THE CHOLERA.

THERE is little to report this week as to the progress of the disease. British shipowners still continue to complain loudly respecting the treatment to which their vessels are subjected in Spanish and Portuguese ports, entailing great commercial inconvenience and pecuniary loss.

The Thames Shipping Inspection Committee met on Monday last, and received from Mr. Harry Leach a list of recommendations relative to the sanitary surveillance of the Thames. These recommendations were based upon the supposition of complete conjoint action on the part of all the local authorities below bridge, and were framed with a view to *prevent*, if possible, the introduction of the epidemic into the port, and, *a fortiori*, into the metropolis. But, inasmuch as the districts of Rotherhithe and East Ham still decline to join the union, and the Committee are indisposed to be responsible for the active conduct of any preventive measures, very little practical advance was made. The Committee appear to consider that their duty is confined to setting in motion a system of inspection *after* (and not *until*) cholera has made its appearance. And hence, in spite of the urgent representations of the Local Government Board, through Dr. Buchanan, there is still no receiving-ship for cases of cholera at Gravesend, no systematic inspection of ships that arrive in the river from suspected ports, and no definite arrangement made for the reception of any case of cholera that may occur among the shipping in the stream. If matters proceed much longer in this fashion, it will be absolutely necessary that the authorities at Whitehall should take the matter into their own hands. A conference between Mr. Simon, who would represent the sanitary, and Mr. John Lambert, C.B. (the secretary of the Local Government Board), the legal, aspects of the question, must be productive, under these circumstances, of substantially useful results. Meanwhile it is a blot on the much vaunted principle of local self-government that the waterway of the metropolis is still entirely unprotected against an invasion of cholera.

Accounts from Russia recite that the mortality at Kieff from cholera has lately averaged 90 a day, and the authorities at Suez have subjected the Austrian steamer *Sa'id*, which arrived there some few days ago from Jeddah, to a quarantine of five days before entering the canal, because cholera was reported at Khaibar. It is supposed that the disease was conveyed to the latter place from the head of the Persian Gulf.

Official reports sent to Berlin state that in the Baltic provinces 2601 persons were attacked with cholera up to Sept. 10th; of these 84 were soldiers. The number of deaths was 1273, whilst 670 recovered, and 708 are still under treatment.

At Königsberg the number of deaths has, for the last week, been greater than in any preceding week. There were 300 deaths, being, as to the number of cases, 80 per cent. Formerly the deaths were 50 and 60 per cent. only.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

ON SINGING IN APHASICS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I can confirm the remarks of Dr. Hughlings Jackson as to the power of some aphasics to express sounds by singing.

I have under my care an idiot boy of twelve, who has no real language, but has a sort of musical talent. When admitted four years ago, he used to kick and bite and resist every effort made for him; but, with proper care and attention, he soon became more tractable. He has never been able to talk or answer questions, but will pronounce a few isolated words, which he has picked up by imitation. He knows the names of a few persons in the ward, but hardly ever makes a voluntary use of them, and, like most of his class, has a proclivity for bad words. He has exhibited, however, a great aptitude for learning musical sounds, and,

simply from hearing the attendants playing their instruments, has learned many of the tunes they perform. He sings, or rather hums them to himself with evident signs of satisfaction, and with wonderful accuracy. His means of expression can hardly reach any further development, but his singing is far superior to his talking powers.

This case has a curious family history, showing how idiocy is often an instance of progressive physical degradation—I mean in the life history of the human animal. This boy's brother is in this asylum, an idiot of almost the lowest type; his aunt is also a patient here, and his sisters are nearly blind from strumous ophthalmia; while his mother is an example of moral depravity, and his father of the dense ignorance and unhealthy *physique* of these wretched denizens of the Fens.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Cambs. Co. Asylum, Sept. 1871. G. MACKENZIE BACON, M.D.

THE OFFICERING OF PAUPER HOSPITALS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have no desire in addressing you to express any opinion as to whether the medical officers at the Small-pox Hospital be in fault or not; but I perhaps may be allowed to state that the occurrence of a public scandal, such as is now under investigation, was foreseen, and, as far as could be, an attempt made to guard against it, now four years ago.

In my capacity as one of the secretaries of the Workhouse Infirmary Association, I was present in the House during the whole time the Metropolitan Poor Bill was passing through Committee. It had come to the knowledge of the Association that the Poor-law Board intended that the asylums and large infirmaries about to be erected should be officered by resident medical men only, and I was asked by several members of the House whether it would be judicious to allow such a rule to be established. I replied in the negative; and my opinions were thought of so much weight that a resolution was come to to challenge Mr. Hardy on the subject so soon as the clause came on for consideration. Mr. Brady, the only medical member present, undertook the duty, and, having given reasons similar to those I had expressed, put the question. Mr. Brady's remarks were extremely well received, and had Mr. Hardy given an unfavourable reply a division would probably have been called for; but he at once gave way, and promised that the Poor-law Board would not sanction resident appointments only. Shortly after a division did take place, and strangers having been ordered to withdraw, I found myself in the lobby with Mr. Fleming, secretary, and Dr. Markham and Mr. Corbett, metropolitan inspectors. I mention this fact to show that the department perfectly well knew what the president had undertaken, but which, as far as I know, these officials never made the slightest effort to carry out. Indeed, I have learned that when this appointment, or that to the Hampstead Sick Asylum (I forget which), was made, a manager urged that there should be a non-resident visiting medical officer, when someone, known to be intimate with the permanent officials, stopped it by stating he knew the Poor-law Board would not sanction such an arrangement.

Comment on the above is unnecessary.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,
Dean-street, Soho, Sept. 26th, 1871. JOSEPH ROGERS.

P.S.—In Ireland, where similar scandals do not occur, the large workhouse hospitals have always non-resident visiting medical officers in addition to a resident apothecary.

PARIS.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

THE change of weather which came on about a fortnight ago—it has been positively cold since—has already produced a marked alteration for the better in the health of Paris. The municipal returns for the week ending Sept. 23rd (Saturday last) exhibit the following items of mortality:—Diarrhœa, 55; dysentery, 35; infantile cholera, 17; cholera nostras, 2. Whereas the week previous the corresponding figures were: diarrhœa, 69; dysentery, 39; infantile