

## THE VALUE OF A REGISTRAR'S CERTIFICATE.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I shall feel obliged if you will inform me in your next week's number of THE LANCET, what use a medical certificate of cause of death is? A pauper patient, who I have just attended, has died rather suddenly. I wished, for my own satisfaction, to make a post-mortem examination; but the friends refused to have it done. I consequently refused to give a certificate, as I could not give a positive reason of the cause of death, though I judged pretty well what might have been the cause of her premature departure. Upon mentioning the circumstance to the clergyman of the parish where this death occurred, and my stating that I refused to do so, he said he could not refuse to bury the corpse, whether they had a certificate or not. Now, Mr. Editor, I only want to know what utility these certificates are, if persons can be buried in defiance of a medical man's certificate.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Sept. 9, 1848.

HOMO.

\* \* Our reply to the question of our correspondent is this:—Such certificates are of very little value in the present state of the law,—a fact which must be well known to the Registrar-General.

## SUGGESTIONS FOR THE TREATMENT OF HYDROPHOBIA BY TRACHEOTOMY.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In a recent number of THE LANCET (August 5th) at page 151, there is an interesting paper by Dr. Marshall Hall, under the heading, "Suggestions for the Treatment of Hydrophobia." In accounting for the fatal termination of this malady, the writer remarks, "In hydrophobia the patient dies of asphyxia, arising from repeated paroxysmal closure of the larynx." He then observes: "I have often thought of a prompt mode of performing the operation of tracheotomy;" and, in further pursuing his subject, he concludes with the following encouraging interrogatories:—"The patient could not die of asphyxia; he would not die of the nervous exhaustion induced by the continual excitement of emotional and reflex actions. Why, then, should he die? Why should he not survive until the poison should be eliminated from the system?"

I should have been much gratified at perusing these suggestions in print, as confirmatory of views which I have already promulgated, had they emanated from any man in ordinary practice, whether a member of my own or of the sister profession; but by their being entertained by so great an authority as Dr. Marshall Hall, the successful leader of the day in physiological pursuits, I am impressed with even a stronger feeling on the subject. I beg to refer the doctor, together with the numerous readers of THE LANCET, to a paper of mine on Hydrophobia, which appeared in your valuable journal nearly five years ago, (THE LANCET for December 9th, 1843, page 337) in which I believe I was the first to suggest the operation of tracheotomy for hydrophobia, based upon the reasoning that every hydrophobic patient dies of suffocation arising from muscular constriction of the glottis. There is, also, the further suggestion, that by a little prolongation of life the rallying powers of the system might be enabled to expel the virus.

Permit me to remind you of a most powerful and comprehensive leading article in THE LANCET of that day, immediately preceding my paper, and headed, "The Advantages derivable to Medicine from the Study of Comparative Pathology." I embrace this opportunity of cordially thanking you for that public demonstration, as it rendered good service to the veterinary section of medical science.

I am, Sir, your most obedient servant,

JAMES TURNER,  
Veterinary Surgeon.

Regent-street, London, August 30, 1848.

## THE UPTON-ON-SEVERN UNION.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—The struggle in which the late medical officers of this union are now engaged is one of a character so thoroughly public, and the question which they are agitating involves the interest of so large a mass of medical practitioners, that the duty which we owe to our professional brethren forces us to give to Mr. Marsh's letter of Saturday last a notice which it little deserves, and instead of gratifying our private feelings

by treating his ebullitions of spleen with silence and indifference, compels us again to bring his past deeds in review. Although Mr. Marsh endeavours to justify his treachery to the profession by creating a private quarrel, yet the profession will judge of him by his public deeds, not by his private temper—by his overt acts, not by his expressions of "warm feelings" and "sympathy." The poor woman who died in 1844 might have been selling butter or even eggs on Monday; we do not dispute the fact. The assistant poor-law commissioner might have manifested a "degree of feeling" towards him at the investigation before the board. We know that he did; it was a good feeling, and kind feeling, towards Mr. Marsh; for Mr. Austin, wishing to save him the disgrace of dismissal, intimated to him that the board were all dead against him, and this intimation, coupled with the decision of the board, that "a case of gross neglect had been made out against Mr. Marsh," were the impelling motives to his resignation. Away with the nonsense about Mr. Marsh's assistants not being allowed to attend his cases; Mr. Marsh had no assistants at the time, but only an articulated pupil. Mr. Marsh has endeavoured to extenuate his conduct against the cause of the profession by an admission of his love of revenge, his desire for reprisal.

Quippe minuti  
Semper et infirmi est animi exiguique voluptas  
Ultio.

A great public principle was thus to be sacrificed, and has indeed been sacrificed, at the shrine of private pique and of personal malevolence. On Mr. Marsh's first hearing that the board had peremptorily refused any increase of salary, and that we had consequently resigned, his expression to Mr. Meears, whilst he rubbed his hands with glee, was, "Well, I am delighted, and as glad as if any one had given me fifty pounds, that you are defeated—seventeen to seven against you!" and yet in his letter he boasts of having "always sympathized with the too numerous victims to medical relief injustice." Well may we exclaim, "Look on this picture,—and on this."

Mr. Marsh has charged one of us, Mr. Braddon, with having "in an underhand manner ousted him out of his district;" ergo, Mr. Marsh in an underhand manner "ousts" the profession "out" of its just rights. But it is necessary to show that Mr. Marsh is as unfortunate in the facts of his statements about others as we have already proved him to be unfortunate in those about himself. Mr. Marsh first opposed Mr. Braddon for the fourth district in 1846, and was elected for a probationary term of six months, at the expiration of which period Mr. Braddon did not oppose Mr. Marsh when he might have done so with success, but allowed him to be re-elected for another probationary term of twelve months. This term ended in May last, and then Mr. Braddon did oppose Mr. Marsh, but in no underhand manner. Mr. Braddon certainly gave Mr. Marsh no intimation of his intended opposition, neither is such a proceeding usual, (the district was advertised as vacant,) but Mr. Braddon never canvassed a single guardian, therefore Mr. Marsh had the field entirely to himself. The profession will readily comprehend that if Mr. Braddon had not opposed Mr. Marsh, and, as he expresses it, "ousted him out of it," there could have been no unanimity among the medical officers of this union in their stand against the board of guardians. Mr. Braddon's motives in accepting this district are now tolerably obvious; his conduct has been that of a strictly honourable gentleman. Had he not been actuated by other motives than those of mere personal interest or personal gratification, Mr. Marsh might have kept his Ripple district for ever. The motives which induced Mr. Braddon to oppose Mr. Marsh are the same which have guided him in his recent conduct—conduct which is fully before the profession—conduct of which the profession can best judge. Mr. Marsh attributes to us both the credit of having "organized a strike." "We own the soft impeachment," as do all the late medical officers, and we refer to it with pride. We have indeed struck home, though as you, Sir, have emphatically expressed it, "it was no vulgar strike for higher wages, but a contest of principle—a struggle between equity and injustice." Mr. Marsh would have done well had he emulated his neighbours, and earned a share of that credit with which the whole profession congratulates itself. Mr. Marsh complains that he was not requested to co-operate with us. Mr. Marsh was not an union officer, but his passive assistance was sought through our first address to the profession; and previous to the publication of that address, Mr. Marsh was seen by one of our number, Mr. Prior. Mr. Prior intimated to him our intentions, and received from Mr. Marsh his most positive assurance that nothing should induce him to accept any of the appointments