

habit of wrapping round the children when removing them from bed during convalescence from their winter illness. Ten days after her father's arrival, one of the girls, who had escaped on the former occasion, was seized with scarlet fever. I found, on inquiry, that the shawl had been laid away in a drawer, after the former illness; that it had not been cleaned or disinfected in any way, and that, since her father's arrival, it had, on several occasions, when she was out driving, been wrapped round the girl who was now ill. No scarlet fever existed in the neighbourhood. There is scarcely room for doubt that the shawl, in this case, was the means by which the poison was conveyed, and that it had retained it for a period of five months.

These two modes of communicating scarlet fever, by direct contact, and by the indirect agency of articles of dress, are far more common than they ought to be. Let every medical man do what he can to spread a knowledge of these facts among those having charge of sufferers from scarlet fever, and let those in charge carefully carry out the instructions given to them, and one great step in checking the spread of that disease will have been taken.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Dundee, Oct. 29th, 1870.

T. J. MACLAGAN, M.D.

THE SYME TESTIMONIAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I send a copy of a letter which I have received from Dr. S. D. Gross, LL.D., the distinguished Professor of Surgery, of Philadelphia, which I shall be obliged by your publishing in the pages of THE LANCET. It records an act which is not only one of the highest tributes ever paid to the merits of a British surgeon, but is one that cannot fail to strengthen the bonds of good fellowship existing between American and British members of our profession. The list of contributors referred to in the letter includes the names of the most distinguished American physicians and surgeons, no fewer than twenty being Professors of Surgery or Anatomy in one or other of the universities or medical colleges of the United States.

“Philadelphia, Oct. 11th, 1870.

“DR. CHARLES MURCHISON, F.R.S.

“DEAR SIR,—I have the honour, as chairman of the Executive Committee of Philadelphia, to transmit to you a cheque on the London Joint-Stock Bank for £45 7s. 9d., the net proceeds of our collections in support of the “Syme Testimonial Fund” in the United States. In casting your eye over the list of contributors, herewith sent, you will perceive that it embraces the names of some of the most distinguished surgeons and medical teachers of this country. The number might no doubt have been materially increased if sub-committees had been appointed in the principal cities of the Union, which, however, it was deemed best not to do. Most of the contributions are, in accordance with your suggestion, small, and must therefore not be regarded by you as at all expressive of our appreciation of the valuable services rendered to science and humanity by the illustrious Scotch surgeon, whose memory they are designed to aid in perpetuating.

“With best wishes for your health and happiness, and the sincere hope that such acts as these, insignificant as they in themselves are, may serve to strengthen the bonds of good fellowship existing between American and British physicians,

• “I am, dear Sir,

“Very truly your friend and obedient servant,

“S. D. GROSS.”

I may add that the subscriptions to the “Syme Testimonial Fund,” the main object of which is the foundation of a Fellowship in the University of Edinburgh, now amount to £1776. Former pupils of Mr. Syme, or members of the profession who have benefited by his teaching, but may not have already contributed to the fund, are invited to aid in raising it to the desired amount of £2500.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES MURCHISON,

Wimpole-street, Oct. 29th, 1870.

Hon. Sec. Syme Testimonial Fund.

MISS NIGHTINGALE ON THEORIES OF DISEASE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In THE LANCET of the 29th inst., Dr. W. C. Maclean has commented—erroneously I think—on some remarks made by Miss Nightingale in the India Office Sanitary Blue-book of 1869–70. Miss Nightingale, in saying, “The public health question is not a question of opinion. It is a question (1) of what is fact? (2) of what is practicable and expedient? However ingenious a theory may be, the wisest thing is never to expend public money on it. Are not the theories we have had, too, not of Indian produce, but of European manufacture? And have they in reality anything whatever to do with public health problems? The questions to be dealt with are either questions of fact or they are nothing. No speculative matter should ever peep out of or creep into public health reports intended to lead to practical action”—expresses a truth which lies at the root of success in the improvement of the public health.

I further think that the illustration of infringement of this truth—given in a footnote by Miss Nightingale—to which Dr. Maclean takes much exception, is just and appropriate.

The fallacy which runs through Dr. Maclean's argument is this. He loses sight of the fact that a sanitary department ought to deal only with determined causes of disease, and that the investigation of undetermined causes of disease is the province of the clinical physician, and that he alone is competent to deal with it. Confusion in this evident distinction has done, and is daily doing, much harm. It has imported into sanitary work much vague and incompetent discussion on the causes of disease, and has damped the ardour and tainted the logic of clinical inquirers.

Surely Dr. Maclean errs in saying that Jenner framed a theory of disease and applied it to a public health question. Jenner clinically studied eruptions on the hands of cow-milkers, listened to a popular belief, tested it by careful experiment, and determined a fact which he applied to the prevention of small-pox.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Edinburgh, October 31st, 1870.

C. MOREHEAD, M.D.

EXTIRPATION OF THE COCCYX.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the October number, 1870 (American reprint), of THE LANCET, you publish a letter from Mr. Lawson Tait, in which he takes from me the credit of having preceded Sir Jas. Simpson in the operation of extirpation of the coccyx for coccydina, and says:—“It is more than eight years since I assisted Sir James Simpson to extirpate the bones in an inveterate coccydina, for which repeated subcutaneous incisions had been made,” &c.

In the May number of the *New Orleans Medical Journal*, 1844, twenty-six years ago, was published my first case. About a year after I published a second case. The two specimens were presented to Dr. Meigs, of Philadelphia, who alluded to my cases every year afterwards, till he resigned his chair, in his lectures in the Jefferson Medical College.

I have never taken any trouble to establish my priority. Dr. T. G. Thomas very kindly alluded to the facts in his work “On Diseases of Females”; and I should not now trouble you with a word on the subject were it not for the fact that those who do not know me might think it involved a question of veracity on my part.

I fear that the writer speaks with too much confidence as to the benefits arising either from the extirpation of the coccyx or subcutaneous division of its attachments. These operations have been found not infrequently to fail, in the hands of others as well as myself. I have seen several cases of failure which had been operated upon by Sir James Simpson.

I will not take up more space with remarks I might make on the class of cases to which these operations are peculiarly applicable.

Very respectfully your obedient servant,

New York, Oct. 17th, 1870.

J. C. NOTT, M.D.