cient, the excellence of the charity would invite, and infallibly obtain, the further contributions of the benevolent.

Mr. Millar's pamphlet is written in a humane spirit, and he is evidently a gentleman of much experience in the subject of which he treats.

We have been quite unable to understand the drift of Dr. Seymour's pamphlet; and if it contains any fixed idea on lunacy law, it has evaded our psychological search. Many years ago, Dr. Seymour was for a long time one of the old Commissioners in Lunacy; and he describes how, during this time, the complaints of patients in private asylums were examined into, and he affirms that irregularity was rarely discovered, and not a single act of cruelty brought to light. He says that "the comfort of patients will mainly depend upon the uniform kindness and imperturbable temper of the attendants;" and he further gives it as the result of his observation, that some of these attendants are "coarse men," "very unfit to associate with persons who have lived in refined society, and who have the least glimpse of reason;" and that "a very large proportion of them are addicted to drinking." If such be the duties and such the character of private asylum attendants in London, by what happy fatality, we may ask, were Dr. Seymour's examinations into the complaints of patients so uniformly satisfactory?

Dr. Seymour's pathological, has been as remarkable as his official, experience. He has found hardening of the substance of the brain three times as frequently as softening, and he has discovered the central ovale, or medullary portion, "discoloured, and nearly as hard as leather,"—sole leather, we should say. Morphia in melancholia, which Dr. Seymour took from the practice of Mr. Phillips, of Bethnal House, enables him to say of insanity, that "even in the medical treatment one great step has been taken."

The *brochure* of Mr. Eccles advocates an opinion which has lately attracted much public attention and favour—namely, "the segregation, as opposed to the aggregation, of the insane." The author gives rather a different account of private asylums in the olden time to Dr. Seymour. "Nothing," he says, "could have surpassed the iniquities that disgraced those true pest-houses of former days." He as fully admits the entire change which has taken place in them. At the present day, he says, "the horrors of the mad-house are chiefly those caused by the noisy *confrères*" of the patient, whose rest is disturbed, whose brain is filled with horrid phantasies by the ravings of some noisy maniac confined in the same building. This picture is doubtless overdrawn, and so is the delightful contrast of each patient with "a separate cottage *ornée*, with his own garden or pleasure-ground; his own attendant, and one or more servants; of such cottages not more than a dozen or eighteen, in park-like grounds of considerable extent; one large house for head-quarters and the residence of the medical superintendent; the billiard room, racket court, stables, &c. The patients permitted to order their own dinners from a bill of fare daily sent to them." Mr. Eccles rightly says, that the plan would necessitate large payments; eighteen patients at £500 a year each might do it, and the idea is very pretty, and not altogether Utopian. It would at least be delightful to the medical man, who would be saved by it from the intellectual and moral grind which constant companionship of the insane occasions. But is it not upon this very thing that the cure of the patient often depends?

Mr. Eccles makes a sensible remark, that harassing patients with constant visits of inspection is less likely to ensure their welfare than "stringent measures to secure that none but persons of character and skill should be allowed to take charge of them."

MEDICAL REGISTRATION.—We beg to call the attention of our readers to an advertisement which appears in this day's LANCET, from the Medical Registrar, having reference to the fees for Registration.

New Inventions

IN AID OF THE

PRACTICE OF MEDICINE AND SURGERY.

MR. BOURJEAUD'S PATENT MUSHROOM PESSARY.

THIS new pessary is calculated to give support to the prolapsed uterus without creating any irritation of the cervix or vagina, and to allow the escape of fluids. Its construction is such that when fully inflated it resembles a mushroom, the dome of which receives the cervix in a depression. The elasticity of the dome—which is, according to the circumstances of the case, more or less filled with air—affords the cervix a yielding and yet sufficiently resisting support, whilst the stalk prevents any inefficiency of the apparatus. Both dome and stalk present a cylindrical canal, which is intended to prevent any accumulation of the normal or abnormal discharges. By means of a tube and reservoir of air, the pessary may be rendered more or less distended after its introduction into the vagina; and the introduction is rendered extremely easy by the small size of the pessary when not inflated. The whole apparatus is of exquisitely smooth indiarubber, and secured upon the patient by elastic bands, which are easily adapted to a light, narrow belt running round the lower part of the abdomen. This pessary seems to answer every end desired in the construction of such instruments, and to be free from the objections which are urged against many of those which have for some time been before the profession.

