vessels contract the blood pressure rises, when they dilate the blood pressure falls.³ The only possible deduction from these elementary facts is that the general state of the blood-vessels in shock is that of dilatation. When Mr. Malcolm has exposed the fallacy in this argument and in others which might be presented in a similar form it will be time enough to consider his excursions into such by-paths as the effects of treatment of which his paper was composed.

Concerning the effects of treatment, it seems pertinent to inquire whether Mr. Malcolm's belief in his view of the constricted state of the blood-vessels in shock has ever induced him to exhibit full doses of nitrite of amyl in that condition. So prompt and reliable a vaso-dilator could hardly fail to produce a very impressive result.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

London, W., March 16th, 1907.

LEONARD WILLIAMS.

FIRE AT THE ROYAL FREE HOSPITAL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In order to allay anxiety on the part of friends of patients and others interested in the Royal Free Hospital which may result from the reports published in some of the newspapers respecting a small fire which occurred in one of the wards early on the morning of March 14th, I venture to ask you kindly to grant space for the following statement. The fire was caused by the joists under one of the fireplaces in the "Annie Zunz" Ward having become ignited. Owing, however, to the prompt action of the hospital staff and the fire brigade the fire was very quickly extinguished and none of the patients were seriously alarmed. I am glad to be able to state that the medical staff report that all the patients are entirely free from any ill-effects from what might have proved a very serious calamity. I may state that the hospital is fully equipped with fire-extinguishing appliances and all the porters and nursing staff are regularly drilled and instructed by an expert fireman in the use of the fire appliances.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

C. W. THIES, Secretary.

Royal Free Hospital, London, W.C., March 16th, 1907.

THE POWERS OF MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HEALTH.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I take it the reason for the existence of the medical officer of health is that he may assist to the utmost of his power in stamping out, or, at least, scotching the inroad of, infectious diseases. But the medical officer of health has not the legal peremptory power to exercise this necessary function. He has to consider who it is that makes the complaint, whom the complaint is lodged against, and whether it will pay him to take up the case at all. He is not a free agent, with all his knowledge of sanitation; with all his convictions of the existence and dissemination of the death-dealing microbe, he must wait for it to assert itself, and he cannot, in many cases, forestall it by precautionary measures. I know of a case where a medical officer of health was appointed by a town council and the terms of his appointment were such as empowered it to "kick its own nigger." This was the actual expression used. The council did kick its own nigger and kicked him out of his office. There seems to me greatly to need an extension of the Act of Parliament giving to the medical officer of health absolute power of control for the repression to the extent of his ability of notifiable diseases. Of course, he would be still liable for damages in case of malicious interference. The public well-being demands it, even if the mayor or the town clerk kept pigs in a proscribed area.

To bring this closer home by an illustration of fact, I have lately been elected on to the committee of a mechanics' institution of over 4000 members. It is shockingly badly ventilated. I have applied to the medical officer of health. He cannot help me. It is a private institution. I have applied to him for a copy of the list of notified cases to hand over to the librarian to prevent the re-issue of books returned from an infectious case—for what is more natural than that a convalescent should seek readable books? He dare not give it to me. I have written the town clerk to strengthen his hand. He agrees that the consequences might be serious if the

medical officer of health did. I have written to the President of the Local Government Board two or three times. We have spotted fever near us and around; we are likely soon to have it. I have at last a letter this morning from the Assistant Secretary stating that the Board has no jurisdiction and cannot undertake to intervene in the matter of ventilation. With reference to the library, the Board is not aware of any statutory provisions requiring the medical officer of health to inform the committee of a library of the cases of infectious disease notified to him as the medical officer of health.

I believe I have heard that medical officers of health are themselves trying to get an increase of powers and a security of tenure of office in this independent direction. This seems to be a case that is recent and important enough to help them. An amendment to their Act seems necessary if anyone will undertake to get a Member of Parliament not to consent to wait until the mare is gone before he locks the stable door. I have myself retired from practice as a dental surgeon, and having no axe to grind shall be happy to place my facts and any assistance I can give at the disposal of anyone in thorough earnest on these matters of public health.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

HENRY BLANDY, L.D.S. Edin., Irel., & Glasg.,

late Dental Surgeon to Nottingham General Hospital, Eye Infirmary, and Lenton and Beeston Orphanages.

