

some assistance to the large body of general practitioners, and that is: let every patient attending a hospital or charitable institution produce as his passport a certificate signed by a medical man and a responsible householder—the first as evidence that the patient's case *requires* hospital treatment, and the second that the case is a deserving one. There are vast multitudes now daily attending our hospitals whose advice costs them from two to three shillings, besides the loss of time and unpleasantness of dreary waiting, which they prefer to undergo rather than pay for the services of their nearest medical man. Many club patients, too, elect to follow the same course, and some believe they do their club doctor a kindness by going to the chemists and obtaining advice and medicine, if the time is not during the doctor's regular hours.

On the question of club and cheap dispensary work I think that the dignity of the profession would better be maintained if contract prices were offered for *individual* services, such prices to be regulated according to the means of the patient and the amount of service rendered, as it seems to me *infra dig.* to accept so many members at so much per head per annum, when some of those members are earning from three to five times as much as others; and some—indeed, many—make use of their club card to call upon the doctor on the smallest trouble.

In conclusion, let me say that we sadly want a stronger fraternal feeling in our professional work, and I think in every neighbourhood the “brother chips” should have a little more social intercourse, meet occasionally, and discuss and settle these vexed questions of charges, &c.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Mitcham, S.W., Nov. 14th, 1888. HENRY LOVE, M.B., &c.

“ALLEGED EXTRAVAGANCE OF HOSPITALS.”

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The hospitals of London owe you a debt of gratitude for your leading article upon Mr. Michelli's paper, not excepting the Seamen's and St. Mary's, which may very well ask to be saved from so doubtful a friend.

Several of your contemporaries which have given currency to the observations you condemn could find no space for the correction every reputable hospital is capable of affording, so that your exposure of Mr. Michelli's facts is the more welcome. Unfortunately, THE LANCET is scarcely read by the classes most likely to be led astray; otherwise, we might hope for a better and more widely disseminated knowledge of the bearings of the hospital question, and for a more correct appreciation of the value or worthlessness of individual institutions. It appears to me that Mr. Michelli's paper supplies the last illustration of the meddling which is not wholesome criticism, and of the over-hasty generalisation which is prolific of fallacy. No doubt some spurious “hospitals” exist of whose authorities every charge he formulates is true, including the expending of 50 per cent. of their receipts in commissions, printing, and stationery; but when this statement is levelled against the hospitals as a body, without an effort to discriminate, we do not err in stigmatising it as pernicious nonsense. The writer of the paper on Hospital Extravagance is more reckless than courageous. He shows absolute indifference about the consequences of a most astounding accusation which he is at no pains to verify, yet he is afraid to adduce one single instance in support of his assertions. Other people, who have a longer intimacy with hospital administration, can be as righteously severe over the extravagance of the system, or want of system, which obtains—as shown in the multiplication of hospitals and the keen struggle for existence forced upon valuable institutions by the unrestricted competition of the unworthy; but they are at least alive to this—that the work of the London hospitals, as a whole, deserves well of the community, and that it is indispensable. Yet Mr. Michelli, who claims to have gained his experience “as resident during over eleven years in two of the most important metropolitan hospitals,” delivers his attack with a light heart upon friend and foe alike, and appears as blind to the difficulties he is placing in his own path as he is indifferent about those he would impose upon others. Unhappily, only too many people are quick to seize upon any excuse for not giving, and when Mr. Michelli has succeeded—as you predict will be the case, though we must hope not to the extent you fear—in lessening the

volume of subscriptions, he will have reaped the reward his paper entitles him to. But both he and the Hospitals Association—without whose aid his paper would never have seen the light—must take heed to their ways if they would not incur the charge of being false to the course they affect to serve.—I am, Sirs, your faithful servant,

Dec. 26th, 1888.

B. BURFORD RAWLINGS.

ON THE ATTACK OF LEAD BY SOME KINDS OF WATER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the course of my work I have met with a very interesting example of the attack of lead by drinking water. The water came from a gathering ground in the north of England, and contained very little mineral matter—viz., only 4·13 grains per gallon, consisting of—

Silica	0·61 grains.
Chloride of iron	0·10 „
Chloride of magnesium	1·04 „
Sulphate of magnesia... ..	1·20 „
Sulphate of lime	0·83 „
Sulphate of soda	0·35 „
	4·13 „

There was also a little free acid capable of saturating 0·14 grain of lime per gallon of the water. Experiment showed that this water dissolved lead very rapidly—so rapidly, indeed, that a few hours' standing in a lead pipe caused such contamination with lead as to render the water unfit for use. The water came from the neighbourhood of Sheffield, and the remedy which ought to be applied is the addition of a small proportion of lime to the water.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

J. ALFRED WANKLYN.

Westminster Chambers, Victoria-street, Dec. 28th, 1888.

