

turn poisons the brain, the medulla, and the heart. Sometimes, in those who smoke for the first time, these symptoms occur in a form even of danger. Such a case occurred to me many years ago, and was published in the *Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal* (in 1816). Of this case I propose to adduce a brief extract:—

“Mr. J. H., aged nineteen, unaccustomed, except for a day or two before, to the effects of tobacco, smoked one and part of a second pipe. He became affected by violent syncope, and by violent retching and vomiting. He returned home, complained of pain in the head, undressed himself, and went to bed. Soon afterwards he was taken with stupor and laborious breathing. He was found in that state by the medical attendant. The countenance was suffused with a deep livid colour; the eyes lost their brilliancy; the conjunctivæ were injected; the right pupil was exceedingly contracted; the left was much larger than usual, and had lost its circular form; both were unaffected on the approach of light. The hands were joined, and in a state of rigid contraction; the arms bound over the chest; and the whole body was affected with spasmodic contractions; the breathing was very stertorous.”

From these several symptoms we may pretty accurately judge of what is going on in the brain in solitary smokers, and in a minor degree in all smokers. The robust may support the effects of tobacco; but the feeble will assuredly pay the penalty of languor, inertia, and incapacity. I have known more than one instance of members of our profession, both in its higher and lower ranks, making shipwreck of their success and fortune by addiction to solitary and sedentary smoking.

Brighton, April, 1857.

### THE LUNATIC COLONY AT GHEEL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Allow me to call your attention to what I fear may become a source of involuntary error in the true appreciation of the number of cures obtained in lunatic asylums.

Gheel is said to average 22 per cent., and Hanwell 15 per cent., of cures per annum. In order to give a signification to this difference in favour of any system soever, it becomes first absolutely necessary to agree on the same principles applied to official statistics.

As to what concerns Gheel, I will explain the statements which Dr. Webster was so kind as to select from a book of mine, and from other authentic authorities—statements whereon the editor of the *Quarterly Review* has based his opinion in an excellent article. Although everybody may, *à priori*, suspect the *cottage treatment* to be more productive in good results, being more natural than any other, notwithstanding, the most correct statistics (be they unfavourable) must be given to the public to judge correctly.

Have Hanwell and Gheel been compared according to the same rule?—that is the question, and most important. I am of opinion that, in order to appreciate the real benefits of the *restraint* and *non-restraint* systems, or of the *cottage treatment*, we must establish a distinction between curable and incurable patients. This is a capital point, for our institution of Gheel is quite powerless in regard to the cure of the latter, as I will soon prove.

Respecting the insane coming from Brussels, and sent to Gheel in 1849, we then had 72 entries, amongst whom 28 were incurables. Deduction being made of this last number, 22 were cured, and 24 left uncured—viz., 45 per cent., or nearly one-half.

Of course, I cannot compare the 58 cures obtained amongst the total number of 343 insane, nor contrast it with the 72 entries. In the first case, there would be 16 per cent., and in the second 80,—both statements being, however, quite inconsistent with the object in view.

During 1850, there were 46 entries, 25 being incurable; amongst the 21 curable cases, 5 recovered—viz., 23 per cent.

In 1851, 55 entries, 25 incurable; 5 cures out of 19 curable—viz., 25 per cent.

I must add respecting Gheel, that when I was appointed chief physician, in 1849, all entertained the sanguine hope an infirmary would soon be erected, and accordingly every kind of lunatic was sent to Gheel; but next and the following years, as it was no more a question to have an infirmary, patients considered as incurable, and *only this class*, were consigned to the neglected colony. Then, Sir, and only then, were they sent to Gheel, where, alas! we had no adequate means of undertaking the slightest somatic treatment. That is not, I believe, the case at Hanwell or Colney Hatch. I am very

sorry to say, that, actually under the Government's direction, Gheel is still a kind of *déni de justice*, or a sort of refusal of humane assistance towards poor lunatics.

I remain, Sir, your faithful confrère,  
Brussels, September, 1857.

T. PARIGOT, D.M.

### THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE PROMOTION OF SOCIAL SCIENCE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I, in common with many others, have received a circular announcing the formation of a new society, called the “National Association for the Promotion of Social Science,” and also containing the names of the committee of one of the departments—on that of Public Health.

