and his description leaves, practically, no doubt as to the probable admixture just mentioned. He, in company with Dr. Bourne, examined the arrangements of the pit, and found, amongst other sources, water coming from two springs, which in the ordinary course, partly through pipes and partly as open streams, in close proximity to a tramway, to disused workings in the pit, to pit stables, to small doorless recesses on each side of the tramway and their cesspools, were liable, in Dr. Peart's opinion, "to contamination, one in its whole course," the other at two points of its course. Dr. Bramwell's paper, though meant apparently to do so, does not damage the theory of water contamination. He admits the fact of contamination. For ourselves, we dismiss the field as an outbreak of typhoid, and break down in the category of the numerous other outbreaks of the kind due to an actual contamination of the water-supply, which water companies will have to find some means of preventing. We are glad that the local medical society of the district has given attention to the subject, and that its leading members took a sensible view of what appear to us very plain and very serious facts.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH.

The Quarterly Return of the Registrar-General for the three months ended March 31st last, shows that the unprecedentedly large number of 204,005 births were registered in England and Wales, the corresponding deaths amounting to 134,637. This represented an increase in the population, therefore, or the excess of births over deaths, in the quarter, was 70,618; but whether this result represents anything like the actual growth of our home population, or not, it is impossible to determine, unless the balance between emigration and immigration could be ascertained. The ratio of births to the present estimated population of the country was higher last quarter than has ever before been observed in any quarter since registration began; and this fact must further be taken in conjunction with another that is remarkable—namely, that throughout the whole of the two last years the marriage-rate was below the average. The mortality of the quarter was a little below the average for the season, but was considerably in excess of the rate for the corresponding three months of last year: the less favourable result for the later period is attributed to the prevalence of "trying and exceptional climatic conditions," as contrasted with the fine genial weather which distinguished the beginning of 1868. The weather in January last was very warm, excepting for one week, when a sudden change took place, which soon showed its effects in the increase of deaths from bronchitis and other diseases of the respiratory system; then another warm period set in, and lasted until the beginning of March, when there was another change to wintry, ungenial weather, which helped materially to raise the death returns. An unusually large number of young children and of old people appear to have died during the quarter, and we know that it is at the beginning and end of life when changes of temperature from warmth to cold are most fatal in their effects. In several districts, half the deaths from tuberculosis in the year who had passed their sixtieth year of age. Scarlet fever was more or less prevalent in a majority of the registration districts. In London it was the cause of 648 deaths, as compared with 339 and 368 fatal cases occurring in the first quarters of 1867 and 1868 respectively. The knowledge thus obtainable in regard to the progress of this epidemic in the metropolis, and the want of such information on a more extended scale, only help to show how extremely desirable it is that the deaths from the principal zymotic diseases all over the country should be ascertained and published in the Quarterly Returns; and it would give us much satisfaction if the Registrar-General would manifest his usual desire to aid preventive medicine by adopting the suggestion we have thrown out. We cannot think there are any serious obstacles in the way of giving what we ask for.

Correspondence.

MR. GRAY'S OBSERVATIONS ON THE TREATMENT OF TROPICAL DISEASES.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—In The Lancet of the 1st inst., Mr. Gray, of the Peninsular and Oriental Company's Service, has put forth statements which I cannot allow to pass without notice. Mr. Gray wishes to impress the profession in England with the notion that the acute diseases of India are still treated in the " heroic" and spoliative manner that was on the decline thirty years ago, and is now, in the medical services of H.M.'s British and Indian Services, quite exploded.

On what facts Mr. Gray bases the hardy assertion "that the natural history of acute tropical diseases has hardly at all been studied," I am quite at a loss to say. Can it be that Mr. Gray's acquaintance with the literature of modern tropical medicine is confined to the author from whom he makes a quotation, that in India, in the present day, would be regarded as homoeopathic? Writers of this stamp are now-a-days as obsolete as "Brown Boss." I do not profess to know who the writer from whom Mr. Gray makes his quotation is, but suspect, from the whole tenor of the passage, that it must be the late Dr. James Johnston, who has ceased for more than thirty years to be regarded as a trustworthy guide in any branch of tropical medicine.

If there was any foundation for the charge thus brought against medical men in India by this gentleman, the evidence in support of it must have come before the medical officers of this hospital. Now, how stands the case? Nearly 23,000 invalids, most of them from hot climates, have passed through this hospital within the last six years: do they bear on their persons, or show in their constitutions, or in the medical history sheets they bring with them, evidence of the " heroic" treatment to which, if what Mr. Gray asserts were true, they must have been subjected? Nothing of the kind. The evidence in this immense field of observation is all the other way. Again, this gentleman finds support of his views in the fact that "a large quantity of tartar emetic and calomel was sent to Abyssinia!" Now, I do not know how much physic was sent to Abyssinia, but this I know, and all the world knows it too, that England never, at any period of her history, waged war with so small a loss of life from sickness as in that memorable expedition. Further, all the invalids from Abyssinia have passed through this hospital; and I hope Mr. Gray will find comfort in the assurance I give him, that they showed no traces of discipline from the "large quantity of tartar emetic and calomel" which has excited such lively fears in his mind.

The whole thing is a myth: Mr. Gray is wasting his time in contending with a shadow—he is slaying the slain. It is eight years since I left India: ten years before I did so a medical practitioner known or suspected to treat his patients in the manner this gentleman supposes to be common to this day, would have been an object of terror to all educated men within the reach of his lancet, to say nothing of his tartar emetic and calomel. I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

W. C. Maclean.
Royal Victoria Hospital, Netley, May 5th, 1869.

THE AMALGAMATION OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

Sir,—One of the speakers in favour of the propositions submitted to the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society on Monday last stated that one reason why a proposition brought forward in 1861 failed was, that no scheme had been submitted to the Society. I was about to call to the recollection of the audience that a scheme was put forward in 1865 by a joint committee consisting of representatives from all...