for her attempts at suicide. Had it been "*refused to account*," &c., then the Commissioners might have supposed (as suggested by the clerk to the magistrates at Shrewsbury) that it might possibly be a case of *jelo-de-se*. I submit, however, that my stating the *inability* of the patient to account for her actions was stating a fact indicative of the loss of reasoning powers, and therefore a corroborative proof of unsoundness of mind. The last clause of the Commissioners' letter shows that they had some misgiving as to the responsibility they would have incurred had the patient been dismissed from the asylum and afterwards succeeded in destroying herself. The knot was disentangled by the enlargement in my second certificate of the idea contained in my first; but the proceeding has caused a considerable expense to the Ludlow Union owing to the distance of the asylum, and a large amount of trouble to me, both of which I think might have been avoided by the exercise of a little common sense.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Ludlow, Sept. 14th, 1866. HENRY MEYMOTT.

[COPY.]

1. Fact witnessed by myself:—
Inability to give a reason for twice attempting suicide.
2. Facts communicated by others:—
Great sleeplessness of late at night, without any bodily cause to account for it.
Attempt to cut her throat three days ago.
Jumped into a deep well for the purpose of self-destruction.
Aug. 24th, 1866.

N.B.—The patient was admitted on this certificate into the asylum by the medical superintendent there.

County Asylum, near Shrewsbury, Sept. 2nd, 1866.

SIR,—I return herewith your certificate in the case of M. R— that it may be amended. The Commissioners in Lunacy, to whom a copy of your certificate has been forwarded, remark that it "*should be strengthened if possible*." If you can add some other fact or facts indicating insanity to your certificate, please do so, and return it to me as early as convenient.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Henry Meymott, Esq. JOHN ROBERTS, Clerk.

Ludlow, Sept. 3rd, 1866.

SIR,—In reply to your letter, I have to express my regret that the Commissioners in Lunacy are dissatisfied with my certificate of the lunacy of M. R—; but I cannot really help it. M. R— committed no overt act of insanity in my presence, but I considered that the facts communicated to me of two separate attempts at self-destruction amply sufficient to warrant my certificate of insanity.

My experience in cases of insanity leads me to the conclusion that a patient may effectually conceal from the medical attendant every symptom of insanity during examination, whilst facts communicated to him by others would leave no doubt upon his mind of the existence of insanity.

I return the certificate, and remain

Mr. J. Roberts. Your obedient servant,
HENRY MEYMOTT.

County Asylum, near Shrewsbury, Sept. 4th, 1866.

SIR,—I enclose a copy of my letter of the 2nd inst. to Mr. Meymott, and also a copy of Mr. Meymott's reply, with reference to his certificate of insanity in the case of M. R—.

I remain, Sir, your very obedient servant,

JOHN ROBERTS, Clerk of the Asylum.
The Secretary to the Lunacy Commissioners.

Office of Commissioners in Lunacy, 19, Whitehall-place, S.W., Sept. 6th, 1866.

SIR,—With reference to the case of M. R—, a patient in the Salop Asylum, as it now appears by Mr. Meymott's letter that his certificate is entirely based on communications made to him by others, the Commissioners have no course left open to them but to order the lunatic's discharge. They will be glad to hear, however, that you have procured her readmission upon a fresh order and certificate.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Mr. J. Roberts. CHAS. PALMER PHILLIPS, Secretary.

* * The letter of Mr. Meymott, and the correspondence to which it refers, involve a question of very grave importance. We regret that we cannot agree with Mr. Meymott in his view of the course adopted by the Commissioners in Lunacy. There

is no more important power confided to the medical profession than that which enables two of them, under certain restrictions, to deprive of liberty "*persons of unsound mind*." There is no power that requires to be more carefully exercised, or that in ignorant or careless hands may lead to greater mischief. The letters we publish on the case of M. R— afford an apt illustration of the fact that it is an absurd though popular error to imagine that the certificate of two medical men can always procure the confinement of an alleged lunatic: the opinion alone is valueless; the facts upon which the opinion is founded must be given, and then the Board of Commissioners, one-half of whom are lawyers, the others medical men, are legally judges of the question whether such facts do or do not constitute a sufficient cause for the confinement of the patient. We entertain no doubt that the patient in question, M. R—, was of unsound mind, but we think it was not the less incumbent upon the Commissioners in Lunacy to ask in her case for more proof of her insanity than is given in the hearsay evidence which Mr. Meymott adduces in his certificate. The law requires the facts to be stated that have come under the immediate notice of the medical man signing the certificate, that they may judge of their sufficiency. In this case they properly asked for further legal proof, and gave Mr. Meymott an opportunity to amend his certificate. The question of the expense thus incurred is immaterial; the ratepayers of England will not grudge an expenditure incurred to secure the legal rights of the subject. The office of the Commissioners in Lunacy involves serious responsibility, and we are glad to find that they will object to any certificate, however clear the case may be, that does not exactly fulfil the requirements of the statute. In an interesting paper by Dr. Bucknill, one of the Lord Chancellor's Visitors in Lunacy, published in the *Journal of Mental Science*, are some valuable hints as to the proper framing of certificates of lunacy. If Mr. Meymott had stated such a fact as the existence of "*great depression without discoverable cause*," or "*the admission of attempts at suicide without explanation*," or some medical symptoms of brain-disorder, together with facts of two attempts at self-murder having been made, his certificate would have been valid. Such documents should be most carefully considered; that they are scrupulously scrutinised by the Commissioners is as much for the advantage of the medical practitioner as it is for the protection of the public.—ED. L.

CHOLERA AT KIDDERMINSTER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I regret to have to report a fatal case of malignant cholera, in the person of a married woman aged thirty-eight, an out-patient of the Kidderminster Infirmary. She was in her sixth month of pregnancy, and previously in good health. She was attended by Mr. Jotham, Dr. Macdonald, and myself. She died, after sixteen hours' illness, at a quarter to three on the morning of the 25th of September.

It appears that she was in attendance on an old man who died of cholera on the previous Thursday, under the care of Dr. Roden. This is the third fatal case within the last few days; and, as far as I am aware, there have been no other attacks in the town.

I am sorry to add that the drainage of the town is very imperfect; indeed, in some places there are only what is called *dumb wells*, and no proper sewerage at all.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Kidderminster Infirmary, Sept. 22nd, 1866. JOHN ROSE, M.D.

LIVERPOOL.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

If the present epidemic of cholera fails to enlighten our minds as to the character of the poison and the mode of its propagation, it may be in part our own ault, because there are facts connected with the outbreak in every new district