ribs so altered as to admit of the bones being readily snapped between the finger and thumb in subjects undergoing post-mortem examination. We also know as a fact that fractures of ribs may occur without any history of violence, as the records of some asylums prove. It is undoubtedly a matter for serious regret that the immense fields of pathological research possessed by many of these institutions should be so inadequately cultivated. Judging from my own experience of one of the principal public asylums with which I was for some years connected, the opportunities of garnering valuable pathological knowledge is too lightly esteemed. I occasionally contributed a few more important specimens of disease to the Pathological Society and Hunterian Museum, but it was, to my mind, simply deplorable that so little in the way of cultivating a collection of specimens to elucidate particular forms of disease was ever attempted. The bare records of each autopsy was invariably entered in a book provided for the purpose, but beyond this nothing. Had the opportunity ever occurred, it had been my intention to have established a museum of pathology in that asylum, and I strongly suggest that by such means a greater impetus would be given to work of this important description. Indeed, scientific work in our public asylums, especially in connexion with the deadhouse, cannot be too urgently insisted on. While writing on this subject I should like to offer another suggestion—viz., that all the attendants be subjected to a system of special training, as nurses are in general hospitals. I do not know if under the present improved management such a system is carried out, but it is undoubtedly one of great importance, no less for the patients than for the attendants themselves, that they should be carefully trained and instructed in their duties. Apologising for the length of my communication,

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

J. HAWKES, M.D.

Queen's-park terrace, W., Dec. 22nd, 1884.

COCAINE AS A LOCAL ANÆSTHETIC.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In spite of all that has lately been written about cocaine, we have probably much more to learn of the valuable properties of this drug as a local anæsthetic. Last evening I had occasion to recommend circumcision upon a patient, aged twenty-three, who had come to consult me in the surgery. Having explained to him the nature of the new drug, he readily consented to give it a trial. A 4 per cent. solution of the hydrochlorate of cocaine was made in distilled water, and of this 4 minims were injected through the foreskin at four different points—one on the dorsum, one near the frænum, and one on either side—altogether sixteen minims. In about twelve minutes anæsthesia was complete all round, and with the assistance of Mr. R. B. Hughes, of University College, the operation was performed, the patient watching the proceedings with considerable interest, and being greatly surprised at feeling no pain whatever after the pricking of the needle for the hypodermic injection. It will be observed that rather a large quantity was injected, yet, so far as we could make out, no constitutional effects whatever were produced upon the patient, and the local effects lasted long enough for the man to walk home and go to sleep without feeling any pain. This morning, however, he tells me that he awoke twice in the night with pain. I have never before performed this operation without chloroform, the administration of which must always involve some risk and a very considerable amount of trouble.—I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

OWEN PRITCHARD, M.D.

Southwick-st., Hyde-park, W., Dec. 23rd, 1884.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I was consulted this morning by a patient suffering from the various symptoms of stricture of the urethra. The urethra was in this instance so very sensitive, and the patient so nervous, that I found it quite impossible to make a satisfactory exploration. Having by me a 4 per cent. solution of a new sample of muriate of cocaine, just manufactured by Corbyn and Co., I injected half a drachm, and retained it within the urethra for five minutes. I found that I could now pass a metal bulb almost without pain, and

easily made out a stricture of 17 millimetres circumference, in a urethra of 30 millimetres normal calibre, at a distance of 4 centimetres from the meatus. I now attempted to make a more complete examination with the urethrometer, but found that the urethra beyond the stricture was still very sensitive. I injected some more solution of cocaine, and this time caused it to be retained nearly half an hour. Finding that I could apparently now perform any manipulation upon the urethra without pain, and not finding a deeper stricture, I determined to operate at once, and divided the stricture with my modification of Otis' urethrotome up to the normal calibre of the urethra. The patient informed me that the operation was almost entirely painless. As patients generally complain of a good deal of pain while the instrument is being screwed up to put the stricture tissue on the stretch, the absence of it upon this occasion is more worthy of note. Of course definite conclusions cannot be arrived at by the result of one case, but the prospect seems very promising. If the observations of other medical men and my own future experience shall be found to coincide with the result of this case, I think we shall find that operations upon the urethra will be greatly facilitated by the use of this drug. By dispensing with a general anæsthesia, we render the patient able to assist the operator by his intelligent co-operation. I am of opinion that it will be found that the passage of the large instruments and evacuating tubes used in our modern operation of lithotomy can be rendered entirely painless by a preliminary injection of this drug, and the treatment of irritable stricture by dilatation robbed of more than half its terrors.

Yours faithfully,

GEORGE HERSCHELL, M.D. Lond.

Moorgate-street, E.C., Dec. 20th, 1884.

LIVERPOOL.

(From our own Correspondent.)

CHRISTMAS CHARITIES.

THERE seems every prospect that in this city the wishes expressed in last week's issue of THE LANCET will, to a very considerable extent, be realised. Our present mayor, Alderman David Radcliffe, has originated the happy idea of presenting 1000 "hot pots" to the poor on Christmas Day. They are to be distributed through clergy, priests, and ministers well acquainted with the poorer classes. Each "hot pot" is to contain 10 lb. of meat and potatoes, to be accompanied by a large loaf of bread, and to be supplied by a well-known firm, whose name is sufficient guarantee of the excellence of their quality. As might have been expected, such munificent generosity has proved contagious. Another gentleman has promised 500 "hot pots" to the deserving poor of St. Jude's district, to be distributed through its present incumbent in charge. A third generous donor promises a quart of best ale to each holder of a ticket for the mayor's bounty. A fourth has promised to distribute 1000 $\frac{1}{2}$ lb. packets of good tea. It is possible that in the interval between now and Thursday further generous donations may be announced. For many years past Christmas breakfasts have been provided to a number of the deserving poor, and this is to be repeated on Thursday. Hence, for at least that day, starvation will be forgotten by many, and a large number of the hungry will be filled with good things. Judging also by past experience and present appearances the poor in all the local hospitals will be well cared for, and their Christmas be made happy, if it cannot be made merry.

DEATHS OF LOCAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS.

Many old associates of King's College will learn with deep regret of the death of Mr. George Henry Snape, which occurred on the 13th inst., after a long and painful illness, at the early age of forty. The deceased was the second son of Mr. Joseph Snape, who still lives and enjoys excellent health, and who formerly enjoyed a large practice as a dentist, first in Chester, then in Liverpool. He was joined by the deceased about sixteen years ago, and on the retirement of the former some years ago the whole of the practice was carried on by the deceased, aided by competent assistants. His death is sincerely lamented by a large circle of friends, professional and general, to whom he had greatly endeared himself by his amiable temper and genial manners. The deaths are also announced of Mr. Arthur Prince May, surgeon, of Crosby;