6. The Pathological Society is described as in a state of mendicancy, and as dunning, *in formâ pauperis*, the Medico-Chirurgical Society for pecuniary support. An eminent member of the latter Society is reported to have said of the former: "If it were worth supporting, it would be supported; but not at the expense of the Medico-Chirurgical Society." But really, Sir, when one knows the facts of the case, and listens to the arguments employed by the opponents of the Pathological Society, it rather looks as if the Medico-Chirurgical Society wished to burden the kindred Societies with the payment of its expenses. The friends of the Pathological Society will be rejoiced to learn that it is not yet reduced to a state of beggary; but they must also see that if this untoward calamity should ever befall it, it has nothing to expect from its hard-hearted landlord but instant ejection. For the small subscription of one guinea, the Pathological Society presents each of its members annually with an expensive volume of "Transactions;" and, in order to do this, it is necessary to be careful of its funds, and not to squander them for the benefit of another Society.

7. The Pathological Society is accused of "repeated annual grumbling," and of making "frequent applications" and "constant efforts" to make known the justice of its cause. The truth is that it has as yet taken no step in the matter beyond the first letter of remonstrance when the rent was doubled. Individual members may have expressed their indignation; but they have done this without any sanction from the Society as a body. The strong expression of feeling against the Pathological Society, however, on a recent occasion, will contribute more than even the primary act of extortion to rouse it into serious action. The Obstetrical Society is said not to murmur, and is held up as a model; but, if I mistake not, its indignation is only equalled by that of its fellow-victim, whom it will gladly join in looking out for other quarters.

8. But the last statement of the opponents of the Pathological Society is the most ludicrous of all. This Society is said to have gained greatly in *prestige* by holding its meetings in the rooms of the Medico-Chirurgical Society. The truth is, that the *prestige* of the former Society was acquired before the latter ever held out its fostering (?) hand; and at the present moment, in its hold on public estimation, it may fearlessly compete with (I regret to say) its formidable rival. During the last seven years the members of the Pathological Society have increased from 277 to 374, while those of the Medico-Chirurgical Society have diminished from 604 to 586. The forty-six volumes of "Transactions" published by this Society may be had at any secondhand book-shop for eight or nine pounds, whereas the thirteen volumes of the Pathological Society fetch at least ten guineas. The meetings of the Medico-Chirurgical Society are but thinly attended, except when something unusually attractive is expected; whereas the meetings of the rival institution are almost always crowded. The president of the former has now and then to complain of a lack of papers, and the Society is indebted for support to its admirable library, rather than to the animation of its meetings; the difficulty at the Pathological Society is to find hearing-time for the numerous contributions and to curtail the discussions. This contrast is made, not out of disparagement to the Medico-Chirurgical Society, but in order to show that the Pathological Society has a *prestige* of its own, and that in this respect it gives as much as it receives. As a Fellow of the Medico-Chirurgical Society, I feel that it will be an evil day for it when the Pathological and Obstetrical Societies are roused to such a pitch of indignation as to turn their backs upon it on account of its extortionate demands.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

A FELLOW OF THE MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL
SOCIETY, AND A MEMBER OF THE
PATHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

March, 1864.

"A CASE OF DISTRESS."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I send you herewith a copy of a letter, signed "Everybody," which appeared with Dr. Birch's letter (published in THE LANCET of the 5th inst.) in the Birmingham Daily Post and Daily Gazette of the 7th inst., and I shall feel obliged by your inserting "Everybody's" letter, and this reply to it and Dr. Birch's letter in your next impression.

It is due, Sir, to the benevolent persons who have subscribed to the fund for the benefit of Mr. Partridge's widow and family, that they should at once be put in possession of the

facts of the case as they are, and not as they have been reported to your correspondent. Having performed this duty I will leave them to decide between your correspondent and "Everybody" and the Committee of the Partridge Fund.

And, first, as to the means at the disposal of the late Mr. Partridge's widow and children. Mrs. Partridge has £1500 in the three per cents., the *income* of which only, and not the *principal*, as the letter of "Everybody" would lead the public to infer, is available to the widow and family during Mrs. Partridge's life. The first half-year's dividend on which, amounting to, say £21 10s., does not fall due until July next.

Mr. Robins has succeeded to the practice under an arrangement, the details of which fairness to him forbids me to publish, but it may be sufficient for the purposes of this letter to state that it is based upon the interest which the patients feel in Mr. Partridge's widow and children, and that by it she will be entitled for seven years to certain quarterly instalments, the first of which is not payable until July next.

