majority to other and more social views. Subscriptions or donations to the funds of the league may be sent by crossed cheque to the Secretary, Imperial Vaccination League, 53, Berners-street, London, W., or to myself.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

E. GARRETT ANDERSON,

Honorary Secretary, Imperial Vaccination League.
4, Upper Berkeley-street, London, W., June 20th, 1903.

BLOOD PRESSURE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have to thank your correspondent Dr. C. P. White, writing in THE LANCET of June 20th, p. 1767, for a correction—the term “cubic” having unfortunately crept into the type-written copy of my address¹ in connexion with millimetres of mercury pressure, that term being, as he says, the measure of volume. With regard to Dr. White's reference to the diminution of the partial pressure of the oxygen in the higher altitudes being possibly the cause of the rise in blood pressure, it may, I think, be an important factor in the background as it were; but I am disposed to think that other causes are at work. My conclusions were strictly limited to the data observed, which pointed to the proximate causes of the rise. I am satisfied that the primary effect of altitude is to lower the arterial pressure and that in winter this effect is apparent in the medium altitudes; but that in the higher altitudes other factors of causation step in which raise the pressure. It is possible, for instance, that temperature is one of these. The whole subject requires further investigation. When the Yungfrau railway is extended to 13,366 feet a good opportunity for this inquiry will be afforded, inasmuch as the railway carriage will provide the important conditions of rest and equable temperature. The interesting paper of Dr. Theodore Zangger in your issue of this week shows the necessity for such an inquiry and I am looking forward to an opportunity of doing further work in this direction. Dr. White mentions the increased pulse-rate in balloon ascents up to the height of 24,000 feet, which is interesting, but may not be the psychological element in ballooning somewhat impair the reliability of any conclusion as to the effect of altitude on the pulse-rate?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

GEORGE OLIVER, M.D., F.R.C.P. Lond.

Harrogate, June 20th, 1903.

SYPHILIS—A QUESTION OF PROCEDURE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I should very much like to know what is the proper course of procedure in the following case.

A patient is seen at the out-patient department of a hospital and is found to have secondary syphilis with ulcerations of tonsils, lips, &c. He states that he is a baker's assistant and that whilst not handling the dough *he handles the baked loaves just prior to their being sent out for consumption*. On being told that he must not continue this work he refuses, saying that he cannot afford to give up his “job.”

What course should I adopt? 1. Should I write to his employer? If in this case he is dismissed, do I render myself liable for damages in a court of law? 2. Should I communicate with the medical officer of health of the district? And if he is subsequently dismissed owing to this officer's action, do I still render myself liable? 3. Should I take no notice and allow this filthy state of things to continue?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. GAY FRENCH, M.B. Lond., M.R.C.S. Eng.,
L.R.C.P. Lond.

June 22nd, 1903.

* * 1. The employer cannot be written to without a breach of professional confidence. But the breach would, we think, be pardonable. It is a complete answer to any civil proceedings for libel or slander that the statement complained of is true, and to any criminal proceedings that it has been made in the public interest. 2. The medical officer of health might be communicated with but his power of interference is not evident to us as syphilis is not a notifiable disease. 3. We think that a distinct warning

might be given to the unfortunate sufferer that unless he desists from his work until he is no longer infectious his plight must be revealed to his employer—a threat, the legality of which is perhaps doubtful. Dr. French should ascertain the views of the hospital authorities. This is important.—ED. L.

APPENDICITIS: A SUGGESTED REASON FOR ITS INCREASE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The occurrence at the same time in one's own private practice of three cases of appendicitis, each demanding operation, is provocative of thought. Ten years ago cases of “perityphlitis” came under notice occasionally and a certain number of people were taken ill and died from “inflammation of the bowels” or “acute peritonitis” in whom an appendicitis was probably at the root of the mischief. My recollection is that such cases were rare and I do not remember one appendicectomy at the Royal Infirmary, Liverpool, during my period of studentship, 1887–91. At the present time appendicitis is about us on every hand. The reason for its sudden increase has yet to be shown. I do not believe it to be due to any process of evolution; the same people are having appendicitis now who did not have it ten years ago. The cause, whatever it is, must be one affecting the mass of the people, rich and poor; it must be common to all countries of high civilisation and big towns; it must be coincident with the increase in the disease.

