the condition of abandoning what every true physician must always look upon as the chief aim and glory of his life—the treatment of the sick.

It is said, moreover, by the advocates of the separation of sanitary from curative practice, that medical men in general practice will not venture to offend influential persons who are, or who may become, patients, and therefore it is necessary to keep them free from official and sanitary duties. Now, there may be many reasons in individual cases against a medical man in private practice accepting or retaining sanitary duties, and during my ten years' experience as the administrative head of a staff of medical officers of health, several of whom were in private practice, I may be supposed to have been cognisant of their difficulties and of my own; but I do not hesitate in asserting that of all the reasons against the conjunction of the two functions, the above cowardly and unworthy one is the least deserving of serious notice. Medical men in practice do not consider themselves disqualified from accepting the post of medical officer to an insurance company; yet the duties of such an office, if faithfully performed, are far more likely to disoblige, or even to alienate, individual patients, or possible patients, than those of a medical officer of health; indeed, there is no kind of duty in this world involving grave responsibility which is not at times apt to be discharged under a painful sense of the absolute necessity of disobliging some one or other. But I can say, as the result of experience, that medical officers of health who are properly supported, and who exercise a sound discretion in performing their duties without giving unnecessary offence in the manner of their performance, will but rarely be made to feel the pressure of undue influence such as is referred to. It would certainly be for the public advantage that each individual officer should be so placed as to be able to consult with others in cases of difficulty or delicacy; but public functions do not in this respect differ from private practice. A man must be prepared in both to do his duty, and a good man will generally do his duty without regard to personal consequence, and will, on the whole, gain rather than lose by so doing.

I trust I have made it apparent to you that there is, at least, much to be said against the general proposition "that all medical officers of health should be debarred from private practice." As regards the Poor-law medical officers, whose fitness as medical officers of health is at present so much under discussion, it appears to me quite clear that the services of these gentlemen ought to be retained as far as possible, but that their sanitary functions should be performed under the control and protection of some superior officer or officers, having a district wider than the parish, and therefore more exempt from purely local influences. The risk which a medical officer of health runs is not, in my opinion, so much that of the interference of his public duties with private practice, as the risk of his being ill-used by those placed in authority over him; and from this he is to a considerable extent protected, if, through a successful private practice, or through other sources of emolument, he is enabled to perform his sanitary duties so long as he is well supported, and to demit them when he ceases to be so. I am, Sir, yours &c.,

Glasgow, Dec. 14th, 1872.

W. T. GAIRDNER.

* * Dr. Gairdner's interesting and instructive letter is very welcome. But are we, as Dr. Gairdner supposes, at variance with ourselves in the particular passages of our leader of December 14th which he criticises? Are we not, indeed, more fully in accord in those passages with the thoroughly sound principles of the relationship which he maintains should exist between the health-functions and the physic-functions of a practitioner than Dr. Gairdner himself? Dr. Gairdner has failed to observe that our brief references to this subject provide for the physic-functions of the health officer being kept in proper play by either public or private practice, and that if we hold it desirable that he should be debarred from private practice, we hold it to be equally desirable that when so debarred he should be in a position and encouraged to obtain public practice. Dr. Gairdner restricts his statements to private practice alone, and his experience of a health officer's posi-

tion in this respect is peculiarly valuable, and must serve to remove many false impressions in regard to it now afloat; but we cannot think that he would exclude public practice from the means of maintaining a practical acquaintance with sickness. We entirely concur with Dr. Gairdner in the lamentable shortsightedness of those who would urge the entire dissociation of the health officer's duties from medical practice; and also in his opinion that we should "aim at making sanitary science and hygiene, much more than hitherto, a part of the education of every practitioner." THE LANCET has always maintained that it is a scandal to the profession that this aim has not long ago been achieved; and we may add that the profession is now reaping, in the dilettanteism which is marring sanitary legislation and work, some of the ill-results of the perverse want of forethought of our examining bodies.—ED. L.

