

not see that there is much sense in it. When physicians were few, and fewer still made a study of any special branch of physic, the busy men at the head of the profession, who had in them the best available knowledge of every complaint, were not overpaid by their guinea a mile. Railways altered the rate of fee to two-thirds of this, but surely there are other elements in the calculation besides railways. The condition of the profession has vastly changed, and a few men are no longer the depositories of the best knowledge upon every one of all medical subjects. Division of labour, that in other trades procures better wages, and gives better workmanship at smaller cost, is prevented by our union rules from benefiting either producer or consumer. My knowledge of the diseases I deal with is a better knowledge than my London neighbour, Sir Blank Dash, has of them, though (now that he is seventy) he is making £6000 a year, and deserves to make it; and my knowledge is better for the reason that I, and such as I, have made special study of some particular set of complaints. It is better workmanship from division of labour. I can produce it more cheaply because I master my one set of subjects at an earlier age than I could achieve repute in all; and I should get better wages if my trade rules were silent. In my particular case, indeed, London practice might not at once be more lucrative, for I have a notion (to which, however, I bind no one else) that a guinea represents the minimum value of my own advice. But it happens that I should get a number of country consultations, and I do not value a day's absence from home at a third part of my entire year's income; so that I am prevented from earning at once a better living, from making what would probably be in the long run more money than my present total expectations of success, and from giving such assistance as I can to patients and practitioners at a distance.

Let me anticipate the reply that I may do just as I please. There is a law of opinion in our ranks that will hinder me, and is meant to hinder me, as potently as the theft of mill-bands, from doing anything of the sort. I believe the opinion to be based on erroneous grounds, and shall be glad if this letter contribute to the formation of a better judgment.

If it were possible for me to append my name, you would see that I am putting no imaginary case. But, of course, I want to be thought in large practice, and would not confess in person to my actual income; and, also, of course, I cannot say in effect to my College or to country doctors that a little more temptation would make me

London, Feb. 1868.

A POSSIBLE BLACK.

USE OF CAUSTICS IN STRICTURE OF THE URETHRA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In corroboration of the statement of Mr. F. Le Gros Clark, published in *THE LANCET* of last week (p. 271), I beg leave to say that during the last thirty years I have been in the habit of using the potassa fusa in some of the worst cases of stricture of the urethra. The utility of this agent has been so manifest that I feel it my duty to protest against any attack upon a remedy which, when properly used, is so calculated to afford benefit to those suffering from a most distressing disease.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Dean-street, Soho, Feb. 23rd, 1868.

ROBERT WADE.

VIRGIN GORDA AS A PACKET STATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I see, in your impression of February 1st, a brief annotation on the proposed selection of Virgin Gorda as the packet station in the West Indies.

For many years Virgin Gorda has been free from hurricanes, whilst St. Thomas has suffered. Virgin Gorda possesses a magnificent harbour, called The Sound, which may be made a most convenient and safe harbour, as the Royal West Indian Mail Packet Company know, from the reports of Captain Leeds, whose survey of The Sound I witnessed, as also no doubt from other sources. The island and reef of Anegada are only dangerous from the want of good lights. The choice of The Sound as a harbour, shortening the transit, and thereby avoiding the navigation of Drake's Channel, and the entrance to St. Thomas's Harbour, is most desirable.

The Virgin group of islands are confessedly the most healthy of the West Indian Islands, and The Sound a most favourable sanitary situation, from its free exposure to the sea breezes

and free tidal influences. St. Thomas Harbour is unhealthy, from its being enclosed by the high hills of that island, and comparative stagnation of its waters.

I could give further particulars, having spent three years among these islands; but I hope, from their brevity, that these contradictions, founded on facts ascertained by personal inspection, may find a place in your valuable journal.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,
CHARLES E. CHAPMAN, L.R.C.P.E., &c.,
late Surgeon to the Virgin Gorda
Mining Company.

Biarritz, Feb. 3, 1868.

BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

THE first months of the new year have been characterised in Birmingham by the important questions in medical economy which have occupied the attention of the profession. A vivid sense of the unsatisfactory relations of medical men to the public seems to have gained a footing in nearly every mind, and the first consequence is seen in the united effort which has been made on the club question. Several causes have concurred to awaken this feeling of unrest, which has been daily gaining strength ever since the question of the remuneration of the club surgeons was discussed at the annual meeting of the branch. The report of the Committee on Friendly Societies next excited the interest of the profession, and a very able paper, by Dr. Percy Leslie, "On Gratuitous Medical Services, their Evils and their Remedy," served to concentrate men's thoughts on the subject of medical reform. Dr. Leslie's paper occupied in its reading and discussion no less than three meetings of the branch, and called forth a debate unparalleled in the history of the Society. Lastly, the various events of the contest between the Committee on Friendly Societies and the numerous sick clubs, including the battle of the Cannon-street Club, have served to sustain the interest, which has recently culminated in the excitement caused by the resignation of the whole honorary staff of the General Dispensary, on the question of remuneration. The article in *THE LANCET* of Saturday last has already given a sketch of the position of affairs at the Dispensary, and of the circumstances which induced the physicians and surgeons to apply for an honorarium in recognition of their services. The annual meeting of the governors has, however, since passed off without bringing any solution of the difficulty; neither the Committee nor the governors were prepared with any suggestions, and the meeting showed no inclination to grant the request of their officers, although many present were convinced of its justice. Under these circumstances, and in order to avoid an unpleasant discussion, the following resolution was passed,—viz., "That the letter of the honorary medical officers of the 13th inst., resigning their appointment, be received and entered on the minutes, and that it be taken into consideration at a future meeting, to be specially convened for the purpose, and that in the meanwhile the honorary medical staff be respectfully requested to continue their services. The General Committee are respectfully requested to communicate with other charities on this important subject, and generally to report further on a matter so involved and so difficult as that now under consideration." It is to be regretted that a few of the governors were not associated with the Committee in this duty, for as the Committee have already twice deliberated on the question, and declared it an impossibility to accede to the request of the honorary medical officers, they can scarcely be expected to arrive at any different conclusion unaided by the advice of others. When the governors next meet it is to be hoped the strong feeling which animates the profession here, and the able support which *THE LANCET* has already given to the cause, will carry to all minds a conviction of the justice of the claim of the physicians and surgeons. Any attempt to carry on the institution solely by the aid of a paid resident staff (and this is the only alternative) would not only destroy the high reputation which the charity now enjoys, but would gradually render the dispensary a huge sick club for dispensing advice and medicine gratis to all comers, with the additional feature that its operations would tend to annihilate that spirit of self-help in the poor, the development of which is the most praiseworthy feature of friendly societies.

The Cannon-street Club contest is now rapidly drawing to a close, and victory inclines to the side of the medical officers.