have most important and controlling powers in arresting the march of the destroying power of inflammatory disease, chronic or acute.

I shall terminate this communication by observing that I think that Mr. Jeaffreson deserves the thanks of the profession and the community, for the bold step he took in advising his patient to submit to the operation. When life is immediately threatened, or when a person is suffering severely from a morbid state, incapacitating him from the performance of the duties of his station, and at the same time rendering life irksome, the course to be pursued is unequivocal, and naturally urges itself upon us. I have no hesitation in confessing that when Mr. Jeaffreson took me to the case I did not feel fully satisfied that the operation was defensible. The person had a small family, was the wife of a working man, and, although inconvenienced, would no doubt have lived many years, and would have been more or less able to protect and assist her family. By the operation she might have been destroyed; it, however, succeeded, and mine was built upon it, and I think that we may say that it opens a new era to those who may be labouring under ovarian disease, and no doubt hundreds of individuals have been consigned to a lingering death who might have been restored to the fulness of vigour and health. These cases will, I think, materially add to our confidence in the powers of the human frame to dispose of ligatures when left in cavities.

Miss Cavell's case shows that very considerable abdominal distention may take place, and the disorder may have existed for a considerable time, without being accompanied by a disposition in the sac to adhere to neighbouring parts, and should, in attempting a repetition of these operations, so much tumour be found that it will not follow the detached portion of the sac, or should adhesion prevent it, there need be little dread in opening the cavity sufficiently to enable the surgeon to see what the state of the parts really is, so that he may detach the adhesion, or content himself with separating the loose part of the sac from the substance with which it is connected, and which might not admit of removal. The attention of the profession will, probably, in future, be more intently devoted to ascertain, in its earliest stage, the character of abdominal tumours, whether the nature, circumstances, and situation, will admit of a removal, and instead of postponing an evacuation of fluid in suspected ovarian disease to as late as possible, they will attempt to remove it in its early stage.

DEFENCE OF AN ARTICLE IN THE "BRITISH MEDICAL ALMANACK,"

ENTITLED,

NATIONAL STATISTICS.

By T. K. EDMONDS, Esq., B.A., *Author of "Life Tables."*

IN the *British Medical Almanack* for 1837, there has appeared an article entitled "National Statistics," containing a full exposure of the incapacity of Mr. Finlaison, displayed in his abortive attempt at investigating the mortality of English Government Annuitants. It is there stated, (as had been previously stated in *THE LANCET*,) that in consequence of the adoption of the tables recommended by Mr. Finlaison, the English nation had suffered a loss of at least £300,000 in four years, from 1830 to 1834. This loss is ascribed to ignorance, in Mr. Finlaison, of an important principle, familiar to every person conversant in these subjects—that of *selection*. This principle has been repeatedly announced to the public; among others, by Messrs. Milne, Wm. Morgan, Deparcieux and Corboux. The principle is so extremely obvious that its truth has never been disputed: it consists in the fact, that recently selected lives will suffer a considerably lower rate of mortality, than lives of the same age of the indiscriminate population.

In the *Monthly Repository* for January 1837, there is an article entitled "Liberæ Mathematicæ," with the initials W. K. attached, professing to be a reply to the above article on National Statistics. This writer does not attempt to repel the principal charge,—ignorance in Mr. Finlaison of the principle of "selection;" and having no solid ground of defence, he endeavours to overwhelm his antagonist by a heap of vituperative epithets. "Wilful falsehood," "anonymous traducer," "he of the Almanack," "perverse article," are among the terms used. He also says of the writer of the article on National Statistics, "We fancy he does not cut the most respectable figure in the world. He has evidently been influenced by some personal pique or other, and his attack is as conspicuous for its malice as its want of ability." The "anonymous traducer" now throws off his mask, and I here avow myself as the author of the paper on "National Statistics." I challenge him, or any one else, to show, that I have been influenced in any degree by "personal pique or malice" against an individual with whom I never had any private collision. I also invite W. K. to reveal his name, and to satisfy the public that he did not write under the corrupt influence of the friends of the party whom I have attacked.

