

THE Vice-chancellor and Proctors of the University of Oxford have nominated Dr. Acland, Regius Professor of Medicine, and Dr. Rolleston, Linacre Professor of Physiology, to represent the University on the Committee of Reference for the Medical Examining Board for England.

MEASLES has for some time past been very prevalent among the troops in different parts of England and Ireland. At Aldershot the cases have been and still are very numerous, but the mortality, happily, has been insignificant.

THE intelligence by the last mail from the Mauritius is not very reassuring. Fever and diseases of a malarious type were very prevalent, and attacks of the former disease had become more frequent among the European troops stationed in the command.

THE *New York Tribune* of the 19th ult. has a very alarming and ambiguous telegram, stating that a severe epidemic of some kind has appeared in the western towns of Brazil. In one place 8000 persons out of a population of 13,000 are reported to have died.

FROM the commencement of the present year there have been thirty-five admissions and twenty-three deaths from cholera among the European troops serving in the Bengal Presidency.

AT a recent inquest in St. Pancras on the body of a murdered child, Dr. Lankester strongly pointed out the necessity of more efficient legislation for the protection of infant life.

CHOLERA and dengue fever are reported to be spreading in India; several cases of the former have occurred among the women and children of the 49th Regiment at Mhow.

MR. JEFFERSON, the American actor, whose impersonation of Rip Van Winkle is so well known, was lately successfully operated upon for an ophthalmic affection.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

ON THE MEMBRANA DECIDUA IN TUBAL GESTATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On June 28th, 1872, Dr. Paul Munde, Master in Obstetrics of the University of Vienna, late assistant to Professor v. Scanzoni at Wurtsburg, Bavaria, U.S. America, called upon me, and requested to know whether in any of my papers on the membrana decidua which surrounds the ovum in cases of tubal gestation I had described the decidua reflexa. My impression was that I had done so; but I requested Dr. Munde not to state this as a fact until I had leisure to refresh my memory by referring to the *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, vol. xli., in which one of the papers was published. At page 145 is the following description of an ovum in which both decidua vera and reflexa and a decidual cavity were observed:—

"Case 6.—Mr. Jackson, of Wimpole-street, presented to me in 1856 the uterus and appendages of a woman who had died suddenly from internal uterine hæmorrhage at an early period of pregnancy. The preparation of the parts is now placed on the table of the Society. It will be seen that the uterus is enlarged, and the whole lining membrane is coated with a thick, irregular layer of a substance resembling the fibrine of the blood, of a red colour in the upper part. This substance has been partially detached from the lining membrane of the uterus, which presents a

natural appearance. When the preparation came into my possession the right Fallopian tube, about the middle, was as large as a walnut, or larger where its coats had burst, and a coagulum of blood was hanging through the irregular aperture. The tube was pervious from the corpus finbratum to the dilated part. On cutting open this expanded portion, a small embryo, enclosed in the amnion, was observed, and the vesicula umbilicalis, remarkably large, with its peduncle, came into view. All the cells of the placenta, and all villi of the chorion, were seen distended with coagulated blood, and surrounded with deciduous membrane, a great part of which had been separated from the inner surface of the tube. By a careful dissection subsequently made, the decidua was found to consist of placental decidua, decidua vera and reflexa, with a decidual cavity. The ovum in this case of tubal gestation was, therefore, perfect in all its structures, and similar in every respect to ova which had reached the cavity of the uterus, and been developed there until the end of the second month."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Savile-row, June 28th, 1872.

ROBERT LEE.

THE POWER OF UNION MEDICAL OFFICERS TO SIGN CERTIFICATES OF LUNACY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I think the following narrative may be interesting to all district medical officers under the Poor Law, and possibly the medical profession generally:—

I am medical officer of No. 8 district St. Pancras, and on Friday last, June 21st, I gave notice to the relieving officer that Mrs. O——, of Compton-street, was a lunatic under no proper control, and requiring to be removed to a lunatic asylum.

On Monday, January 24th, I received a note from the relieving officer, a copy of which I subjoin:—

"Mr. Wadeson, J. P., will meet you to-morrow, Tuesday morning, at ten A.M., at —, Compton-street, to see Mrs. O——."

