

its course, even with the best management there will be some deposits, and watchfulness, with occasional cleaning out, will be necessary." It should be known that we have no power to prevent the effluent from these sewage farms and works being turned into the river. In 1887, after the first work of cleaning out, the Hartley Wintney Sanitary Authority took proceedings against the Government Manure Company and the Aldershot local board for causing pollution, and was successful in both cases. If anyone will show me something tangible in the shape of sewage or filth contaminating the river, the Hartley Wintney Sanitary Authority, which has hitherto done its duty in this matter, will, on my advice, take the case up. I have a very intimate knowledge of the district, and I assert that the Blackwater valley is immeasurably better than it was a few years ago. The river was not cleaned in the summer; better it had been, as the reeds are then visible. A mill a few miles down the stream has been removed, so that now there should be a greater fall. I have no hesitation in recommending that the river be again cleaned out, from Eversley to Aldershot Town. If the four sanitary authorities having jurisdiction in the area would only pull more together, there would soon be as little to complain of as is capable of remedy at their instance. Perhaps we may at some future time see a straight "cut" made, and the present tortuous stream diverted into it. As the mischief originally arose through the sewage of Aldershot Camp and Aldershot Town having been for many years discharged into the river, and as the health of the troops and the gentlemen cadets at Sandhurst is of paramount importance, the straightening of the river and further purification of the valley should, in my humble opinion, be undertaken by the War Office authorities.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

C. J. DENNY,

Sept. 30th, 1890. Med. Officer of Health, Hartley Wintney San. Auth.

BARMING HEATH ASYLUM.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In a note about this asylum in your last issue you say that the superintendent "could suspend the attendants without any chance of their case being brought before the committee." This is not true. I have been superintendent of this asylum over fourteen years. There have been many suspensions during this time, but every one has been reported to the committee and the cause of the same investigated by them. Every person suspended has had the right of appeal to the committee, and in almost every case this right has been exercised, yet never has my decision been reversed. The attendants complained that there was often a long delay before their appeal could be heard. To remedy this I recommended the changes which have been made, and now, instead of having to wait for the next meeting of the committee, the case can be heard at once by two visitors, while the right of appeal to the full committee still remains in force. I quite agree in your concluding remark: "There is every prospect of a satisfactory settlement." But this will not be hastened if undue prominence is given to *ex-parte* statements. I regret to say that one section of the local press, under the inspiration of discharged servants of this asylum, has for some time past published anonymous attacks upon me and my management of the asylum, which are as untruthful as they are virulent. As, however, the whole subject is occupying the attention of my committee, I must ask you to suspend your judgment for the present.

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

F. PRITCHARD DAVIES, M.D.,

Barming-heath Asylum, Sept. 29th, 1890.

Superintendent.

SANITATION AT SEA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—As an ex-surgeon of the P. and O. Company, may I be allowed to correct the idea that some of your readers may have formed from Mr. Piggott's letter in THE LANCET of Sept. 27th, that the P. and O. Company are hostile to any sanitary improvements being introduced into their ships, or that their ships are badly ventilated? The P. and O. ships are above the average in hygienic conditions, as they ought to be, considering the amount of hot weather they encounter. Any new feasible sanitary scheme for the better condition of their ships the Company are always willing to try; this has

been my experience during the two and a half years I spent in their service. If Mr. Piggott had done the usual thing, consulted with the captain, and got him to add his signature to his report to the *medical superintendent*—or, as Mr. Piggott styles him, "the senior surgeon,"—the unpleasant ordeal of appearing before the higher powers would not have taken place, and his suggested improvements, as far as practical, would no doubt have been carried out. The medical superintendent is always ready to put any schemes for improving the sanitary condition of the ships before the managing directors, provided the said scheme be not the outcome of some inadvertent imagination. Many improvements which ought to be carried out according to a medical point of view are totally impracticable, and it requires the added testimony of a sailor or shipbuilder to say whether they will act when the ship is at sea. In a company like the P. and O., where the surgeons rank as senior officers, I should say, were they appointed by the Board of Trade considerable trouble would ensue, not only to themselves, but to those who came in contact with them, for they would be looked upon as pariahs by the ship's company. This is readily understood by any one thoroughly acquainted with the official life of one of our big companies. I don't think that in any other company the doctor has such power, where the health of crew and passengers is in question, as he has in the P. and O. S. N. Company. The captains are always willing to do everything in their power to help him in his work.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

STUART HALLOWS, M.B.Ed., D.P.H.

Harle Syke, near Burnley, Sept. 29th, 1890.

HOSPITALS AND CHILDREN'S INSURANCE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I am sorry to trouble you, but I should be very glad of your opinion upon the following circumstances.

As resident medical officer I was called upon last July to attend a child; I found it suffering from marasmus, diarrhoea, and worms; after several visits I found the mother neglected the child (who was insured) very greatly, and I cautioned her that unless she was more careful I should refuse the certificate in case of any fatal result. The child got worse and the neglect continued, and one day the mother took it to — Hospital, where it died in a few hours, and a certificate was given. I was much struck by the ease with which the mother obtained this certificate, so wrote to the hospital for particulars. As I received no answer, I again wrote, and then the secretary wrote, thanking me for drawing his attention to the case, and promising the medical superintendent should write me. Again I had no letter, so after another fortnight had elapsed, I reminded him of his promise, and received a note from the medical superintendent, saying the child died of well-marked tubercular meningitis. I wrote and thanked him, but pointed out my question as to whether there had been any post-mortem examination was still unanswered. I heard no more for a month, so I wrote to the secretary and complained of the discourtesy with which I had been treated, and repeated my question. He replied that I had been treated quite properly, and that if I was told the cause of death that was quite sufficient. Yesterday I wrote and explained to him that I was not disputing their diagnosis, but wanted to be informed if a post-mortem was held, and I pointed out if a child is admitted into a hospital obviously dying, evidently having been ill for some time, and no inquiries whatever are made as to previous care or treatment, and if the child dies, and a certificate of death is granted without any inquiry or without any post mortem, it makes it an extremely easy matter for children to suffer great cruelty, and for frauds upon insurance offices to be perpetrated. In reply, I have just received an extremely rude letter from the secretary, saying "my thirst for information leads me to ask too much," and that they "are not disposed to satisfy a curiosity of so inordinate and meddlesome a character." Now I care nothing for his rudeness, but I am anxious to know if I have asked too much, or if I have transgressed any unwritten law in persistently trying to obtain an answer. If so, I am quite ready and willing to apologise.

I need hardly say I wrote in a perfectly friendly spirit, but I take a deep interest in infantile insurance; and if such cases as I tell you of here often happen, it certainly is