The question which I have now placed before the public is a *national* question, and the pecuniary loss of £300,000 is a small

item compared with the injury to science consequent on an incompetent individual being placed at the head of the department of National Statistics in one of the most civilized countries of the world. In my "Life Tables," published five years ago, I stated, without mentioning Mr. Finlaison's name, that the Government's Tables "rested upon the authority of a person whose qualifications for the task undertaken were unknown to the public." Having since seen the name of Mr. Finlaison repeatedly appealed to as an authority on a subject of which his ignorance has been satisfactorily, (or rather unsatisfactorily) proved, by a national loss of £300,000, I felt it incumbent on me to speak out more openly, as I have recently done in *THE LANCET*, and as I have now done in the pointed article on "National Statistics." That the nation has suffered an immense loss by the sale of annuities by Mr. Finlaison's tables, has never been denied even by Mr. Finlaison's friends. The only question to be determined is, whether Mr. F. is, or is not, the principal cause of this undisputed loss. I believe that it is impossible to exonerate Mr. F. from the chief culpability. The present writer adopts the contemptibly sophistical argument, that because the *precise* amount of the loss has not been ascertained, therefore, the fact of there having been any loss is doubtful. I would ask this shallow sophist, whether the repeal of the law for the sale of annuities on old lives in 1834, at the alleged instigation of Mr. F., was not equivalent to a confession on the part of Mr. F., that the practical operation of his tables was ruinous to the public? In reference to the stated amount of £300,000, I believe it to be considerably under the mark. A capital of *one million and a half* is acknowledged to have been embarked in the speculation on old lives; and it can hardly be supposed, that the profit expected to be realized by the speculators amounts to less than £300,000. The true amount of the loss may be easily determined, on the publication of the materials now existing.

Mr. Chadwick has recently reprinted an article written by himself in the *Westminster Review*, (April 1828), on the "Means of Insurance." He writes as a friend of Mr. Finlaison, and has now added the following note, which contains a faithful portrait of the manner in which the unfortunate "public purse" has been plundered. But Mr. Chadwick being one of the recipients of the public money, makes common cause with his fellow-pensioners, and he charges the loss incurred on the superior dexterity of the money dealers, and not to the incompetency and remissness of the appointed guardians of the public purse. Mr. Chadwick says:—"It might have been expected, that with a set of tables calculated according to a rate of mortalities derived from the

experience of the long lives of the government annuitants, that the nation would in future be protected from loss by the sale of annuitants. *But the vigilance of individuals surpassed that of the department of administration!!* It was quickly perceived, that if persons at a very advanced period of life were selected, who were in a more than usually good state of health, and soundness of constitution, *enormous gain* might be made. For example,—if the price of stocks were at $91\frac{1}{2}$ to 93, the price of an annuity of £20 a-year, so long as a person of 90 should live, was £31 19s. 10d., so that by three half-yearly payments, the purchase-money would nearly all be got back. But if the man should live until four, five, six, or seven half-yearly payments were received, the gain to the proprietor of the annuity would be prodigious, and the loss to the country, in the same proportion, great. It is well known, that several gentlemen of fortune, and it is said some banks, sent to the most healthy districts, and sought out individuals of advanced age, who were in a superior state of health and soundness of constitution, and also of long-lived families, and laid out large sums in the purchase of annuities to be received as long as these men should live. The adventurers even carried the speculation so far as to *supply the men thus selected with the comforts suitable to their years*, and employed medical men to be always ready to assist them in order to keep them alive as long as possible. After the existence of such operations was discovered, one session of Parliament was allowed to elapse before the Chancellor of the Exchequer could be persuaded to obtain an Act empowering the Commissioners to refuse annuities to men of very advanced age." Mr. Chadwick then adds, "It is stated in *justice* to Mr. Finlaison, that he was one of the foremost in his endeavours to put a stop to the mal-practice." Mr. Chadwick might have stated with truth and with *more justice* to Mr. Finlaison,—that the existence of the ruinous original "Act" sprang from the ignorance in Mr. Finlaison of a principle familiar to every actuary.