The present conditions of food-supply and distribution may give the key to the situation. Probably four-fifths of the chief perishable comestibles are frozen or chilled for transmission or collection before reaching the consumer. Chilled or frozen meat, fish, poultry, rabbits, game, &c., are notoriously prone to rapid decomposition when removed from cold store; also, they degenerate more rapidly after cooking than unfrozen articles. Following the argument it may be that the ingestion of chilled or frozen food especially liable to rapid decomposition may result in a more septic state of the intestine than in the pre-cold storage days, and this greater septicity may in its turn account for the greater virulence of those irritations to which the cæcum and appendix have always been prone.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

S. KELLETT SMITH, F.R.C.S. Eng.

Liverpool, June 22nd, 1903.

THE GENERAL MEDICAL COUNCIL AND THE ROYAL COLLEGES OF PHYSICIANS OF LONDON AND SURGEONS OF ENGLAND.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The letter of Dr. R. W. C. Pierce in THE LANCET of June 20th, p. 1768, is interesting as evidence of a “reversal of policy” on the part of the Colleges. This is to be expected. The increasing number of universities in the provinces and the establishment of facilities for obtaining medical degrees in London tend to diminish the demand for the Conjoint diploma, for no man will take a diploma when he has reasonable facilities for taking a degree, provided the respective standards nearly approximate. It is on these grounds that the Colleges should, I submit, be merged into the University of London, for though the Colleges have done good work in the past the days of the diploma are quickly passing by.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Brighton, June 20th, 1903.

FREDK. W. COLLINGWOOD.

MOLYNEUX'S PROBLEM.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. A. M. Ramsay's report of the case of a Man Blind from Congenital Cataract who Acquired Sight after an Operation when he was 30 years of age, given in THE LANCET of May 16th, p. 1364, is of extreme interest to students of psychology. There is one point on which further explanation would be welcomed. Dr. Ramsay says: “When asked to distinguish between a ball and a toy

¹ THE LANCET, June 13th, 1903, p. 1643.

brick he looked at them for a considerable time ..... and then he described both correctly." It cannot be meant that he said: "This is a sphere and that is a rectangular parallelopiped," or something equivalent. Even with normal eyes and lifelong experience it is not possible to see a sphere as a sphere or a cube as a cube. Molyneux, in stating his famous problem, supposed, as I understand him, that the patient was told that one of the bodies shown him was a cube and the other a sphere and was only asked to say which was the cube and which was the sphere. Was it in this way that Dr. Ramsay's patient was tested? Even Dr. Franz's patient, whose case is so carefully reported in the *Philosophical Transactions* for 1841, does not seem to have been tested in this way, although we may perhaps conjecture what the result would have been from the fact that he said he saw the cube as a quadrangular figure and the ball as a disc. If Dr. Ramsay's patient was simply asked to say which was the ball and which was the brick this would, I believe, be the first case in which Molyneux's problem was tried as he stated it.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Trinity College, Dublin, June 22nd, 1903.

T. K. ABBOTT.

BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Legacies to Local Charities.

Mr. Thomas Best, the survivor of two brothers who had for many years carried on a successful manufacturing business in this city, has bequeathed his entire fortune, amounting to over £100,000, to various charitable objects. The destination of about half this sum was decided by the will, the other half being left in trust to the Lord Mayor and corporation, in order that they may invest it and apply the annual income for the purposes of institutions in Birmingham and the Midland counties supported, at least in part, by public subscriptions. The specified moiety goes to various institutions in the city, the more important bequests to hospitals being £5000 each to the General Hospital and the General Dispensary, £4000 each to the Blind and Deaf and Dumb Institutions, £3000 to the Queen's Hospital, £2000 each to the Children's, Women's, and Orthopædic Hospitals, and £1000 each to the Eye and Ear and Throat Hospitals. Mr. Best was no doubt justified in trusting the disposition of one half of his fortune to the discretion of others, but that such a method of dealing with one's worldly goods may sometimes be a doubtful policy is illustrated by another series of gifts which have recently been made public. Dr. Griffiths of Washwood Heath, who recently died, had been for many years a well-known and much respected general practitioner in the eastern division of the city and one of the members of the corporation. Instead of deciding for himself as to the objects to which his money should be devoted he left the disposition of it to trustees. It must be confessed that it is difficult to suppose that the late medical gentleman would have approved of some of the objects to which his money has been devoted by those in whose hands he placed its distribution. It seems unlikely that he would have selected the Homœopathic Hospital as the recipient of £200, nor, considering the feelings entertained towards the General Dispensary by general practitioners, can one suppose that he would have selected that institution as one which should benefit by his generosity to the tune of £100. Finally, a similar sum given to the University is to be applied to the purchase of books for the department of English literature, though the medical school has many crying necessities, towards the satisfaction of which a gift of such a sum would have been very acceptable. The way in which this money has been distributed will perhaps give pause to medical men contemplating a similar method of disposing of their wealth after their death.