146, Gregory Boulevard, Nottingham, March 17th, 1907.

YELLOW FEVER IN CUBA AND ITS MEANS OF PROPAGATION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In reviewing my article on "Yellow Fever again in Cuba" in your editorial comment published in THE LANCET of Feb. 23rd, 1907, you have placed me in a wrong light and consequently made me suffer an injustice which, I am sure, was unintentionally done. The concluding words of your elucidation of my writing are the following: "His article is not without interest but will hardly modify the opinions of those who concluded with the several commissions that yellow fever is propagated by mosquitoes." These words give the wrong impression that I do not believe yellow fever is propagated by mosquitoes, and there is where you inadvertently have placed me in a false light. I have never denied that yellow fever is transmitted by mosquitoes. What I have always contended from the very first moment it was brought to public notice in Havana is the conclusion of the American Yellow Fever Commission in Cuba in 1900, that "the female mosquito of the species *Stegomyia fasciata* is the only and exclusive etiological cause, and the only and exclusive means of propagation of yellow fever." Which certainly is a very different thing from what you, unconsciously, accuse me of believing. I am of opinion that although mosquitoes, no doubt, transmit yellow fever under certain and well-defined conditions, yet there are besides other means of propagation of yellow fever—as, for instance, biting flies, bed-bugs, lice, chigoes, fleas, sand ticks, and other kinds of ticks. And it is very strange that no controlling experiments had been made with these domestic insects.

Another error in your kind review of my article is that the grand total of 89 cases of yellow fever, with 37 deaths (a death-rate of 41·57 per cent.) does not cover the whole year 1906, but only goes as far as July 1st; that is, to the end of the first six months of that year. During the second semester of 1906 a great many more cases of yellow fever occurred in Cuba.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

A. M. FERNANDEZ DE YBARRA, A.B., M.D.

New York City, March 10th, 1907.

THE ELECTIONS OF GUARDIANS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I think it a pity that Mr. J. Theodore Dodd, a guardian and councillor of the city of Oxford, should attempt to drag the vexed question of out-door relief into the columns of a medical journal. His axiom that infectious diseases, such as measles, whooping-cough, fevers of various descriptions, and phthisis, may be checked by being brought to the notice of a medical man at an early stage goes, of course, without saying, but when he launches out into the general question of "out-relief" I venture to submit that this is a very different

³ R. H. Starling: Elements of Human Physiology.

matter, and to suggest to the already heavily rated medical man that in view of the terrible abuses of this system which have been brought to light in a recent Local Government Board inquiry he will do well to pause before voting for guardians who are pledged to extend the facilities for this form of relief, thereby further pauperising the recipients and placing an extra burden on his own shoulders.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

E. G. YOUNGER, M.D. Brux., M.R.C.P. Lond., D.P.H.
Mecklenburgh-square, W.C., March 18th, 1907.

BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

The General Hospital.

THE annual report of the board of management of the General Hospital shows a very satisfactory condition of affairs. The total expenditure for the year was £25,849 and the total income was £27,435, the latter being a little more than £1000 greater than the income of the previous year. On the other hand, it must be noted that the income derived from subscriptions, extra tickets, ordinary donations, and special congregational collections showed a slight, though distinct, falling off. During the year the daily average of in-patients was 304, the total number being 5204, and the cost per patient was £3 6s. 10d. Amongst the in-patients were included 1155 children under 12 years of age and of these 185 were less than two years old. The out-patients numbered 65,427, and each cost, exclusive of teeth extractions, 2s. The number of operations continues to increase; last year 3344 were performed, and as many are of a serious character they form a constantly increasing source of expense. The number of the out-patients is becoming so great that it constitutes a severe strain on the staff. Many of the cases are of quite a simple character, but their examination and treatment take time which might with advantage be devoted to more serious cases. This fact has been recognised for some time and steps are being taken to form a plan for the treatment of the more simple cases as dispensary or club patients. In the last annual report attention was drawn to a new plan for dealing with cases waiting for admission and the success of this is now recorded; it has worked so well that it is only at times of great pressure that any case has to wait a month before admission. It is stated in the report that many expressions of gratitude are received from patients and their friends but only a small minority of these are accompanied by contributions to the funds of the hospital.

The Walsall and District Hospital.