The writer in the *Monthly Repository* says, "From that day (in 1829) to this, the Tables of Mr. Finlaison have been silently acquiesced in by all Europe until they are now, for the first time, attacked by the anonymous traducer in the *British Medical Almanack*." I distinctly deny the truth of this statement. In my own case, I have during the last five years repeatedly affirmed that these tables were not worth the paper on which they have been printed: whether the results be true or false is a matter of the utmost indifference, as they can be of no possible practical utility, from this want of any principle in the conducting of the investigation. In my "Life Tables" (published in 1832), I stated, in reference to Mr. F.'s tables, "when the admissions take

place at all ages, and at various times, as in the case with government annuitants, no useful result is to be expected from a comparison, in the gross, of the number living and dying at any interval of age, without any regard to the time each individual has belonged to the society." The tables of Mr. F. have *not* been silently acquiesced in by others; and I now assert, that they have never obtained the approbation of a single individual who has devoted any considerable portion of his time to the study of the laws of human mortality.

The names of Messrs. Babbage and Lubbock are introduced, as authorities on this question; and it is argued, "That if there had been any imperfection in these tables, we hold it for certain that it would not have escaped their notice." In opposition to the negative testimony of those two eminent mathematicians, I can cite the direct testimony of two talented individuals, who have each devoted the labour of a long life to the investigation of the laws of mortality. The late William Morgan, of the Equitable Society, has published the following expressions relating to Mr. Finlaison:—"Respecting these tables we have very little information,—the values of annuities are accurate to the *millionth part of a farthing*, but they are so inaccurate in the *pounds*, as to be undeserving of consideration." Again, Mr. Corboux, in his work on Population (1833), speaks thus of these tables:—"The ministerial influence obtained a Bill to pass, sanctioning such a practical application of Mr. F.'s tables as they are unlikely to meet any where else." In another place Mr. Corboux remarks, "That Mr. F. ought to have shrunk from seeking the sanction of a British parliament to an assemblage of unharmonious and incorrect results deduced from his undigested data."

The writer of the Reply in the *Monthly Repository* has practised a most impudent imposition on his readers, by quoting, as from me, a statement favourable to Mr. Finlaison, such as no friend of Mr. F. has yet had the hardihood to make. His words are—"He of the 'Almanack' admits, indeed, that *Mr. Finlaison did his utmost to prevail on the government to refuse dealing in such a speculation unless the ages were below sixty-five.*" [The italics from the original.] Some lines further on he continues,—"But still the question recurs, why is Mr. Finlaison accused of a loss which, if demonstrable, arose out of a transaction entered into, as is admitted, in spite of his most strenuous *opposition*?" No similar "admission" has ever been made by me, and every sentence in my article on National Statistics has a directly opposite tendency. The dishonesty and sophistry of the passages just quoted consist in assuming that Mr. Finlaison, at *some time or other*, recommended that the government should not grant annuities on old lives, and

thence inferring that Mr. F. had *at all times* made such a recommendation to the government. This false inference has been drawn in spite of the notorious fact (never denied by Mr. F. himself), that the transaction was *entered into* solely at the recommendation of Mr. Finlaison, who presented his tables to the government without saying a single word as to their inapplicability to old lives. The writer, W. K., did not dare insult his readers by going through the process of drawing the false and absurd inference for himself and readers. But he quotes the inference as proceeding from the mouth of his antagonist. In expressing my opinion of this Act I shall use the words of W. K., and say,—"*Now this is a wilful falsehood, which the writer perfectly well knew when he penned it.*" The determination of the question, as to which party the stain of "*wilful falsehood*" is most applicable, I leave with confidence to the judgment of the public.

London, 46, Regent-square,
Jan. 16, 1837.

REPLY OF DR. J. JOHNSON TO CASTIGATOR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Your correspondent, "CASTIGATOR," has, by garbling and distorting an article in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review*, (of which I never wrote a line) endeavoured to prejudice the minds of the GENERAL PRACTITIONERS against me personally. In this he will be signally disappointed; because the article itself, disproving his allegations, is before the public, and to a rigid scrutiny of it I invite that class of practitioners whose minds he attempts to poison. The *object* of "CASTIGATOR" cannot be mistaken, viz., to injure me in my professional and editorial character. I defy and despise the attempt. My practice, as a physician, is *not* dependent on the patronage of the general, or of any other class of practitioners. I am just as independent as the general practitioner himself. As to my editorial interest, no man will subscribe to my journal who does not expect the *quid pro quo*, in the shape of professional information, and without reference to my politics. But why does "CASTIGATOR" conceal his name? Is he afraid? Yes! He well knows that were his real signature appended to the paper, the *cause* of the attack would be as apparent as its *malignity*. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES JOHNSON.

Suffolk-place, Jan. 15, 1837.