I apprehend it to be a sufficient answer to the somewhat ungenerous paragraph in your correspondent's letter, that "it is reported and believed in the neighbourhood that the deceased gentleman had at the time of his death a good practice, yielding at least from £700 to £1000 a year," that the late Mr. Partridge was bankrupt only about two years ago, and that the book debts due to him at the time of his death showed £140, but that they will probably realize not £120, out of which about £90 was owing for rent and taxes, debts, and other liabilities, nearly £75 of which has already been paid. So much for the book debts. It may be fairly inferred from the observation in your correspondent's letter, "that the family received some help from relatives and friends who are well able to afford it," that they were receiving substantial and permanent aid from one or other of these sources. I know little or nothing of what *friends* have given to the widow directly, but I do know that the aggregate sum presented to her by the whole of her own and Mr. Partridge's *relatives* is £35, out of which £19 has been paid for funeral expenses, and that the *rest* has been absorbed in the purchase of mourning, the expenses of moving, &c. When, therefore, the remainder of the debts are paid, I ask what funds are available to Mrs. Partridge for the maintenance of herself and family from the 6th of February, the day of Mr. Partridge's death, to July next, when the first instalment of her income becomes due? I could give sad and touching details confirmatory of the literal truth of the words of the appeal in the Committee's advertisement, but I am restrained from doing so by a feeling which is much vaunted, but practically little regarded, by Dr. Birch and "Everybody"—namely, a respect for the memory of the deceased.

Thus much for the available resources of Mrs. Partridge for the maintenance of herself and the maintenance and education of her family. And now, Sir, for their condition. There are thirteen children, one only of whom was, at the time the advertisement complained of appeared, even partially off her hands. Of the remaining twelve, one, a girl of about eighteen, is an imbecile; and of the other eleven, some are entirely uneducated, and the others barely possess the rudiments of education.

The above *facts* as to the pecuniary position of Mrs. Partridge and her family (so prettily *idealized* by "Everybody" and Dr. Birch), together with a proposal to put the subscription on, as nearly as may be, the grounds referred to in Dr. Birch's letter—namely, "a recognition of the honourable and popular professional character of the late Mr. Partridge," were embodied in a letter from a relative of the deceased, which was laid before the Committee, and discussed, before the advertisement objected to by Dr. Birch and "Everybody" appeared. I need not add that the proposal was unanimously rejected by the highly influential Committee to whom it was submitted, and that the statement in the advertisement excepted to by "Everybody" and Dr. Birch, "that Mr. Partridge had left a widow and thirteen children *almost* deprived of the common necessities of life," was adopted as the true and only ground of appeal to the benevolence of the public.

I am most anxious to give "Everybody" and Dr. Birch credit for good faith and good feeling in the publication of these letters, but I think that it was a courtesy due to the Committee that they should have sought privately at their hands an explanation of the reports which Dr. Birch avers had reached him, and that it could only have been in the event of its being withheld that they would have been justified in appealing to the Committee in your columns for it.

The result of the course which Dr. Birch and "Everybody" have adopted, is, that they have dragged into an unenviable and painful prominence the private affairs of this unfortunate family, and have done their utmost (unintentionally it may be)

to damage the cause of the widow and the fatherless, for which the Committee have so zealously and honourably laboured, and so cast an unjust reflection on the *bona fides* of the gentlemen composing that body. I may add, not for the purpose of advertising the little I am able to do, but in the hope that the statement may operate as an additional sanction, if any were needed, to the entire good faith of the Committee, that I so fully concur in the truth and propriety of the form in which the appeal has been made, that I have taken the sole charge of one of my late brother's sons, with the intention of bringing him up to the profession of his late father.

I have no business with the high-flown passage in Dr. Birch's letter, that if his suggestion be adopted, "in after-life the children may always look back with honourable pride and pleasure to this help, rendered as a testimony to their father's professional position and character," &c., as the fund already raised has been subscribed on the faith of the statement in "the printed appeals;" but I hope that the children will grow up with hearts too large to cavil at a word or two in the appeal which has been made for them, and that they will live to earn for themselves an honourable independence, and thereby show to those who have ungrudgingly extended to them their substantial sympathy in their sorrow, that they are not unworthy of the generous effort which has been made in their behalf.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

THOS. PARTRIDGE, M.R.C.S. & L.S.A.,
A Brother of the late Mr. Partridge.

Hurst-street, Birmingham, March, 1864.

To the Editor of the Daily Post.

SIR,—I send you for publication a copy of a letter which appears this day (March 5th) in THE LANCET, as to the fund raised for the family of this gentleman.

I trust that the benevolence which prompted the kind efforts of the Committee will at once induce them to accept Dr. Birch's judicious suggestion as to the mode of giving the money; it is worth doing if it were only to cherish the better feelings and aspirations of the children in after-life.

There cannot be two opinions (as the Committee will be aware, if they have not earlier discovered it, when they see my signature to this letter) as to the mistake of representing a family to be almost in hopeless pauperism, who had between £2000 and £3000 available resources of their own still left for the widow and children. The error may be presumed to have arisen from haste, and the strong feeling excited by such sudden distress.

As they will, however, need all, and more than all, the help they can receive (for there are thirteen of them), I will send another guinea to the fund (and the Committee may calculate how much that will help them when they read my signature) if Dr. Birch's suggestion, with his kind donation of £5, be accepted. And my opinion is further influenced also in this matter by respect for the naturally generous and high-toned feeling of the deceased.

If we are to do as we would be done by, let us help the families of others in the generous spirit in which we should desire our own to be helped should they ever (which may God forbid!) come to need it.—Your obedient servant,

Birmingham, March 5th, 1864.

EVERYBODY.

