

cause of the lowered arterial pressure in shock is the increased capacity of the vascular system resulting from loss of vaso-motor control. Increasing the atmospheric pressure will diminish the capacity of the vascular system and so directly raise the blood pressure in the essential part of the circulation—namely, the heart and great vessels and the brain.

I am, Sirs, your faithfully,

April 4th, 1905.

P. LOCKHART MUMMERY.

FREE INCISION IN PLEURITIC EFFUSION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In your issue of March 25th I notice that Dr. S. West discourages "free incision" in pleuritic effusion. As I have treated a few cases in this manner with success I would like to express my opinion with a view to encourage this method of treatment. I have employed incision in acute cases, sometimes with a high temperature and pneumonia. The object of the treatment is primarily to relieve the dyspnoea and secondarily to prevent the adhesions which are so frequent after empyema, not to refer to the very large number of cases which go on to tuberculosis. Dr. West says: "The objection to this method of treatment is, of course, that it necessarily leads to empyema." My experience is that it is more probably a preventive of empyema, if the drainage is properly carried out. If done early, within a week or so, there is no fear of adhesions, as Dr. West anticipates. It is supposed to be the relief of tension that cures, as similarly occurs with an obstinate effusion in a joint when incised. Far from being "unjustifiable" as a method of "radical treatment" I think it appeals to anyone on first principles and as the lung expands quickly there is no cavity left to become septic.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Hampstead, March 28th, 1905.

ALBERT WILSON.

ISOLATION HOSPITALS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Allow me to assure Dr. F. Lucas Benham that I sincerely regret having misread his former communication to THE LANCET and that the part of my letter in which I offered him my congratulations on his having "contented himself with a letter to THE LANCET" should have been so badly worded as to have given the impression that I was harbouring an *arrière pensée*. What I intended to convey was that continued association with this movement would have brought him no more satisfaction than it has brought us. As Froude has it, "Men possessed with an idea cannot be reasoned with"—which explains the fact that after 25 years of continuous failure the isolation hospital still exists, but the why and the wherefore of its existence nobody knows.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Nottingham, April 1st, 1905.

EDWD. DEAN MARRIOTT.

IMMIGRATION AND THE DEATH-RATE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In your comments on the Registrar-General's sixty-sixth annual report it is stated that "it is unreasonable to expect that in a country receiving hordes of destitute aliens from all parts of the world the present exceptionally low death-rate will be permanently maintained."¹ It would be interesting to learn what is the writer's conception of a horde. I may say at once that the immigrants do not dwell here in tents, camps, &c. As to numbers, there were in 1902 probably less than 56,000² and in 1903 considerably less than in 1902.³ They are certainly not all destitute. THE LANCET annual returns show that in the districts with the largest number of aliens (Stepney) the death-rate is not the highest in London, neither for all classes nor for children under one year of age.⁴ Mr. Charles Booth believes that an influx of foreign Jews, who, as is well known, form the bulk of the immigrants, will be a factor in reducing the death-rate in St George's in the East and Shadwell as it has been in Whitechapel.⁵

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Commercial-road East, April 3rd, 1905.

M. D. EDER.

THE SCAVENGERS OF NEW YORK.

THE OUTBREAK OF CEREBRO-SPINAL MENINGITIS; THE REMARKABLE INCREASE OF CANCER, ORGANIC HEART DISEASE, AND CHRONIC BRIGHT'S DISEASE.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL SANITARY COMMISSIONER.)

So many cases of cerebro-spinal meningitis have recently occurred in New York that the disease has assumed an epidemic form. Its presence has created very great alarm and not a few persons have already sought safety in flight. According to Dr. G. B. Fowler, who was recently commissioner of health of New York, this is a filthy disease. In times gone by it used to prevail in prisons and also among the insane of filthy habits who were locked up in asylums that were a sort of prison and where no great care was taken to maintain cleanliness. To-day, however, there is a sanitary code issued by the board of health of the department of health of the city of New York. The corporation has a large budget and quite an army of officials and servants. Indeed, some of these are organised on a military basis. Filth, therefore, should not abound in such a city—at least, not to the extent of causing an epidemic similar to those which prevailed within the asylums and prisons in the days when little or no knowledge of sanitation existed. It must be confessed, however, that the scavenging and the paving of the streets are not what they should be. Though I was but a short time in New York still I came upon a few places where the pavement was in a deplorable condition and noticed about the streets a good deal of garbage which should have been removed. Such experience, however, is too limited to form the basis of an opinion. A few cases of neglect could be found in any town and I am not in a position to say whether what I chanced to see at New York was exceptional or general. On the other hand, at the University Settlement in Eldridge-street, which is on the East side and the most densely populated part of New York, I heard a lecture on this very subject. The lecturer described the measures taken by the late Colonel Waring and how he had insisted that he was determined to clean the streets.

For this purpose the colonel, who was the city commissioner for street cleaning, put his men into uniforms. He endeavoured to make them take a pride in their work and proclaimed what has often been said though not often realised—namely, that the scavenger is one of the most useful and indispensable functionaries of the State. He urged that it was not a disgrace to sweep the streets; the real disgrace was to take money for sweeping and then not to sweep. Having organised his scavenger brigade, given them their uniforms, and drilled them a little, he determined to raise their sense of self-esteem by some striking demonstration. It so happened that at that time there was a fashionable horse show. Consequently he had all the horses in the employ of the street cleansing department carefully groomed and decorated with ribbons. The men were told to put on their best and cleanest uniforms. Colonel Waring, himself in a similar uniform and mounted on a fine charger, rode at the head of the scavenger brigade, conducting them and their horses to the horse show. Here the fashionable and wealthy members of New York society, struck by the originality of the proceeding and realising the importance of the object in view, gave the scavengers an enthusiastic ovation. They had been accustomed to parades of firemen, but, after all, is not the scavenger as useful a worker? Does he not also largely contribute to protect the public against the dangers that especially menace the dwellers in large towns? It was certainly an excellent idea to endeavour to raise the standard of life and self-respect among the scavengers and Colonel Waring very ingeniously discovered a method of achieving this end. It is essential for the welfare of the community that scavengers should realise how very important is the work with which they are entrusted and how serious the consequences may be if it is not carefully, punctually, and efficiently performed.

If, as it is maintained, cerebro spinal meningitis is a filthy disease, can it be that since the death of Colonel Waring there has been some relapse and that the scavenging work is no longer so well done? Or is it, as the present commissioner says, that there is a great increase of street stalls, street markets, and costermongers' carts? In America all these

¹ THE LANCET, April 1st, 1905, p. 880.

² Statesman's Year-book for 1904, p. 29.

³ Board of Trade Returns, April, 1904.

⁴ THE LANCET, March 12th, 1904, p. 749.

⁵ Life and Labours of the People in London, final volume, p. 18.