MEETING OF EDINBURGH MEDICAL STUDENTS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—At a meeting of senior medical students of the University of Edinburgh, held yesterday in the Oddfellows' Hall, the following motions were put to the vote and carried.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

WM. LYON MACKENZIE,

University of Edinburgh, Dec. 19th, 1888.

Chairman.

“1. That this meeting desires to express its disapproval of the discourteous and undesirable disturbances which have recently been made by a small section of the students in the professorial classes.

“2. That this meeting also protests against the misleading accounts and unwarranted exaggerations of the disturbances that have been reported in the public press, and resolves that notices of these resolutions be communicated to the principal medical and other newspapers.”

* * The above was inadvertently omitted from our last issue.—ED. L.

THE DISCUSSION ON CHRONIC ALCOHOLISM AT THE PATHOLOGICAL SOCIETY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Will you allow me to correct your report of my remarks on Chronic Alcoholism at the Pathological Society, which have been so condensed as to fail to present the results I put before the Society? I compared the cases of cirrhosis of the liver which had been found in the post-mortem room at Guy's Hospital between the years 1875 and 1886 inclusive, in the reports of which the patients were definitely stated to have been chronic drunkards (89 in number), with the 130 cases of cirrhosis which had occurred between 1875 and 1883 collected by Dr. Price, and those previously collected by Dr. Fagge. The results in the main agreed, except that granular kidneys were found in one-fourth of the cases in which the livers were less than sixty ounces, and in one-sixth in which they were greater than sixty ounces; the corresponding figures in Dr. Price's tables being one-tenth and one-fourth. In

almost half of these cases of cirrhosis the kidneys weighed over ten ounces, and in twelve cases over fifteen ounces, excluding those cases in which cardiac failure, lardaceous disease, or other cause of renal enlargement existed. Many of these kidneys appeared to be mainly hypertrophied. In the remarks quoted on the relation of tubercle to alcoholism, I referred only to cases of alcoholic hepatic cirrhosis, of which eight occurred in 1883, six dying with acute tubercle and one with fibroid phthisis; but over the whole series for twelve years only 22½ per cent. had tubercle. I also stated that two-thirds of the cases of cirrhosis dying under forty have tubercular lesions. I am, Sirs, yours truly,

St. Thomas-street, S.E., Jan. 1st, 1889.

G. N. PITT.

EDINBURGH.

(From our own Correspondent.)

NEW YEAR'S DAY IN EDINBURGH.

HOGMANAY DAY is, in Scotland, far more important as a holiday than is Christmas Day. This year it was celebrated with the usual festivities. There was probably as much drinking and even as much drunkenness as usual, but there seem to have been no serious accidents, though a number of cases of cut head and other minor casualties are reported. The worst feature about this "drinking in" of the New Year custom is the large number of young people of both sexes who are to be seen, in all stages of intoxication, in the streets, especially in the early hours of New Year's Day.

THE FUTURE OF MEDICINE.

The *Scottish Leader* in its review of the work of the year 1888 comments on the amount of detailed research work carried on both in this country and abroad to advance the science and practice of medicine and surgery. This is compared with the work done in connexion with the improvement of mechanical inventions, and it is suggested that arising out of the "sub science of bacteriology" there is a most satisfactory tendency to replace the still too individual treatment by a wider attention to social hygiene. The importance of this is further insisted upon in reference to the effect of overcrowding of the profession on professional work. The writer says, "We may have to look to the very overstocking of the medical profession for the compulsory development of a sufficient amount of personal leisure for scientific research and for civic interests and duties. For the average medical practitioner is at present too busy to attend to these as fully as could be wished." This is certainly the case in Germany.

THE HEALTH OF EDINBURGH FOR THE YEAR.

