In pondering over this mighty evil, I considered that the *débris* of three millions of people, mixed with all the rain-falls and streams, are too great to be conquered by our engineering or chemical philosophers. But, even if practicable, it would be so only after dealing destruction all around in the shape of sewers, great and small; and as to separating it after its accession to the mighty river, the idea could only be broached in an "Arabian Night's Entertainment." Then the question remains, whether the *evil can be nipped in the bud*—whether, in fact, all animal excreta can be conveniently disposed of without poisoning either the *drains* or the river? Our only plan, I think, is to take the *evil at its source*; and it occurred to me that probably this could be effected by means of very *porous vessels* (without holes at the bottom), made so as to fit into or take the place of the watercloset pan; the aqueous portion would thus drain through, leaving a solid residuum, which could be emptied into the dust-bin at stated periods. Perhaps a very porous vessel of compressed carbon could be so prepared, which would likewise have the effect of destroying as they arise all effluvia from the excreta, or a mixture of porous carbon and clay, prepared as earthenware. If this plan could be carried out, and found to answer practically, every *watercloset throughout the kingdom having any connexion with a drain or stream* should be fitted up in this manner, so that all the streams in the land would be pure and undefiled; for the carbon would absorb even the ammonia, leaving nothing more than a little saline matter to mingle in the stream. The drains from stables, cow-houses, and offensive manufactories would be similarly intercepted by large carbon or such-like filters; and if the kitchen sinks were also made thus, all organic remains would be detained for their proper destination, the dry dust-bin, and ultimately the ground.

I trust the importance of the subject will be sufficient apology for thus trespassing on your valuable space.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAMES JOSEPH CREGEEN, M.D., F.R.C.P.E.

Plough-road, Rotherhithe, Dec. 1859.

ON THE ACTION OF WOORARA.

[LETTER FROM DR. G. HARLEY.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—My attention has been called to a letter in THE LANCET of the 17th inst., said to be from the pen of a "M. Jules Broca." Although I doubt very much if there exist such a person, and the assertions made in the letter are so palpably absurd that it is unnecessary to refute them, yet as some of your readers may be dazzled by the authorities he cites, I may mention that he not only misquotes them, but that he even appears not to know their proper names, for he splits one of them up into two, and misspells another.

He speaks of two grains of woorara as if it were a small dose for a pigeon; but if so, what ought to be the dose for a man, who, I suppose, will weigh at least 200 times more? Then, again, the said "M. Jules Broca" talks of experimenting with the alkaloid woorarine! I wish he had at the same time told us how to get it, for, as far as I am aware, no chemist has yet been able to crystallize such a substance.

Your learned correspondent ends by telling us that woorara is absorbed in substance (!) by the stomach, a fact no less startling than new. Physiologists will no doubt duly appreciate this discovery, for heretofore they have taught us that a substance to be absorbed must first be dissolved.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Harley-street, Cavendish-square,
December, 1859.

GEORGE HARLEY, M.D.

THE EDINBURGH AND LONDON COLLEGES, AND THE JOINT LICENCE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your pithy leader of the 10th inst. we all read here with pleasure, for it is pleasant to know that what we have done is approved elsewhere, and to be held up as an example to the London Colleges. But we are in no hurry to see the London Colleges unite for a joint examination, for they are now playing into our hands by delaying to do so. Especially is the College of Physicians doing so to her Edinburgh sister, by delaying to open her licence to the student and general practitioner. The increase of students in Edinburgh is a good omen, as well as a commencement of reward to our Colleges for their activity in carrying out the co-operation, and in fearlessly raising the standard of education.

But the Edinburgh College of Surgeons has too good reason to complain of the conduct of the London College in not having instituted a preliminary examination. Why does it only keep on announcing its intention of doing so? It is long since the Edinburgh College instituted a formal preliminary examination, and this year it has been raised; being precisely the same as that for the double qualification. Notwithstanding this rise, the number who have gone up for the preliminary examination in Edinburgh this year is much greater than in any previous year. How long are the London licentiates in surgery to continue not only untried in anything but anatomy, physiology, and surgery, but, it may be, absolutely uneducated and unfit to be members of a liberal profession?

The Edinburgh College has, however, a still better ground of complaint against the London College in its delaying to extend the period of study. While no student who began this session can obtain an Edinburgh diploma in less than four winter and three summer sessions, the London College falls short of this by a year. The Medical Council assume the four sessions as a matter of course; for they recommend that the final examination be not allowed "until after the termination of the fourth winter session." The London College may depend upon it that unless it speedily follow our example, its conduct will be formally brought before the Medical Council. It cannot be allowed to go on admitting to the status of professional men the illiterate, the professionally half-educated, the unripe. I trust that before the next general meeting of the Medical Council the London College will have come forward with these two proposals for its sanction:—1. A preliminary examination, not inferior to that of the Edinburgh College, for all who come up to pass after that date. 2. That four winter and three summer sessions be required from all who commence their studies (i.e., attendance on medical classes) after September 1st, 1859.

The co-operation with the College of Physicians for the double qualification is merely a matter for the interest of the Colleges and for the convenience of the student, saving both the expense and the annoyance of two examinations. The longer the London Colleges delay it, the worse for themselves.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Edinburgh, Dec. 16th, 1859.

F. R. C. S.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your leader of the 10th inst., upon the junction of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons of England, and the adjusting of a joint examination, you say: "If anyone can suggest a single valid reason against the immediate adoption of this measure, it is high time that it should be made public."

Quite so. Let those who can defend the present degrading union of *surgeon and apothecary* do so; but if unable to substantiate their position, then let them gracefully acknowledge the necessity for a change of things, and leaving the Hall to its legitimate occupation of attending to the purity of drugs, let the teaching of medicine be entrusted to its proper and legitimate source—the College of Physicians, and a creditable and gentlemanly qualification be at once made available to all.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

December, 1859.

STUDENS.

A CASE OF DISPUTED LUNACY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am much obliged to you for referring, in THE LANCET of last week, to the case of Alfred Godfrey, as it affords me an opportunity, as one of the medical men who signed a certificate of his lunacy, of shortly stating the facts of the case. The newspaper reports of the proceedings before the police magistrate were (as is usually the case when the penny-a-liner has to deal with lunacy questions and "mad doctors") grossly inaccurate. Alfred Godfrey was never admitted as a patient into Bethlehem Hospital, and consequently could not have been, as represented in the police report, "discharged twenty minutes after having been received." He was not taken into the hospital because the authorities had ascertained that he had been for more than *twelve months* insane, and was therefore (in conformity with the rules of the asylum) inadmissible as a patient. There was no doubt expressed, at the time of the preliminary examination before the committee, as to Alfred Godfrey's insanity, or suggestion made as to the inaccuracy of the medical certificate. Since being refused admission into Bethlehem, two independent medical gentlemen have seen and examined him. He is now, on their joint certificates, confined as a lunatic in Colney-hatch Asylum.