In accordance with this instruction I went to —, Compton-street, this morning, Tuesday, at ten o'clock. In a few minutes Mr. Wadeson, J. P., arrived, bringing with him another medical man, Mr. H. Statham, of Woburn-place. Mr. Wadeson acknowledged that he had authorised the relieving officer to instruct me to meet him at ten o'clock, for the purpose of examining Mrs. O——. Mr. W. proceeded to say that he afterwards more attentively read the Pauper Lunatics Act, and that he came to the opinion that the certificate of a district medical officer was not sufficient for the removal of a pauper lunatic, and that a district medical officer signing such a certificate would not receive any fee. He had, therefore, thought proper to bring with him a duly qualified medical man unconnected with the Poor Law. I assured Mr. Wadeson that I had an experience of twenty years as district medical officer, and that such officers were not prohibited, or in any way disqualified, from signing certificates for the removal of pauper lunatics. To which Mr. W. curtly replied, that he should read the Act as he thought proper, and abide by his own reading, and that he would not permit anything further to be said on the subject. This, of course, admitted of no reply, and I left the room.

I then consulted the Pauper Lunatics Act, 16 and 17 Vict., and I found chapter 97, sect. 98, containing all directions respecting certificates of lunacy for paupers, and at the end of the chapter is the following:—"Note—Medical officers of unions or parishes are no longer prohibited from signing certificates in the case of pauper lunatics belonging thereto." You will perceive, Sir, from this extract that Mr. Wadeson was mistaken when he said that district medical officers were legally incompetent to sign lunacy certificates for paupers.

I venture to think that if Mr. Wadeson is a gentleman as well as a justice of the peace, it would have been more becoming on his part, after finding out, as he supposed, that he had made a mistake in directing me to meet him, if he had written immediately to prevent my attendance; but that is an amount of consideration which a justice of the peace could scarcely be expected to display to the parish doctor.

It is, however, positively untrue that any such legal disability exists, and, so far as I can see, Mr. Wadeson has no excuse whatever for a gratuitous insult offered to me individually, and through me to the district medical officers of the metropolis.

I do not know whether I have any legal remedy against Mr. Wadeson, but my impression is that I can sue him in the County Court for loss of time during my journey to Compton-street, &c. Perhaps some of your readers will be kind enough to advise on that point.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

THOMAS MASSEY HARDING, F.R.C.S.

Gray's Inn-road, June 25, 1872.

THE PUBLIC HEALTH BILL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The alternative offered to Poor-law medical officers by Dr. Rumsey's letter is quite a gratuitous one. I mean that no such alternative is offered by the Bill itself. His first proposition expresses, in a tone of disparagement, what the Bill really offers to Poor-law medical officers; his second proposition expresses, in a tone of elevated confidence, what he himself would like the Bill to have offered. Dr. Rumsey would counsel Poor-law medical officers to withhold all support to the first proposition, and to adopt the policy enunciated by his second proposition; or, in other words, to take up a policy, not of support and gratitude for what is really offered, but a policy of agitation for something that is not offered, but which Dr. Rumsey thinks ought to have been offered by the Bill.

As to "being constituted in town and country alike deputy officers of health," the 11th clause sufficiently shows that there was no such intention on the part of the authors of the Bill, but, on the contrary, that they expressly avoided for the present the crushing opposition to the Bill which would have followed its extension to towns.

Agitation, then, for what has been expressly and avowedly left out of the Bill, would appear to most minds a fruitless waste of time. In the thirteenth clause we have the importance of the Poor-law medical service, in sanitary work, honourably recognised; and we have a real improvement in the status of all rural medical officers. Here, then, the Bill emphatically claims a policy, not of blind agitation, but of gratitude and support on the part of our Association. Lastly, I would merely remark that my experience of Poor-law medical officers would lead me to expect that all duties arising from their appointments, as sole medical officers of health in their respective districts, would be discharged in a fearless, upright, and honourable manner, and that they would stand in no need of the purifying influences of Dr. Rumsey's "principal officer of health," who, he most condescendingly tells us, "would be ready at all times to support you, and to relieve you from the disagreeable duty of initiating proceedings against nuisances created by your private patients."