Notwithstanding the multiplicity of societies, I regard this one with great pleasure, for it is well fitted to call greater attention to some of the most important and prominent objects of the day; and if it should be well managed, it is likely to add much weight to the scattered efforts which are now made in each of the five departments which this society is intended to embrace. But it must not be forgotten, that whilst it has selected a sphere for its own operations different from that of any other existing institution, it will, in many respects, be regarded as a rival of that well-established and invaluable institution—the British Association for the Advancement of Science; and on this ground, as well as on that of the multiplicity of societies, it will require no ordinary effort to obtain for all the active support of that small number of distinguished working men who alone can give stability and value to it. Having this belief, I cannot but think that sufficient care has not been exercised in reference to its *débat*, for at this, more than at any future period, it is important that it should show good grounds for public confidence. As it has not had any antecedents, the only mode by which it can be at present judged is the constitution of its governing body; and I ask you, Sir, if that body fairly represents the talent of the country in reference to social science, or gives promise that the affairs of the society will be conducted on those large views which alone become a National Association. I see many names on the committee of persons who have never done the least work for social or any other science, and whose general acquirements and mental power are at the most not above mediocrity. There are also some who have obtained handles to their names, and who, therefore, may be ornamental, but as they have not been known to fame in this department of science, are not likely to be useful. It is also worthy of notice, that from one-third to a half the whole committee of forty-two members are connected with one provincial town, and that the inauguration meeting is to be held in the provinces. These are, in my judgment, so many mistakes, and to them I would add another—viz., the omission of the names of some who have attained to a prominent position by their researches in this direction. The whole aspect of the affair leads me to infer that the curses of English arrangements—favouritism and localism—are not excluded. When shall we see such questions treated in a spirit of pure philanthropy, and the advancement of science and the good of the world placed paramount to private friendships, back-stair influence, and local jobbery? In this particular instance, how much better would it have been to have selected for the committees and secretaries only those who are already recognised as leaders and original inquirers in the science of public health, and to have fairly represented the whole kingdom?

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,  
September, 1857. LEX.

### THE ADULTERATION OF BREAD AS A CAUSE OF RICKETS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having, like many others, been out of town, I did not see the communication of Dr. Coley respecting bakers' bread, in THE LANCET of August 22nd, until to-day. As he has very much mistaken my views, I shall be obliged if you will allow me briefly to reply. Dr. Coley speaks of what I have said in my former paper of July 4th as an “hypothesis which refers the origin of rickets to decomposition of the phosphate of lime in the bones, produced by the alum contained in the bread made by the London bakers.” This is entirely wrong, as I attributed the great prevalence of rickets in London and many other places to the decomposition by alum of the phosphate of

lime of the wheat-flour, the children being thus deprived of that material which they require for the nourishment of the bones; and I quoted Baron Liebig as my authority for this chemical decomposition. Dr. Coley thinks that I consider nutrition too much of a chemical process; but if he supposes that the phosphate of lime of the bones can be formed from the phosphate of alumina and sulphate of lime contained in bakers' bread, his opinion of nutrition is much more strongly chemical than mine.

Dr. Coley says: "Dr. Snow's theory is without foundation, otherwise every child partaking of the bread made by London bakers would necessarily have rickets." If Dr. Coley had done me the favour of reading my paper before replying to it, he would have found that I have expressly stated that many children derive a sufficient quantity of phosphate of lime from milk, potatoes, and other articles of food, independently of the bread, and therefore escape having rickets, although they eat bakers' bread, in which the phosphate of lime is usually destroyed. I also remarked that rickets might arise from derangement of the digestive and urinary functions.

Besides the necessity of referring to Dr. Coley's paper on account of the mistakes into which he has fallen respecting my statements, I have another and more agreeable reason for doing so, as he has unwittingly supplied a fact which very much confirms my views. Having alluded to the great prevalence of rickets amongst children in the towns in Belgium, he says: "This unhealthy condition of the osseous system in Belgian children is traceable to the general use of vegetable soups, their almost entire deprivation of bread and animal food, bad nursing," &c. &c. The italics respecting the bread are Dr. Coley's, and show the importance he attaches to that particular. Now, the privation of bread must deprive the children of that portion of phosphate of lime which they ought to obtain from the bread as completely as if, eating the bread, the phosphate of lime were destroyed by alum; and it is extremely improbable that vegetable soups contain enough of this salt for the supply of the growing bones. I do not wish to beg the question, or I might say that the prevalence of rickets proves that the soups do not contain enough of phosphate of lime.

Dr. Coley alludes to the frequent concurrence of scrofula and rickets as a proof of what he calls the constitutional origin of rickets; but admitting the applicability of this phrase in several cases, what is so likely to injure the constitution as a deficiency of one of the most important constituents of the body? Moreover, if the new views of Dr. Churchill be correct, and scrofula and consumption are caused by a deficiency of phosphorus in the body, the adulteration of bread may tend seriously to promote the prevalence of these maladies.

The observations I have been able to make on the presence or absence of rickets, in a late excursion into the provinces, entirely confirm me in the views stated above; but I regret that I have not yet had time or opportunity to collect evidence in that numerical form which would leave no room for doubt or cavil on the subject.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
Sackville-street, Sept. 21th, 1857, JOHN SNOW, M.D.

