditional terms, but I approach the profession as an ambassador offering peace on the basis of mutual respect and forbearance.

I strike no flag and I surrender no principle; but I claim, as a legally qualified medical man and a gentleman, who desires to find and follow truth wherever he can discover it, and as one who assumes no distinctive name, a moral right of admission to your medical societies, and to unrestrained professional intercourse with the entire body of medicine.

Yours sincerely,

GEORGE WYLD, M.D.

Great Cumberland-place, June 4th, 1877.

PARLIAMENTARY INTELLIGENCE.

HOUSE OF COMMONS.

Friday, June 1st.

MEDICAL ACTS.

Dr. LUSH moved that the order for the second reading of the Medical Act (1858) Amendment Bill be read and discharged, remarking that it was his intention to move for leave to introduce another Bill on the same subject.

The motion was agreed to and the Bill withdrawn.

Monday, June 4th.

THE LATE ARCTIC EXPEDITION.

Dr. PLAYFAIR asked the Secretary to the Admiralty, in the absence of the First Lord, whether, having received a report, of date March 3rd, from the Admiralty Committee on Scurvy, to the effect that the early outbreak of scurvy in the spring sledging parties of the late Arctic Expedition was due to the absence of lime-juice from their provisions, and, further, that in not including lime-juice the officer in command of the expedition deviated from the Memorandum of Recommendations and Suggestions of the Medical Director-General furnished to Sir George Nares by the Admiralty for his information, and that such deviation was not proper, he had taken any steps in respect to this report with a view to prevent similar calamities on future occasions.

Mr. A. EGERTON.—As there is no intention at present to fit out any Arctic Expedition, it is unnecessary to take any immediate steps as to the issue of lime-juice, in consequence of the Report of the Committee to which the hon. member refers. Should, however, at any future time a similar expedition be sent out, the experience of the last one will doubtless not be lost upon the Admiralty. I may add that directions have been given for a communication to Sir George Nares upon the subject of the report, which will be laid upon the table.

Dr. PLAYFAIR.—In consequence of the answer to my question, which was not confined to Arctic expeditions, I shall call attention to the report on the motion for going into Committee of Supply.

PUBLIC HEALTH (METROPOLIS) BILL.

Mr. SOLATER-BOOTH obtained leave to bring in a Bill to consolidate and amend the law relating to the public health in the metropolis. The Bill was brought in and read a first time.

Obituary.

PETER BROTHERSTON, F.R.C.S. ED.

By the sudden death of Mr. Brotherston, of Alloa, in Clackmannanshire, we have lost one of our best country surgeons.

While a student in Edinburgh he attracted the attention of Mr. Syme, who formed so high an opinion of his aptitude for surgical work that he frequently requested him to assist at his private operations. Having obtained his diploma from the College of Surgeons, London, he returned to his native town, and it was not long before he acquired the largest practice in the district.

Mr. Brotherston possessed in a peculiar degree that decision and promptitude which are so essential to every medical man, and with these gifts, accompanied by a clear head and a steady hand, he was enabled to perform many operations of a serious nature. These included numerous amputations of the major degree, several excisions of the knee, shoulder, and elbow, and various operations in the region of the throat.

The difficulty of treating the more severe cases in the poor houses suggested to Mr. Brotherston the idea of establishing a small cottage hospital, which, with the aid of a few friends, he was shortly enabled to carry out. To this he devoted a certain proportion of his time daily, and its success is sufficiently attested by the fact that in 1876 seventy patients were treated under its roof.

The results of his work he published from time to time in valuable communications to the different medical journals, the principal of which were: "Cases of Excision of the Knee-joint," "Three cases of Empyema occurring after Scarlatina, treated by Paracentesis," and "Provincial Surgery, as illustrated by cases treated in the Alloa Hospital," which last was read, by special request, before the meeting of the British Medical Association in Edinburgh in 1875. He was a member of the principal medical societies in Edinburgh, and was well known both in that city and in Glasgow as an able surgeon.

His many acts of kindness to the poor and those in straitened circumstances will only become known now that he is gone, for he was a man with a large heart, and one who to relieve suffering humanity spared himself no exertion, thinking but too little of the remuneration.

He took a deep interest in the Archæological Society, which was founded several years ago in Alloa, and before it he read several interesting communications. His arduous labours, extending over a period of upwards of thirty years, in 1875 began to tell seriously on his health, and, by the advice of his friend Dr. Begbie, he spent a few months in San Remo. On leaving for Italy he was presented by his grateful townsmen with a sum of money, and this Dr. Brotherston highly valued as being a pleasing token of their appreciation of his long and faithful services in Alloa. Returning in the summer of 1876, he was able to resume a great part of his practice, but it was only for a time, as it soon became evident that disease of a serious nature was advancing in his chest. With an energy peculiarly his own, he continued to see his patients until a late hour of the night previous to his sudden demise, which took place early on the morning of the 20th of April. His loss will long be felt in Alloa and the surrounding district, and it will not be easy to fill the place of Peter Brotherston.

GEORGE MORLEY HARRISON.

THE subject of this brief memoir was born at Chester, on the 15th April, 1823, and was principally educated at the Wesleyan Preparatory School, Woodhouse-grove, Leeds, of which establishment his grandfather was governor. He was apprenticed to his uncle, the late Mr. Morley, of Leeds, a surgeon in extensive practice. His medical studies were pursued first at the Leeds School of Medicine, where he obtained several distinctions, and subsequently in the metropolis, at Guy's Hospital, obtaining the membership of the Royal College of Surgeons in 1845.

In 1849 he commenced his career in Manchester, and