

share of reasonable vanity, and feels no small complacency in carrying his long sword lightly suspended by his sling belt, his grave and respectable cocked hat, his red coat, simple without over-ornament, his blue trousers, not forgetting the red stripe; let the reader, I say, suppose this young officer, not a little proud of such display, called to go armed thus *cap-à-pie*, to be present at the accouchement of some great unwashed Rebecca,—when any aged Spanish matron would be fully as efficient, and would feel she had no military dignity to degrade.

If his attendance were necessary in these cases, the medical officer, for humanity sake, would cheerfully submit to it, but it is not so. It is well known that there is a large civil hospital at Gibraltar, to which every inhabitant has ready admission. Advice is daily given gratis by two Civil Surgeons, and medicine to those that require it. Besides, if this be not sufficient, it can be proved that two of the many intelligent Civilian Doctors, one English, the other Spanish, would give ample medical relief out of doors, for a small annual stipend, whenever there was reasonable objection to the removal of the patient to hospital. By adopting this plan, a saving of £800 at least would be made to the country, and the duty would be better done, because it would be more agreeable to the feelings of the inhabitants; and instead of such a large store supply of Medical Officers against any epidemic that might arise (who, in the interim, are apparently busily, but really idly occupied), the steamer, in 10 or 12 days, would bring any number of Surgeons from England the emergency might require. To conclude, if these remarks lead to an alteration of this mistaken system, they will not have been made in vain; but if, like many other abuses, they have become too rooted to be removed, all we can do is to congratulate the poor Spaniards of Gibraltar on the superfluity of Medical and Military Doctors at their command, and, above all, to praise the divine benevolence of the present system, which undervalues the ease of the Medical Officers of the Staff when the imaginary convenience of any Spaniard is concerned.

THE STATISTICS OF AGES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—I have just seen your Number for Feb. 15 of the present year. In it appear some "Remarks on the more Fatal Years of Life," forwarded by Mr. Slight, of Portsmouth, the compiler of which finds, from the Registrar-General's Report, "that more people die at the ages of 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70, than either in the year before or the year after," and gives a table to illustrate this point, which affords results that, he says, will "open a large field for medical and surgical inquiry." Before entering on this field it may not, perhaps, be impertinent to suggest one or two queries. 1st, What is the fair allowance that ought to be made for the natural aptitude to give round numbers which people so universally evince? 2ndly, Suppose a person dies soon after he has attained the age of 49, or a little before the age of 51, is it not probable that his friends would give in his age as 50 to the District-Registrar; and would not the frequency of such an occurrence go far to account for the disparity apparent in the Table? 3rdly, Is it not observable that many people show a strange tenacity in sticking to certain round numbers when allusion is made to their age; and, in populous districts, does it not often occur that some of the lower orders have really forgotten their age, and, having migrated from some distant place, cannot easily ascertain it, and therefore find it most convenient to speak of their ages by *tens*?

For nearly three years I have kept a register of the ages of women applying for relief from a large lying-in institution in this town, and from my Tables I should conclude that the ages of 30, 35, and 40, were most remarkably prolific parturient epochs, did I not make a large allowance for the heedlessness and inattention of the patients. Most certainly it never entered into my head to enter on any physiological investigation to account for this fact. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

HENRY COLES.

Cheltenham, March 11, 1840.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In a late Number of THE LANCET I perceive a communication from a gentleman at Portsmouth, containing the remarkable statement, founded on the first Annual Report of the Registrar-General of Births, Deaths, and Marriages, viz., that more persons die at the ages of 30, 40, 50, 60, and 70, than either in the year before or in the year after those numbers. Now, I beg leave to make one or two short remarks on the above. In the first place, the observation, that the decimal years of life are the mos

critical to humanity, is not new, and it has appeared in print certainly more than once. But, secondly, I have been informed that Mr. Thomson, of the Standard Life Assurance Company, on examining the Register of Burials in the West Kirk Churchyard of this place, found that the proportion of deaths in those years of life was so great as to induce him to doubt the accuracy of the Register. He, therefore, has accounted for this disproportion by the following supposition—that in cases where the friends of the deceased are uncertain of his or her age, they are more likely to say that he was 30, 50, or 70, than 29, 51, or 69, &c.

This supposition I conceive to be sufficiently reasonable to make us look with distrust upon conclusions drawn from the data in question. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

SIGMA.

Edinburgh, March 10, 1840.

CURE OF CORYZA BY CUBEBS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—The following case is one which, perhaps, might prove interesting to the profession, as furnishing a new proof of the power which cubebs possess of modifying the morbid secretions of mucous membranes. The efficacy of this remedy has already been attested by various practitioners, both in this country and abroad, in cases of morbid secretions from the urethra, vagina, intestinal canal and conjunctiva; but I am not aware that any cases have been brought forward in which it has been used to combat that affection of the Schneiderian membrane, which has been described under the name of "chronic coryza."

The disease, although of no immediate danger, is yet a constant source of annoyance to the patient; and, from the copious discharge to which it gives rise, cannot fail of being more or less injurious to the constitution.

The subject of the following case, Mr. S—, was a gentleman, æt. 32, residing at Paris. In consequence of being engaged in literary pursuits, he was leading rather a sedentary life. His general health, however, was good, and he had never been the subject of any severe illness. He placed himself under my care about four months ago, for a constant cold in the head, as he termed it, with which he had been afflicted during the last fifteen months, never having been entirely free from it during the whole of that period. He had for a long time been under the care of a medical practitioner, and had also consulted some of the principal physicians of the French capital, without deriving the least benefit from the

tisanes, baths, fumigations into the nostrils, &c., employed, all of which means had been most liberally persevered in. On inquiry I could not ascertain that any distinct cause could be assigned for the origin of the disease. The state of the patient when I saw him was the following:—The general health was pretty good. The patient, however, stated that he found himself weaker than formerly, copious perspiration being produced by slight exertion. The digestion was good, but the bowels were rather torpid. There was a constant discharge of a thin, colourless fluid from the nostrils, with the sensation of their cavities being obstructed, as in ordinary coryza. The discharge was much more considerable some times than at others, there being exacerbations every three or four days. On those occasions the state of the patient was really distressing, he being often obliged to pursue his occupations with a basin at his side, into which the discharge from the nostrils flowed. During these exacerbations there was constant sneezing; the hearing was affected, and they were often accompanied by headach. No cause could be assigned for them. The greatest care against exposure to cold did not prevent them, and they occurred as frequently in the hottest days of July, as during the cold of winter.

Under these circumstances I determined on administering cubebs, combined with the carbonate of iron. The dose I commenced with was half a drachm of recently-powdered cubebs, and a scruple of carbonate of iron, three times a-day. The dose was gradually increased to two scruples of carbonate of iron, and a drachm and a half of cubebs, three times a-day. After the medicine had been taken for three days, the symptoms became much alleviated, and the discharge from the nostril diminished, and the patient went on improving, with, occasionally, slight relapses, until, at the end of three weeks, he was quite free from his complaint. The powders were then gradually discontinued. A relapse, however, of considerable severity, called for a renewal of the treatment; but wishing to convince myself if it were to the cubebs, or to the carbonate of iron, that the late improvement was to be ascribed, I commenced treating my patient by the latter; and as the disease was not serious I continued using it for a week, although without the slightest benefit. The cubebs, not combined with the carbonate of iron, was again had recourse to, with the effect of immediately diminishing the discharge; at the end of a fortnight the disease had entirely disappeared, but the use of the medicine was persevered in for a fortnight longer. Since that period the patient has remained perfectly free from his complaint, although the season (from the month of December to March) has been