undertaken to ascertain whether it be possible or probable that arsenicated cigars can cause death by the inspiration of their smoke impregnated with volatilised arsenic; or by its admixture in the saliva without such change. And very important are the conclusions arrived at. "There are four ways," remark the investigators, "in which the introduction of arsenic into the animal economy may be effected through the medium of cigars: by impregnation with a powerful solution of the poison; by its introduction into the candescent end, or as an impalpable powder into the buccal end, so that it may reach and mix with the saliva during smoking; or, finally, in larger quantity hidden in the central part of the cigar. Poisoning is hardly possible in the first or second cases. In the third instance it is conceivable. It might occur by a combination of two or three of these methods. The question of the formation of arseniuretted hydrogen is not settled."

In reading this report, we seem to be transported to the days of the Borgias, when the poisoned taper, falsely bearing the motto "*aliis inserviando consumor*," destroyed other existences in sacrificing its own; and when the flowers of the ball-room were scented with alien and lethal perfumes. It is well to be assured that these fabled horrors are also impossibilities.

The mere suggestion of this most "deleterious sophistication" of tobacco must carry alarm and discomfort to the soul of any rich uncle in the habit of smoking his favourite nephew's cigars; whilst for our modern blowers of anti-blasts to tobacco it furnishes a patent and effective insinuation. This report, however, practically negatives the possibility of such a crime being successfully perpetrated; since it is only in those cases where the impalpable powder is made to mix with the saliva, in other words, where detection is almost inevitable, that this detestable expedient could be effectively employed.

THE VICTORIA CROSS.

By a late warrant from the War Office, the Victoria Cross has been conferred upon Assistant-surgeon Henry Thomas Sylvester, 23rd Regt., for gallant devotion shown in the performance of his duty during the Crimean campaign. The grounds for the decoration are thus stated in the warrant:

"Date of act of bravery, September 8, 1855.—For going out on the 8th of September, 1855, under a heavy fire, in front of the 5th parallel, right attack, to a spot near the Redan, where Lieutenant and Adjutant Dyneley was lying mortally wounded, and for dressing his wounds in that dangerous and exposed situation.—N.B. This officer was mentioned in General Sir James Simpson's despatch of the 18th of September, 1855, for his courage in going to the front under a heavy fire, to assist the wounded."

This is a sign of better times. We hope it may augur the dawn of a day when the brave devotion of our military brethren will receive all the honour which it deserves. The labours of the military surgeon call for as high courage and as noble self-sacrifice as any that devolve upon his brother officers. How great the risk of life, the returns of the Crimean and Indian campaigns will tell. It is well that even tardy justice should be done to their claims, which have been so long neglected. But this creeping slowness to reward has little of graciousness to recommend it; nor does it add to the value of the gift. Our authorities would do well to bear in mind the familiar interpretation which Seneca puts upon such delay—

"*Tarde benefacere nolle est.*"

A TALE OF A TUB.

THE philosophy of coincidence is a section as yet unwritten in the memoirs of mundane philosophy. Showers and sorrows proverbially never come alone. And so in all things. If *Mater Dolorosa* has given to the world twins, *Miserrima* in the next street emulates her performance by the production of triplets. There are epidemics of monstrous gooseberries and three-legged

calves; of dramatic poets and great statesmen; of commercial failures and social atrocities.

The details of the Waterloo-bridge murder were no sooner bruited over Europe, than the report of a parallel horror arose, to afford a seeming conformation of the old saw, and to shock Paris from its vivacity. An unclaimed tub, long warehoused at the station of Choisy-le-Roi, was opened by the officials. To their great terror and disgust, they found within a dried female corpse, mutilated and disembowelled, the hands being thrust into holes in the abdomen, as in ghastly mockery of modern French pockets. It was submitted to medico-legal inspection, and several elaborate *procès verbaux* ingeniously added to the mystery which surrounded the discovery. After much mountainous labour the mouse has crept out. The explanation has been afforded within the last few days by the publication of a letter from M. Passot, captain of the *Paraíba*, now in the north of Antwerp, addressed to M. Mayre at Choisy. M. Passot writes that the body found must be that of a Peruvian mummy, which he had discovered in a cave, and forwarded to his uncle at Choisy. The address was unintelligible, and the cask had remained unclaimed until the character of the contents was discovered on opening it.

"*Servabit odorem testa diu*," says Horace; but the contents of this cask were several hundred years past stinking. And so this poor mummy, more renowned in death than life, has been fated to excite horror, mirth, and astonishment, after lying shrivelled for centuries, during which

"Countless kings have in the dust been humbled,
Whilst not a fragment of its flesh has crumbled."