## NAVAL MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As a farewell letter on the above subject, I wish just to give your various correspondents my reasons for writing my first letter. I saw in THE LANCET a letter respecting the "Indian Medical Appointments," recommending young men to enter the Company's service in preference to the Queen's. Now those who wished to serve their country a little might as well enter the Queen's as the Company's service: that was the cause of my letter.

Your correspondent at Sheerness is mistaken if he *does* imagine that I wrote my letters as a sort of *decoy*—far from it; but, as he justly and truly points out, my statement (although perfectly correct) was apt to mislead, and I have to thank him for replying; as I should have felt very sorry if I thought I had occasioned any young surgeon to imagine H.M. Navy (or Army) to be better than it is.

Mr. Keele says very little about *my* misstatement, but seems to make it a channel through which to tell us about the two poor Jamaica assistants.

As to the other gentleman, "An Assistant-Surgeon," he seems to think worse of my not being in the service (although he is not sure of that,—perhaps I am; or I may be in the sister service) than of my errors.

My friend at Sheerness says the average sick is 5 per cent.

with the *Duke*, with 1100; 5 per cent. on that number would be 55: 40 is only 15 short, so that is pretty correct by his account. I own, however, that my statements might mislead; but when I said "I did not say how long he (the surgeon) had to serve for 18s. per diem," I said it with no shabby meaning, I was only telling him of the legal fact.

I think, Sir, enough has been said on this subject. All your correspondents appear to dislike their profession. Do they honour it? No. Should they, then, continue members of it? I mean no offence to any of them when I say that "It is a dirty bird that fouls its own nest." Thanking them again for explaining my letter to the public, and you, Sir, for the kindness you have shown in inserting our hints,

I remain, yours truly,

September, 1857.

J. J. C.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In THE LANCET of the 12th ultimo, there is a letter from an "Assistant-surgeon R.N.," in which the following paragraph occurs:—"There is a slight mistake in Mr. Keele's letter. All time as assistant-surgeon counts towards surgeon's pay and retirement instead of only three years, as Mr. Keele says."

I should consider this a very great mistake, as I had laid particular stress on the *three years*, if I was wrong; but if your correspondent will be good enough to turn to page 208 of the "Navy List," he will find that surgeons are divided into two classes as regards their pay. First, those employed on the 1st of July, 1840, who get 18s. per diem, after twenty years' full-pay service, including service as assistant-surgeon. Second, those unemployed, or who entered the service since the 1st of July, 1840, who will get 18s. per diem, after twenty years' full-pay service, including *three years'* service only as assistant-surgeon. As I was endeavouring to show the prospects of an assistant-surgeon in the navy, I only mentioned the latter class. It is this most unjust order of 1840, reducing the pay of naval surgeons, that I wish to see rescinded. Surely an increase of pay, at the rate of 6d. per diem for every three years' service, is inadequate remuneration for the whole time and services of medical gentlemen.

Your correspondent is not the only assistant-surgeon that was ignorant of the order of July, 1840, as it is but too common for surgeons to enter the Naval Medical Service, believing the pay to be good, from their commencing at 8s. a day, but quite uninformed as to the slow rate at which that pay would be increased. There is a great stir being made at the present time about the increase of pay for army surgeons, and I think with very great justice. I should like, however, the propriety of increasing the pay of naval surgeons to be considered at the same time.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

St. Paul's-road, Highbury, Oct. 1857. GEORGE THOMAS KEELE,  
Late Assistant-Surgeon R.N.

## M E D I C O - M I L I T A R Y.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am not in the least surprised to observe an advertisement for assistant-surgeons for that hermaphrodite department, the medico-military one. It is not unlikely the recruiting officers might entrap a few poor devils to serve. Perhaps it may return to times when, to use a nautical expression of old standing in the sister service, "they baited a grating with bergoo—i. e., Scotch porridge, and sent it on shore to trap a few gallipots," as they were called. The system of acting assistant-surgeons, I think, has brought the medical department into worse odour than ever.

Now, Sir, I think I ought to know a little about the interior economy of this department; and, from what I do know, I would sooner make my boy a drummer than a doctor in it. Officer and gentleman sounds well, but it is "all my eye." Strange it may appear, but true it is, you scarcely ever see or hear of a medical man in the army bringing up his son to the same prospects. Ask any who have served longer than I have; they will give "a short blessing" in answer.

I have made use of the word "hermaphrodite," and I think a medical officer is truly that. He enters as lieutenant by rank, but the ensign of a day old is his superior officer. At a mess-table he is the inferior. No executive authority to maintain his own ground. Scripture says "no man can serve two masters." The assistant-surgeon has to obey all his executive officers—a crabbed colonel; a cranky old deputy inspector; a staff-surgeon first class, of self-importance, who mounts spurs,