ON MATERIALISM IN MEN OF SCIENCE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The *Examiner*, in a notice of Dr. Carpenter's address at Brighton, said the author was one of the few remaining specimens of a class of philosophers gradually becoming extinct! I hope this statement is untrue, and that there are many scientific men besides Dr. Carpenter who believe in something above and beyond matter. The Darwinians in Germany and Italy go in for the most absolute materialism. Büchner says that just as a machine produces motion, so does the organism produce spirit, soul, and thought; Voigt holds that the relationship between thought and brain is the same as that between bile and liver; and Moleschott affirms that spirit and man, force and matter, are but terms to distinguish the different manners of considering the same substance. Then I observe in some of our own leading scientific men an extreme jealousy of allowing anything like a metaphysical argument in proof of the separate existence of the soul. Supposing that we cannot prove, physiologically, the soul's separate existence, can we make a single step in argumentation of any kind without a metaphysical process? A mere syllogism or even an *ergo* implies one, and without it so-called physical science could not examine the *sensible* any more than a dog or cat could. There is a vast fallacy involved in this attempt to isolate so completely one realm of the *scibile*, and in the non-recognition of the connexion that exists between the various realms of knowledge. Some of our greatest men of science seem to me to weaken immensely, or to destroy altogether, the moral nature of man, and to drive themselves into difficulties ten times greater than those which the Christian faith and philosophy set before us. Philosophers in these days explain nature without God the Creator, and the politician, quite logically, steps in and says he also can do without Him in the state; and so he proclaims the separation between the supernatural and the natural, and then, as a consequence, the deadly sins hoist the tricolour and bellow out "Viva la riabilitazione della carne!" and, as a still further consequence, the justice of God gives us the state in which we are and the worse one that is to come. Dr. Maudsley's recent address at Birmingham is, I am afraid, a fair specimen of the psychology prevalent in the medical profession. He believes, too, that Christianity has done more harm than good in the world, and therefore he heaps upon it accusations which are not founded on fact. Where are his proofs that the ignorance and superstition of the dark ages of Christian Europe taught the barbarous treatment of the insane, or that the asceticism taught by St. Paul acts badly on the mind? I think, if the truth could be known, we should find that in these days, when the flesh is being emancipated from all its restraints, insanity is on the increase; certainly, in Italy, the suicidal passion is more prevalent than in the ages of greater faith. Modern men of science do not seem to understand what the teaching of theologians upon the subject of mind is; they seem to suppose the intellect is regarded by them as a mere dweller in a house, whereas their actual teaching is that body and soul become a real "tertium quid," the "human compost"; they say the intellect makes use of the organism, and that,

in insanity, some portion of the organism—not the intellect *in se*—is diseased. Again, it seems to me to be great bosh to talk about moral sentiments in the way that some of our men of science talk of them, as the outcome of mere matter. That mind is evolved out of matter is sufficiently difficult of conception; but that our moral sentiments are so manufactured, seems to me the height of absurdity and utterly inconceivable; for morality implies responsibility to a higher existence than our own, and that higher existence can never be the outcome of mere matter, because, substantially, all matter must have the same dignity, and can never pretend to difference in hierarchical degree and order, so to speak. It is fortunate for us that Almighty God does not hand over His world to be governed by our great evolutionist philosophers and the lesser swells who follow their lead; if He did, we should find ourselves in an inextricable chaos! The wide spread of their doctrines in Italy, Germany, England, and elsewhere is a very black sign of the times, because they naturally lead to hatred of revealed religion, and so become most powerful auxiliaries in the great anti-Christian army now everywhere marshaling its forces. The thought sometimes occurs to one that this neopaganism may require its Dioclesian over again, and that our boasted refinements may demand once more the Christian's blood! And, after all, what are these new theories put forth by evolutionists and others that they should unsettle any man's faith? Matter, say they, existed before mind; mind is matter's last, highest, and best product; from inorganic matter, inorganic chemistry, and physical forces, they tell us, organic and organised matter and vegetable life were produced; and that, from vegetable life, by a gradual process of evolution, animal life, and, finally, mind resulted; that matter shapes and determines mind, which, accordingly, is sane or insane, active or sluggish, as matter is in one state or another; that mind is a phenomenon, a function, a force, associated with and dependent on matter; that nerve-cells and fibres are the latest and highest forms of matter, and that mind is the highest and last and best of a series of forces commencing with mere physics and culminating in thought and a rational soul! On the other hand, it may be urged that mind is, *sui generis*, differing in nature and origin from all mere attributes and properties and forces of matter, and in a sense independent of, whilst associated with it. To my own mind the evolution theory of life presents far greater difficulties than the old creed, that "God made man and breathed into him the breath of life"; in other words, that God Almighty was before all matter, in time, *behind* it, as men of science say, and that He created, fashioned it, and endowed it with life. No amount or kind of matter could ever, *per se*, generate intellect, will, moral sentiment; these are God's gifts, man is responsible to the giver for their use, and the highest act of man's reason is the acknowledgment that "in Him we live and move and have our being." I do not see how, on the evolutionist and materialistic view, we can explain many facts and phenomena of daily occurrence: e.g., the triumph of mind over matter at the hour of death; the fact that, with a body *in extremis*, the mind is often clearer, brighter, more active than ever; that with matter at its worst we find mind at its best; also the fact that hard students work best when seedy and below par, not when in rude robust health. How, too, can we explain the fact that the will can prevent an epileptic seizure, and that the mind can and does often constrain and drag along a reluctant body? Then what is the relation of grief, hope, fear, encouragement, good and bad news, to matter—to the body? Is not the immaterial here acting on the material, mind upon matter? Again, if the doctrines of materialists were true, one would expect to find extensive and palpable disease of brain in insanity, whereas, in fact, this organ is in the worst cases often, to all appearance, sound. On the whole, therefore, I think the theologians and the despised scholastics and followers of St. Thomas Aquinas have the best of it, and that the evolutionists and materialists have failed to establish their new doctrines. Some of them, however, I am happy to see, do admit that mind, being the last developed and the highest of all the forces of nature, *may possibly* be final and eternal!