Correspondence.

"*Audi alteram partem.*"

AMPUTATION AT THE ANKLE-JOINT.

MR. SYME presents his compliments to the Editor of THE LANCET, and begs to request insertion of the accompanying letter.

Rutland-street, Edinburgh, Nov. 1857.

37, Albemarle-street, London, Nov. 17th, 1857.

SIR,—Observing that you have thought it worth your while to notice some observations which have been made respecting the ultimate results following your operation of amputation at the ankle-joint, I venture to send you the following short notes of a case in which I performed it, between three and four years since. I may mention that the operation is one that I have done several times at the Hospital for Sick Children, and in every instance, so far as I know, with complete success. With hospital patients, however, it is not often that we are able to trace their progress for any considerable period of time, as I have been able to do in this case, which, I hope, may be of interest to you:—

Sarah Fennell, aged five, was admitted under my care at the Hospital for Sick Children in March, 1854, with abscesses communicating with the ankle-joint, and a diseased condition of the astragalus and os calcis. An attempt was at first made to save the foot, but her general health, which had always been delicate, began to fail; and on June 22nd I amputated at the ankle-joint, in the manner so clearly described by you in your remarks on the operation. There was very little hæmorrhage at the time, the trunk of the post-tibial artery not having been divided; there was no sloughing of the posterior flap, and the wound united kindly.

Her stay in the hospital was prolonged owing to an attack of inflammation of the membranes of the brain, which came on about three weeks after the operation, apparently from over-exposure to the sun in the garden on an intensely hot day; but on the 30th of August she was discharged cured, the wound having been completely healed for some considerable time, the cicatrix firm and well removed from pressure, and she was able to bear considerable weight on the stump.

I saw her again a few days ago, (Nov. 10th, 1857,) nearly three years and a half after the operation. She is at a school, and she runs about and plays with the other girls, apparently

just as if she had not lost her foot. She wears a sort of bucket shoe or boot, with a little cotton wool at the bottom, and says she never suffers any pain or inconvenience in the part. The amount of shortening is much less than would be imagined—in fact, quite inconsiderable. I have had a cast taken of the leg, and as I am able to see the child at any time now at her school, if there should be any point on which you would like further information, I shall be happy to obtain it for you.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

James Syme, Esq.

ATHOL A. JOHNSON,
Surgeon to the Hospital for Sick Children.

THE ROYAL MEDICAL BENEVOLENT COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Happening to go into my husband's consulting-room, my eyes accidentally fell upon the words Royal Medical Benevolent College, at page 507 of your number for November 14th, and as I have always taken a lively interest in that institution, I could not refrain from perusing the letters of your several correspondents.

The one signed W. Dalton seems to me to evince more zeal than judgment, and to have been written under such a total misapprehension or perversion of facts, that I have no doubt you will have many others most anxious and more competent to point out its glaring inaccuracies, both of argument and grammatical construction.

Having attentively read the pamphlet alluded to, published by the sub-committee, I cannot resist, with your permission, making one or two remarks. Mr. Dalton states "another attempt" is being made "to misapply the funds of the institution," and protests against such *misapplication* to "any other purpose than that of pure charity for the aged and the orphans."

From my reading of the pamphlet, I infer that it is *against* the misapplication of the funds, and the failure of the council to carry out the intentions of the subscribers as promised to them in the original prospectus, that the committee are acting.

As one illustration of the former, I take the building of the College. The estimate was £18,000, whereas £31,000 and upwards have been expended, and the building is yet unfinished. As regards the latter, a leading feature in that original prospectus was the education of the children of the medical profession at a fixed and remunerative charge. Although this was clearly set forth from the first, Mr. Dalton now indignantly protests against it, and threatens that if carried out, he and his friends will withdraw their "*annual guinea*," which, I must confess, I think could not *very materially* affect the funds of the College.

Now, I and many others subscribed principally with this latter object in view; for in my opinion there is as much sympathy needed for those who from necessity are compelled to make an appearance beyond what their incomes justify as for the orphan. Indeed, if facilities were afforded for a more economical education of our children, there would assuredly be fewer orphans requiring the aid of charity. There is no poverty more keenly felt than *genteel poverty*. But the pamphlet seems to me to show that this original intention can, so far as the exhibitors are concerned, and with a less reckless expenditure, be made self-supporting; so that if objectionable, neither Mr. Dalton nor any one else need contribute anything towards the education of these the children of our less affluent professional brethren.