THE CORONERS AND JUSTICES OF THE PEACE OF ENGLAND AND WALES.

THE following important document, as the precursor of a still more important one, has been presented to the Royal Commission now sitting to inquire into certain proceedings connected with the holding of inquests:—

AN OUTLINE OF THE CASE OF THE CORONERS OF ENGLAND AND WALES WHOSE FEES, IN CERTAIN INSTANCES, HAVE BEEN DISALLOWED AT COURTS OF QUARTER SESSIONS.

It is not possible for me to consult all the necessary authorities, and digest the material that I have in hand, before Easter. I never rely on a secondhand authority; and will neither cite, nor found argument on, anything, except after consultation of the originals. Of course the time needed is thus increased; but it is the only way in which a trustworthy view of the law can be put together, so as to deserve the respect of those who are able to appreciate the bearings of such questions. What makes this the more important is, that hitherto the law relating to coroners has not been examined in the only way that can throw real light on this branch of the subject; but an incidental Act of Parliament has been attempted to be interpreted empirically, and the result has been inconsistent, not only with every rule laid down by all the highest authorities on the interpretation of statutes, but with the most ordinary canons of criticism. Though unable, therefore, now to present the statement which I am preparing, I will state, in a few words, what I shall unquestionably be able to establish.

I shall show that the course taken by the justices of some

counties, both (1) in refusing to allow certain fees, and (2) in giving directions to police officers, is not only unwarranted by any statute, but is directly contrary to law. Justices of the peace are unknown at common law: they exist only by statute; and they have not an iota of power beyond what the letter of statute law plainly gives them. In this respect they differ wholly from the coroners.

The common law, I shall show, does not allow the coroner to act on any motion of his own or of any police authority whatever. But it *requires* him to act, forthwith, on receiving the customary information from either the recognised local authority or any inhabitant. It is absolutely unlawful for him to inquire for himself, or to consider *whether or not* he shall hold an inquest. The law puts on him the *obligation* to summon a jury, forthwith, upon receiving the information of anybody found dead, sudden death, death in duance of any kind, or death by accident; and to take care that the inquisition thereupon shall be "duly taken." Most of all has the law always laid upon the coroner the obligation to hold the inquest in every case of "accident." I shall show that while death by obvious felony has always been the subject of inquest (which, however, it would not be, were the recent assumptions of the justices even consistent with themselves), yet the general simplicity of these cases led to their never having been so much insisted on as deaths by accident. Deaths by "accident" or "misadventure"—whether violent in itself, or the result of prevailing disease—have ever been the special objects of the emphatic declaration of the obligation upon coroners to hold inquests. I shall show that the importance of every such case being the subject of an inquest was so much felt, that cases in illustration of it have been detailed with an astonishing minuteness; these illustrations including a large proportion of the identical classes of cases with holding inquests on which the justices have lately attempted to interfere.

I shall show that the law has provided a means for ascertaining that the coroners have done their duty,—but a means very different indeed from letting it be left to the justices to allow or disallow items of fees after the inquests have been held.

I shall show that the whole tenor and purpose of the statute law, as regards coroners' inquests, has been to ensure an inquest being held in every case of accident or misadventure; and that these statutes, as well as the common law, are being set at nought by the course that is being pursued by the justices, under cover of discussing the items of fees.

I shall show that the Act 25 Geo. II. c. 29 gave no power to the justices to question the propriety of any inquest whatever. I shall fully illustrate what is the meaning of inquests not "duly held;" and I shall show that the function of the justices under that Act is purely ministerial, just as in the case of "allowing" poor rates.

I shall show that what cases and decisions there have been before the courts of law on this subject, instead of supporting the attempts of the justices, go exactly the other way. I shall show that it is because those points and bearings of the matter on which the whole rests have not, in late cases, been brought before the courts, that the latter have given some decisions apparently inconsistent with the independence of the coroners, and seeming to support some of the assumptions of the justices. I shall further show that no two of these decisions agree with one another; but that, as is a natural result when conclusions are formed on false or incomplete premises, they are inconsistent as well with each other as with any possible principle;—while, on the other hand, I shall show that the well-considered judgments and established principles of the courts of law entirely destroy every foundation for the pretensions taken up by the justices.

