

lint, whereas it is barely half an inch, and only just sufficient to admit the edge of the caustic wedge thus

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MORTALITY IN LUNATIC ASYLUMS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—I have been looking with some anxiety at the observations lately made in your most excellent Publication on the subject of lunatic asylums, which seem replete with sound judgment and research. The ratio of mortality I was unprepared for, and but that your veracity is unquestionable, it would exceed belief. The returns, as far as they go at present, show the most urgent necessity for further investigation. Surely this fearful result cannot prevail throughout the various licensed establishments. Indeed, there is great reason to hope, by the letter in *THE LANCET* of the 3rd inst., from Mr. Stillwell, of Moorcroft-house, that a better state of things will be shown in the smaller asylums: notwithstanding the very satisfactory manner in which Mr. Stillwell has made his statement, the value of his letter would have been greatly enhanced had it been a little more explicit, and the return made over a shorter period of years. Perhaps he will yet state what is the average annual amount of mortality at his establishment.

It seems to me that the smaller licensed houses have a decided advantage over the more overgrown. The patients in the former constitute a little community amongst themselves, are more select in their class, participate in each other's amusements, and are more immediately under the guidance of the superintendent. I cannot but think that some limit should be made to the number of patients which each proprietor of licensed houses receives. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. FRANCIS, M.D.

Eaton-square, Oct. 10, 1840.

AUTHORSHIP OF THE THEORY OF OVARIAN MENSTRUATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In the number of the "Foreign and British Medical Review," just published (No. 20), at p. 592, is a sort of apology from the editor to Dr. Robert Lee, for attributing to M. Gendrin the credit of being the originator of the theory, that menstruation depended on or was connected with certain changes in the ovaria; whereas (evidently from a demand made upon the editor by Dr. Lee himself) he is now convinced

that, seven years ago, Dr. Lee propounded the same theory, and is, therefore, "indisputably, the first." Now there is the paper by Mr. Cruikshank, published in the "Transactions of the Royal Society," before the close of the last century, partially quoted by Dr. Lee, distinctly pointing out the same facts, and also carrying on the statement farther, by showing the analogy between this condition of the human ovaries during menstruation, and the same organs in the rabbit during *heat*. In Dr. Robert Hooper's large work on the morbid anatomy of the uterus, there is also an engraving of the uterus, Fallopian tubes, and ovaries, taken from a female who died during menstruation, showing a similar condition, and published several years before Dr. Robert Lee's paper in the "Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine." In 1821 was published an octavo volume, by Dr. John Power, containing "a new view of the nature, causes, &c. of the periodical discharge of the human female," which, although mixed with some absurdities, promulgated precisely the same theory, and even went so far as to consider menstruation to be "disappointed pregnancy;" that the same changes took place precisely in the ovaries as described by Cruikshank during each menstrual period; that great vascular excitement and congestion took place, with the formation of an actual ovum or Graafian vesicle; which, being denied, the vivifying influence of the male passed away useless, along with the menstrual fluid, which was the *resolution* of the vascular action thus rendered useless, or, as he quaintly terms it, "disappointed." Every farmer's wife knows a similar fact in hens, which constantly lay eggs ("pullet's eggs," as they are called), without the access of the male. These eggs are good for culinary purposes, whilst fresh, but will not keep, nor will they ever be hatched into chickens, however long a hen may sit over them, because they "want the tread," as the phrase is. I do not for a moment accuse Dr. Robert Lee of plagiarism in this instance, but I think the editor of the "Review" has been a little too easily induced to give that gentleman the *indisputable* priority. I am, Sir, your constant reader,

FINSBURIENSIS.

October 12, 1840.

NOTICE.—(*To the Editor.*)—Sir: I wish, through the medium of your widely-circulated pages, to inform "Mr. J. H. Goodwin, of Macclesfield, L.A.S.," that, in reply to a letter from him, dated August 20th, 1840, requesting my "Recipe," I forwarded it *by return of post*, directed as above, and, to my surprise, my letter has been returned superscribed, "not to be found."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

T. W. WANSBROUGH.

King's-road, Chelsea, Sept. 16, 1840.