I am quite disinterested in this matter, having no child at the school; but I do think the terms "short-sighted and selfish," as applied by Mr. Dalton to those gentlemen who form the sub-committee, both harsh and uncharitable, as it can only be under extreme circumstances that any one would willingly wage war with authority.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

November, 1857.

A LIFE GOVERNOR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As a local secretary and as a governor, willing to exert myself on behalf of all the benevolent objects of our institution, I am anxious to deny *in toto* the statement of Mr. Dalton in THE LANCET of the 14th inst., "that another attempt is being made to misapply the funds of that institution," when alluding to the movement now being made on the exhibitors question.

For the benevolent objects of the Royal Medical College, I would first refer Mr. Dalton to the original prospectus issued by our much respected treasurer, Mr. Probert, headed as a

proposal "to Erect and Endow a College for the Reception of Distressed Members of the Medical Profession, or their Widows, and a School for the Education and Maintenance of their Sons." This heading was followed by the outline of a scheme, the principles of which were, I may say, guaranteed to the profession by the names of Dr. J. A. Wilson, Dr. Robert Lee, W. Fergusson, Esq., J. Bacot, Esq., and B. Phillips, Esq., being appended.

I would next refer Mr. Dalton to the printed form, by which he and other local secretaries appealed to the public to establish "a Medical Benevolent College," to include "a School, in which a liberal education will be given to 100 boys, the sons of duly qualified medical men, the majority of whom will pay £30 a year each for education, board, lodging, and washing, while the rest will be orphans, educated and maintained entirely at the expense of the Society." These appeals were most generously responded to, and Mr. Dalton will find his printed form of receipt headed "Medical Benevolent College, for the Reception of Distressed Members of the Profession, or their Widows, and to afford a first-class Education to their Sons or Orphans." The word "Benevolent" was, I believe, introduced into the name of the College after considerable discussion, to express the true design of the institution.

I would now briefly remind Mr. Dalton of Law 30, adopted and acted on for about twelve months, "that a certain number of scholars should be exhibitors, and should pay a sum *not exceeding* £30 a year." This, as all must allow, was an immense boon to the profession generally, but was most unfortunately and unexpectedly snatched from our more needy brethren by a resolution passed in August, 1856. By this, the scholars, *still called exhibitors*, are required to pay the sum of £40 annually. The section of the Act forming the excuse for thus depriving many of so great a boon reads thus:—

"It shall be lawful for the College to educate at their school, with the foundation scholars to be elected by the governors, other children, either as boarders or as day scholars, and either as exhibitors or otherwise; and such children shall be received upon such terms of payment, and other terms and conditions, as shall be fixed by the Council; so, nevertheless, that the funds of the College applicable to the charitable objects of the foundation shall not be diminished by the admission to the school of such other children."

Webster defines an exhibition to be "an allowance of meat and drink; pension; benefaction settled for the maintenance of scholars in the English universities, not depending upon the foundation." And if this definition be correct, the four Surrey scholars are now the only exhibitors at the Royal Medical Benevolent College; and I can see nothing in the section of the Act above-quoted to justify the exclusion of exhibitors from our Benevolent College. The question to be solved by the governors appears to me to be, ought there to be exhibitors at the College or not? But I cannot conceive how the advocacy of the exhibitors' cause—the prominent feature of the benevolent scheme from the first—can be considered an attempt to apply the funds to a wrong purpose.

Sincerely trusting that every medical man will not only become a governor of the College, but lend a helping hand to the cause of their more needy brethren, thus rendering the institution a more lasting monument to Mr. Probert's benevolent perseverance, and still more worthy of the medical profession.

I am, Sir, yours very truly,

Dulwich, November, 1857.

EDWARD RAY, F.R.C.S.

HOSPITAL REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Being a "Constant Reader," I have noticed with much satisfaction some remarks in a past number of your journal, on the propriety of appointing senior resident-surgeons in our large metropolitan hospitals. It is no flattery to say you have contributed, in a marked degree, to introduce many improvements in the way of hospital reform, and I hope you will not leave this stone unturned. It is, indeed, a stumbling-block and an offence that in the very institutions set apart for the instant relief of every description of casualties, a patient may actually be carried in and die before he can receive the attention of an experienced surgeon.

Now, Sir, we shall all be indebted to you, both profession, patients, and public, if by your reformatory pen this evil can be removed. As things stand at present, the unhappy wight who may have severed his femoral artery, or sustained a com-