I am, Sir, yours truly,

J. WICKHAM BARNES.

July, 1872.

OBLITERATION OF THE CONJUNCTIVAL SAC.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Mr. Carter inquires what becomes of the tears after obliteration of the conjunctival sac; if the lacrymal gland would not be a source of considerable trouble? Perhaps there may be cases in which this will be found to be the case, and that the conjunctival sac cannot be destroyed whilst the lacrymal gland is left; but I can only say that in the (few) cases in which, as yet, I have ventured to destroy the conjunctiva altogether, I have not found this after-complication to arise.

For my own part I doubt very much if at most times and in a general way the lacrymal gland is so active a body as it is supposed to be, or that it has so much to do in secretion as is generally believed.

In an introductory paragraph to my present notes I have invited the personal experience of others in some few practical matters (of which the destruction of the conjunctival sac, in some cases, is one), in which I have made some inno-

vations on the established rules of eye-surgery. I wish to correct myself by the corrections of others, and if among them, Mr. Carter, especially, will essay the practice of destroying the conjunctival sac, I shall be very glad to have elicited his practical opinion, and to have the benefit of his sound judgment. My rules are only intended to express my own present experience, *quantum valeat*, and not to be at all final or didactic, as of sufficient experience, of myself alone; and I would again claim the privilege of modifying them after my own greater experience and according to the determination of my ophthalmic brethren. That I may do this it is mainly that I have thus early published my partial experiences in this, as in some few other practical points worth consideration.

Your obedient servant,

Upper Brook-street, June, 1872.

J. F. STREATFIELD.

THE MEDICAL CLUB.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—At the extraordinary general meeting held at the Club on the 30th of May last, it was unanimously resolved "to continue the Club on the proprietary principle." Captain Valpy (late of the 89th Regiment) having submitted a proposal to the meeting to become the future proprietor, negotiations have since been concluded with that gentleman, and on the 1st instant he undertook the responsibilities and liabilities of proprietor of the Medical Club.

Captain Valpy's experience in the commissariat and paymaster's department of the army for over nineteen years, and his having been a member of the Club for several years, will afford him very great facilities for further developing and improving the management of it.

Captain Valpy proposes to continue the Club as a "Medical Club," and to place it upon a new and enlarged basis, a copy of the details of which when completed will be forwarded to each member.

Your obedient servant,

LORY MARSH,

July 3rd, 1872.

Late honorary secretary and treasurer.

THE APOTHECARIES' MONOPOLY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A decision was given the other day by a London magistrate which appears to me to be altogether adverse both to the meaning and spirit of the Medical Act of 1858, and raises anew the question which I considered the majority, if not the whole, of the medical profession regarded as settled—viz., whether a fair remuneration for advice and medicine can be recovered in courts of law by a medical practitioner holding a qualification in medicine and surgery. The case is briefly this:—Dr. M., who is a M.D. and C.M., sues a gentleman for £10 for advice and medicine. The defendant does not deny that he received advice and medicine, but the judge rules that the plaintiff cannot recover for medicine unless he is a licentiate of the Apothecaries' Company. Now, Sir, would you kindly say whether, in your opinion, this is the state of the law, and whether this ruling is in accordance with the Medical Act of 1858.

Yours, &c.,

London, June 20th, 1872.

B. D.

BIRMINGHAM.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

GENERAL indignation is felt in this town at the rejection of the Sewerage Bill by the House of Commons. The subject is to be brought before the Town Council at its next meeting, and special attention will be called to the fact that the majority of three, by whom the measure was rejected, was made up of votes of members—viz., Sir R. Peel, Sir C. B. Adderley, and Mr. Wingfield Baker—who, as owners of land proposed to be acquired by the Bill, and petitioning against it as such owners, were not qualified to vote on the question. It will be seen that this is rather a constitutional than a local question, and Parliament will be invited to give an expression of its opinion upon it.