I shall show that the result of the unlawful interferences of the justices, under cover of the question of fees, with the independence of the coroners' action, has been, to make the coroners greatly remiss in the discharge of their duties, to the injury of the public safety and interests; while I shall show that the wise requisition of the common law—which statute law has so strenuously sustained,—that an inquest shall be held in every case of death by accident, misadventure, prevalent disease, or in duance, has become in the present day a matter of vastly greater importance to the common weal than it ever was in former days, in consequence of the extraordinary increase, by machinery, traffic, and applied science, of the sources of accidents that may cause death, and of the multiplicity and subtlety of the means by which death may be caused without external marks of violence.

I shall point out the peculiar characteristics of an inquisition taken, out of regard to the sacredness of human life, on view of the body of the dead, as distinguished from any case of

charge and defence for crime; and I shall show several characteristics of the coroner's court, as distinguished from every other. I shall show the importance, to the highest public interests, on many separate grounds, that these distinctions should not, as is sought by the justices, be confounded; but that, on the contrary, the coroner's court should be maintained in the highest state of efficiency, and thoroughly independent of all interference, such as has lately been so unlawfully attempted—and, unfortunately, allowed to be carried on—by the justices of the peace in several counties of England, under cover of this question of fees; though the representative bodies of boroughs have, happily, in no case fallen into so unfortunate a mistake.

As the whole of the interference by the justices has arisen out of the matter of the fees due to coroners, I shall show, incidentally, that it is not true that anciently the coroners had no remuneration.

In a few words, I shall show that the policy of the common law, backed up by statute, has ever been, to stimulate the coroner to unremitting activity in all cases of accidental death, or death in duance, out of reverence for the sacredness of human life; that the present condition of society needs this more than ever; and that the justices have unlawfully stepped in, to the great detriment of the public interests, and assumed to themselves to override both the spirit and letter alike of the common and the statute law.

8, Serjeant's Inn, March 17th, 1859.

TOULMIN SMITH.

ON SANTONINE AS AN ANTHELMINTIC.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As I see, by THE LANCET of Saturday last, that a correspondent inquires the dose of santonine in tænia, I beg to place the accompanying remarks at your disposal.

The simple fact that the existence of worms in some portion of the alimentary canal may be considered as the exciting cause of a great number of disorders, especially in that large and important class of spasmodic affections occasioned by eccentric irritation,* will, I trust, be deemed a sufficient excuse for my endeavouring to draw attention to a medicine but little used by English practitioners, although in much and deserved repute on the Continent as a vermifuge. I refer to santonine, a principle obtained from the *artemisia santonica*, a botanical species which even in the time of Celsus was highly esteemed for its anthelmintic qualities. The use of it in a considerable number of cases has led me to regard it as a very safe and efficacious remedy, in which opinion I have been confirmed by those friends to whom I have suggested a trial of it. As regards its physical peculiarities, it is a crystalline powder of a white colour, which, however, assumes a yellow tint after long exposure to light and atmosphere; is readily soluble in alcohol and water, and possesses weak acid properties. It has scarcely any perceptible taste, which, with the small quantity which requires to be administered as a dose, forms a strong recommendation in its favour, seeing that the majority of anthelmintic medicines in vogue are very inconvenient in those respects. Its *modus operandi* is as a specific poison to the animal. It may be given in one or two large doses, or in repeated small ones, my usual method being, for a child five or six years old, according to the following formula: santonine, three grains; powdered loaf sugar, five grains; mix, make into a powder, and take one every six hours to the extent of four doses. An hour or two after the administration of the last powder, a dose of castor oil should be given to facilitate the expulsion of the dead worms. Should any signs of the intestinal nuisance present themselves subsequently, a single dose of santonine will usually suffice to free the patient.

In adults, the santonine may be given in about five-grain doses, with a supplementary cathartic draught, or a proportionate quantity of castor oil, as directed for children.

Where the *ascaris vermicularis* is the leading type of the parasite, an enema of warm water, containing santonine in solution, will be found useful; some more warm water being injected into the rectum a few hours afterwards, in order to bring away the lingering drug and dead ascarides.

My experience of this drug extends only to its use as an anthelmintic, but it is largely employed by the French physicians in many spasmodic diseases, in which its good results are most probably due to the cessation of the reflex nervous action set up by the irritating presence of the worms on their consequent expulsion.—I am, Sir, yours obediently,

WM. ABBOTS SMITH, M.D.

Hatfield Broadoak, Essex, March, 1859.

* Vide a case in point in Graves's Clinical Medicine, ed. 1843, p. 244, "Cough caused by Tænia."