Dr. Littlejohn, in his annual report, gives the annual mortality as 4374, or 16·64 per 1000. Of course it is the usual story. A high death-rate of infants under one year; no less than 962, or 3·43 per 1000. Diseases of the chest carried off at least 1477, or nearly 5·62 per 1000; and zymotic diseases 306, or 1·16 per 1000 only of the total deaths. The intimations of cases of infectious disease during the same period were in all 4978, in which were 3836 cases of measles, 618 of scarlatina, 255 of diphtheria, 245 of typhoid fever, 23 of typhus fever, and only one of small-pox. Of the 7500 births, 8·73 per cent. were illegitimate. During the year there were treated in the City Hospital 1099 patients (including 181 in hospital on Jan. 1st last), with a mortality of 62, or 5·64 per cent.

The late ex-Provost Prough, of Dundee, has bequeathed £100 to the Edinburgh Medical Missionary Society.

Edinburgh, Jan. 2nd.

IRELAND.

(From our own Correspondent.)

DUBLIN.

THE DUBLIN BARRACKS: TYPHOID FEVER.

A LARGE amount of attention has recently been directed to the sanitary shortcomings of the Royal and other barracks in Dublin, and the alleged prevalence and comparatively large mortality from typhoid fever in those institutions.

That the Dublin barracks are badly constructed, and that insanitary conditions exist, cannot be doubted; but, at the same time, it would seem to appear that the prevalence of typhoid fever among soldiers located in Dublin as contrasted with the civil population has been exaggerated. Typhoid fever, it may be said, is never absent from Dublin, and all practitioners in this city are tolerably familiar with the fact that during the year now closed the disease has extensively prevailed among all classes of the community. A very large number of cases have been treated during the last twelve months in private practice, and a considerable number admitted into the various hospitals. In order to determine whether there has been an increase in the mortality from typhoid fever among the inmates of the Dublin Barracks, as compared with the general population, it is absolutely necessary, as pointed out in a previous number of THE LANCET, that this comparison should be confined to the population at the military ages, and these ages distributed alike in the two classes. I do not for a moment wish to say anything in favour of the sanitary condition of the Dublin Barracks, more especially the Royal Barracks, the drawbacks of which latter institution have been pointed out by Sir Charles Cameron and Dr. Grimshaw in their report issued early in 1888; but I am of opinion that the imperfectly drained subsoil of the city is a fertile factor of the disease, and that until we possess a proper main-drainage system for Dublin, and a thorough remodelling of the connecting drains from the various houses, we cannot expect to escape occasional visitations of typhoid fever. In the House of Commons last November, Mr. Stanhope, in reply to a question bearing on the matter, said that most of the recommendations of Sir Charles Cameron's Commission had been carried out, and that nearly all the remainder were in course of execution. He also stated that he had determined to institute a further wholly independent inquiry into the sanitary condition of the Royal and Wellington Barracks, and had appointed a sanitary engineer of eminence, Mr. Rogers Field, to undertake it. It is probable that the inquiry will be extended to all the barracks in Dublin, and pending the report I shall reserve any further observations on the subject.

THE LATE SURGEON ROBERT POLDEN.

The death of this gentleman, who belonged to the Indian medical staff, took place at Calcutta on the 2nd December, from an attack of Asiatic cholera. Mr. Polden was educated in Trinity College, Dublin, and gained honours in various subjects during his distinguished career at that University.

NATIONAL CHILDREN'S HOSPITAL, DUBLIN.

A series of grand costume recitals, with lime-light effects and *tableaux vivants*, will take place, under the patronage of her Excellency the Marchioness of Londonderry, on the 10th and 12th inst., in aid of the funds of this hospital. The silver *fête*, recently held, contributed a net sum of £184 11s. 9d., a result which must be regarded as satisfactory.

The new wing of the Royal Hospital for Incurables, which is intended principally for cancer and consumptive patients, is making considerable progress, and a special appeal will shortly be made for the funds required to complete it.

Dublin, Jan. 1st.

PARIS.

(From our own Correspondent.)

SEWAGE DISPOSAL.

WITH reference to my last letter, concerning the disposal of the sewage of Paris, I may mention that the first reading of the report of Dr. Cornil has been favourably received at the Senate. In concluding his report Dr. Cornil made the following statement:—"Our hospitals are the great centres where are accumulated patients affected with contagious or microbial affections. The dangerous matters, such as the sputa of phthisical subjects, the dejections of patients affected with intestinal ulcerations or simply of general maladies, the linen of dressings, everything which proceeds from wounds or suppurations, &c., should be disinfected on the spot, before leaving the hospital, by chemical procedures or by well-known heating measures." In con-