Medical Benevolent Society.

The eighty-first annual meeting of this society was held on May 29th, when Mr. M. A. Messiter of Dudley was elected President and Dr. E. Malins President-elect. It was announced that the invested funds of the society amounted to £15,688 4s. 6d., that there were 414 members on the books, and that a sum of £659 had been expended during the year in grants and Christmas donations. To the sum mentioned above will have to be added an amount of £5000, less legacy duty, which has been left to the society by the late Mr. Henry Duncalfe of Sutton Coldfield, subject to certain life

interests. When it comes into the possession of the society this sum of money is to be invested and called "the Duncalfe Benevolent Fund."

Hospital Saturday Fund.

Saturday, June 13th, was the day set aside for the annual collection for this fund. The full amount has not yet been received but it will obviously be larger than in any previous year. As on former occasions Alderman Cook, the chairman of the executive committee, entertained the members of that body to tea after the conclusion of their labours for the day. In the speech which he made on that occasion the alderman congratulated the committee on the fact that the prospects of raising the £20,000 which they desired were very bright. No less a sum than £278,855 had been received from the citizens in connexion with the fund during the last 30 years—a truly wonderful record. He desired to see the time when it would be possible to establish a sanatorium for consumptives under the auspices of the fund. Such an institution was greatly needed and when its establishment was possible he was confident that the Hospital Saturday executive would be able to carry on the work as well as any other body in Birmingham. The Lord Mayor in his speech strongly supported the suggestion that such a sanatorium should be started for the use of the working classes of the city.

Crippled Children.

A conference on the subject of the welfare of crippled children has just been held at the Women's Settlement in this city. It was presided over by Miss Dale, one of the members of the education committee of the city, and there were present representatives of nearly all the organisations in the country for the care of crippled children. Before the reading of papers most of the delegates visited the special school maintained by the education committee for this class of children and were shown the ambulance which conveys the scholars from their homes to the school which is situated in Dean-street. In a paper by Miss Fisher of the Manchester University Settlement it was stated that the actual number of cripples in the country was not known, but that Mr. Knipe, honorary secretary of the National Industrial Home for Crippled Boys, estimated the number in 1888 as 100,000. In Birmingham there were 537 crippled children known to the union. Dr. F. Warner estimated that three in every 1000 of the children attending public elementary schools in London were maimed, crippled, or deformed. Accurate figures about those who were unable to attend school were unobtainable. As to the nature of the disablement, more than half of the cases were due to hip, spine, and other bone diseases; infantile paralysis came next, and then rickets, amputations, and deformity. In many cases a slight injury was aggravated by carelessness and neglect or by a mistaken kindness which prevented parents from taking their crippled children to a hospital.

Deaf and Dumb Institution.

The annual meeting of the friends of this charity has recently been held under the presidency of the Lord Mayor. There had been no recurrence of the epidemic of scarlet fever which had visited the institution in the previous year. The committee had again found it necessary to appropriate £500 from the legacy fund towards meeting the year's deficiency of ordinary income, which amounted to over £1000.

Hospital for Women.

A sum of £320 has been handed over to the committee of this hospital by the Master Bakers and Millers' Association as the result of a football match and sports held in May last in the grounds of the Aston Villa Football Club. At the annual meeting of the committee responsible for the church parade and service held each year for the benefit of the Women's Hospital by the Sparbrook and District Amalgamated Friendly Societies the chairman mentioned that last year £260 were raised for the hospital and expressed the hope that this year the contribution would not be less than £300. Councillor Nettlefold said that in designing the new hospital the committee started with a high ideal because it felt that if it did not aim at the moon it would hit nothing worth having. Whilst it would strive for one of the best hospitals of its kind in the United Kingdom the committee did not intend it to be a building replete with all sorts of fads and fancies. Only a few days ago its policy of inquiring before adopting anything had led to the explosion of the merits of a much-lauded, so-called germ-proof floor. He also stated that it was reported at a