Considerable advances have been made at the hospital during the past year. Two additional wards have been built, and an additional operating theatre, a surgery for casualty cases, a new steam laundry, a disinfecting chamber, a new dispensary, and a more commodious x ray room have been provided. The income for the year exceeded the expenditure by £43, but it will have to be considerably increased next year if it is to cover the increased expenditure which will be necessary for the proper upkeep of the new departments, and the executive committee is wise in appealing at once for increased support.

The Care of the Feeble-minded.

At the annual meeting of the supporters of the Laundry and Homes of Industry, which attempt, amongst other things, to deal in a practical manner with the care of feeble-minded young women, Mrs. Hume Pinsent made an eloquent and forcible appeal for State interference. She pointed out that their society had proved that feeble-minded girls could be made useful and happy, but it was only possible to deal with a limited number. For this there were two reasons—want of means and absence of any power of legal restraint. Mrs. Pinsent emphasised the fact that the money extracted from ratepayers for the education of mentally defective children is practically thrown away, for when the school period is over there is practically no safe place to which the girls can go, and none to which they can be made to go, the result being that both they and their children have eventually to be kept at the public expense. Voluntary subscriptions have hitherto proved utterly inadequate to meet the necessities and with the regularly increasing burden of rates and taxes out of all proportion to the general increase of incomes, it

is not likely that voluntary subscriptions will increase to any great extent. It is perhaps not to be wished that they should, for if there is any chance of staving off the consideration of a difficult subject Governments are not likely to interfere where no votes are to be gained, and it is important that this should become a prominent question, for the feeble-minded and the insane are two great dangers which threaten the best interests of the State, and at present no adequate provision is made for dealing properly with either the one or the other, while both might be practically eradicated in a comparatively short time if they were dealt with in a firm and efficient manner.

Measles and Diphtheria.

We are suffering at present from a very definite epidemic of measles and it has been found necessary to close many schools. During the past week there were 19 deaths from this disease, and there do not seem to be any signs of diminution. Diphtheria also continues to be very prevalent but fortunately it is still of a very mild type. Scarlet fever has diminished but typhoid fever shows signs of increased activity.

March 19th.

LIVERPOOL.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Ladies Charity and Lying-in Hospital.

THE annual meeting of the supporters of this charity was held last week at the town hall under the presidency of the Lord Mayor. The board of management reported that, owing to the improved condition of the working classes of the city, the number of patients attended to in the outdoor department was only 1645, as against 1847 in the previous year. The number of in-patients was 295, as against 322 in the year 1905. In the school of midwifery 57 pupils were trained during the year; these attended the examination of the Central Midwives Board in accordance with the new Act, of whom 54 qualified. Professor A. M. Paterson, in moving a vote of thanks to the board of management and the medical staff, emphasised the fact that the charity was doing a great work, not merely for the relief of the poor but also in an educational sense, and this had been brought about through the harmonious feeling that existed between the charity and the University of Liverpool. Mr. J. B. Fortune had provided an operating table for the hospital. Lady Hampson had raised among her friends £564 to provide necessities for the patients without trenching on the honorary treasurer's funds. The out-door department is now fully utilised by the medical students at the University for the purposes of practical midwifery under the supervision of Professor Henry Briggs.

The Proposed New Dental Hospital.

The committee of the Liverpool Dental Hospital has decided to make a public appeal for the erection of a new hospital. The present building—which is a converted dwelling-house in Mount Pleasant and has been used as a hospital for nearly 30 years—is now totally inadequate for the needs of the charity. It has been altered and enlarged from time to time until now all the available space is occupied. In every respect the accommodation is insufficient. The space available for operating-rooms and laboratories is far too limited. The sanitary condition of the hospital is also unsatisfactory. This hospital is the only dental hospital in Liverpool and is largely used by the poor of the city. During the year 1906, 23,982 patients were treated. Over 30,000 operations were performed and of these about 11,000 were operations not for the extraction but for the preservation of the teeth. With more adequate appliances and accommodation the number of operations in this category would be greatly increased. The Dental Hospital is affiliated to the University of Liverpool through the school of dental surgery, the dean of which has a seat at the medical faculty. By this means two important ends are gained. Without the assistance of the students the greater portion of the work accomplished could not be undertaken by the staff of the hospital, and without the practice of the hospital the school of dental surgery could not exist. It is estimated that the cost of a new hospital will be about £10 000, including equipment. Promises of support already received amount to over £5676,