MORTALITY IN HOSPITALS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your leading article of the 27th ult. directs the attention of the profession to the statistics of hospitals, published by Dr. Farr, and adopted by Miss Nightingale; and in this article you call upon me, amongst others, to give the results of my experience in this matter. It requires far more space for its adequate discussion than I can ask you to spare me; but I will try to put together a few facts bearing on it, referring anyone who wishes for fuller details to the report prepared by Dr. Bristowe and myself for the medical department of the Privy Council, and which will form a portion of the forthcoming annual report of that department.

Dr. Farr's allegation in the letter appended to the statistics you quote, (Twenty-fourth Annual Report of the Registrar-General, p. 231,) is a very plain one. It runs thus: "It is evident from the tables that the mortality of the sick who are treated in the large general hospitals of large towns is twice as great as the mortality of the sick who are treated in small hospitals in small towns."

This allegation is quite in accordance with all that I have seen, if it be restricted (as Dr. Farr's statistics are restricted) to England; and I believe that the difference in the mortality depends entirely (or almost entirely) on the difference in the severity of the cases under treatment; but Dr. Farr's tables would lead to the conclusion that he connects the difference in the death rate with the difference in the size of the hospital; that is to say, he leaves the reader to infer that his figures prove a small hospital to be healthier than a large hospital, *under similar circumstances*. If this be so, a very few considerations will prove that Dr. Farr is in error, and that we possess no evidence to show that smaller hospitals have a lower death-rate than larger ones, provided the circumstances of the two are the same.

Let us take an example, first, from Paris, where all the hospitals are under the same management, and are parts of the same system, and where, therefore, the nature of the cases they receive is the same. A glance at the work of MM. Blondel and Ser, p. 127, will show that the rate of mortality in 1860 at all these hospitals varied very little, except that it was very much higher at Lariboisière than at any of the others. Now Lariboisière is to be regarded, in a sanitary point of view, as an aggregation of six hospitals, each holding about 100 beds, and ought, if Dr. Farr's rule had been a correct one, to have had almost the lowest mortality. In 1862 the death-rate at the Hôpital Cochin, which contains 112 beds, was higher (12.06 per cent.) than that of the Hôtel Dieu, with 808 beds (10.91 per cent.)

I will take my next example from London, and extract a few figures from the Statistical Society's "Journal," Sept., 1862. The death-rates of St. George's Hospital (350 beds), Charing-cross Hospital (118 beds), and the Great Northern Hospital (20 beds?), are the same—viz., 8.3, 8.3, and 8.2; while University College and King's College Hospitals, almost the smallest in London, have almost the highest death rates, 11.2 and 10.7, the latter precisely the same figure as St. Bartholomew's.

Again, let us take an example from Scotland, where the small hospitals in small towns receive equally with the large hospitals in large towns all kinds of cases—fever, small-pox, &c., not excluded. The Arbroath Hospital has 60 beds, and a death-rate calculated over seven years of 9.6 per cent. The Glasgow Infirmary has 612 beds, and a death-rate in three consecutive years of 10.4, 10.0, and 9.1. The Greenock Hospital contains 119 beds, and its mortality in the same three years was 14.6, 10.6, and 11.7; the high rate of the first year being caused by the large percentage of deaths from fever.

But if we compare our English country hospitals together, we shall see here also how very fallacious is the rule which Dr. Farr's statistics are supposed to establish. I select at random one of the largest and one of the smallest of them. I have hitherto, in quoting the hospital documents, used the ordinary system of stating their death rates. In what follows I employ Dr. Farr's method of reckoning:—

The hospital at Exeter contains 233 beds; 194 patients were in hospital at the commencement of the year 1862, and 55 died in the course of last year—a death-rate (after Dr. Farr's method) of 28 per cent. The hospital at Chichester contains 56 beds, and there were 40 patients in the house at the beginning of the year 1862. Twenty died in the course of the year—a death-rate of 50 per cent. In Dr. Farr's own table the death-rate of the Radcliffe Infirmary is 24.81 per cent., that of the Bath United Hospital, 102.56 per cent.; yet the former is double the size of the latter. On the other hand, the Hull Infirmary and the Derby Infirmary appear to be of the same size, but are, of course, very differently circumstanced. The former has a mortality of 77 per cent. in Dr. Farr's table, the latter of 35.

I cannot see how these discrepancies could be explained if Dr. Farr's rule was good for anything, except by saying that all the smaller hospitals whose names I have cited are in so horrible a sanitary condition as to balance the good effects which their less concentration of sick would otherwise have given them. If Dr. Farr were to make such an assertion, he would, of course, have to prove it, and that, I venture to say, he would find impossible.

Let us take another aspect of the case. At all our large metropolitan hospitals (with the exception of the London Hospital) fevers are freely received, and acute medical cases are daily admitted. At the largest of them—St. Bartholomew's, Guy's, and St. Thomas's*—the admission is quite free; in all

* Two of which are included amongst the five hospitals having more than 300 beds intended in Dr. Farr's table—the London, Middlesex, and St. George's being the other three. St. Thomas's, I suppose, is excluded, as no longer existing in its former condition.