Yours truly,

D. HOOPER, B.A., M.B.

Trinity-square, S.E., Nov. 12th, 1872.

EVACUATION OF ABSCESS BY ASPIRATOR.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The following short notes of a case of abscess emptied by the aspirator may be considered worth publishing by way of illustrating one of the uses of this instrument.

On August 25th last I was consulted respecting a delicate boy, aged nine years, who for some months previously had been under the treatment of a hospital surgeon for "a swelling" in the thigh. Various local applications had been steadily used without effect. The swelling was situated in the front and lower-fourth part of the femur, evidently under the deep fascia. It was elastic to the touch and free from either pain or tenderness. To prevent fright and struggling, I first introduced the finest needle of Dieulafoy's apparatus almost before the patient was aware of anything being done, and then attached the barrel. Nearly three ounces of pus were quickly removed. The thigh was next strapped round to bring the walls of the sac together, and the patient sent to the seaside for two weeks. On his return I prescribed iodine for some remaining thickening, which soon disappeared. The boy has been quite well for some time.

The advantages of aspiration over cutting in such a case as this are too obvious to require pointing out.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Hertford-street, Mayfair.

GEO. MOORE, M.D.

Obituary.

HOLMES COOTE, F.R.C.S.,

SENIOR SURGEON TO ST. BARTHOLOMEW'S HOSPITAL.

THE announcement of the death of Mr. Holmes Coote will be read with regret by a large circle of old friends, who have lamented for some years that his brilliant talents should have been obscured by ailments which prevented his taking that position in the surgical world to which he might fairly have aspired. Educated at St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Mr. Coote early displayed a devotion to the study of human and comparative anatomy, which led to his appointment as one of the demonstrators in his own school, and gained for him the Triennial Prize of the College of Surgeons, on the Anatomy of the Fibres of the Human Brain, in 1845. He also wrote papers on the Anatomy of the Brain, and on the Homologies of the Skeleton. In 1854 Mr. Coote proceeded to the East as one of the senior surgeons of the Smyrna Hospital, but there, unfortunately, had little opportunity of distinguishing himself. As assistant-surgeon to St. Bartholomew's and to the Orthopædic Hospitals he did good work for many years, but upon becoming surgeon to the former hospital he resigned the latter appointment. The experience thus gained was utilised in several papers on orthopædic subjects, and in a course of lectures delivered at St. Bartholomew's and published in these columns in 1861. Mr. Coote shared the lectures on surgery at St. Bartholomew's with Sir William Lawrence for some years, and latterly with Sir James Paget. He was always a popular teacher, and in his earlier years was a good speaker at medical societies, especially the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society, of which he was for some time secretary. To the Transactions of that Society he contributed two papers, and to "Holmes's System of Surgery" several articles, remarkable more for an extensive clinical experience than any great research or elaboration. Mr. Coote's health has for many months been in a very precarious condition, compelling him during the past summer to retire altogether from professional duties. One of his sons is, we learn, a candidate for election at the Medical Benevolent College, and will, we trust, receive the support of all old Bartholomew men.

JOHN MOORE, M.R.C.S.

MR. MOORE was born December 12th, 1784, at West Coker, near Yeovil, Somerset, the abode of his family for several centuries. He received his first education at