

now for many years tried electricity, and proved its powerful remedial agency in various diseases, I can most conscientiously advise its use in any future unfortunate case of anæsthesia that may occur, as well as in the asphyxia that follows an overdose of prussic acid, and also in narcotism following the abuse of opium, or any other vegetable poison.

In either case, so confident am I of its power and efficacy, that I should feel myself very uncomfortable had I not a machine, and an efficient one, at hand, to fly to immediately in case of an untoward accident.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Princes-street, Coventry-street.

J. H. HORNE, Surgeon.

TESTIMONIAL TO DR. BERNCASTLE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg, through the medium of your columns, to call on the profession generally to subscribe, for the purpose of presenting to Dr. Berncastle a testimonial expressive of our sympathy in his cause, and our disgust at the conduct of the coroner, jury, and guardians.

I shall be happy to receive subscriptions from gentlemen in my neighbourhood, and will set down, as a commencement, £5, for myself and two friends. I propose that the sum collected be presented to Dr. Berncastle in the form of a purse, to be by him laid out as he may think fit.

In making this appeal to my professional brethren, I trust I need not remind them that it is their duty and interest both, to rally round an injured member of their community, for what is his lot to-day, to-morrow may be their own.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Lewisham, Feb. 1848.

C. WILSON STEEL.

FRIGHTFUL MORTALITY AMONGST MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS IN IRELAND.

PROPOSALS FOR THE SUCCOUR OF THEIR FAMILIES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I sincerely trust that the melancholy details which you have given of the truly frightful mortality among our professional brethren in Ireland during last year, have been perused with thoughtful attention by every reader of your widely-circulated journal. One in about every fourteen of the medical practitioners of that country swept off in the course of twelve months!—a rate of mortality greatly exceeding the average in the unhealthiest climates in the world. That the fatal fever was, in almost every instance, caught from attendance upon the sick, is just what we might have expected; nor can any one wonder at the frequency of this result, if he will but realize to his mind for a moment the condition of a man, worn out, it may be, at the time with fatigue and anxiety, visiting the wretched inmates of an Irish hovel,—the very focus of destitution and filth at the best of times. I verily believe that there is not a spot on the face of the wide world where medical practitioners have to undergo such exhausting and unremunerative toil, and are exposed to greater danger in the discharge of their holy mission—that of ministering to the diseased—than in many of the districts of Ireland, where fever is epidemic through the land. Not to allude to other distressing circumstances in their position, I see it mentioned by Drs. Cusack and Stokes that the residences of the practitioners are sometimes so far apart from each other, that when one of our brethren has been himself overtaken with the pestilence, he has actually died without having received any professional attendance! When we learn at the same time that a family is thereby, in very many instances, left utterly unprovided for, must not the feeling of a strong sympathy at once take the place of a mere regret? Let the reader but look back at that account of destitution and suffering in some of the families, which you have given from the Report of the Medical Temporary Relief Committee, and I am sure that his heart must burn within him to do something to mitigate such distress. Ought we not, as a body, (I speak to my professional brethren in every part of the United Kingdom,) to inquire into the state of things as represented in that Report, in order that steps may be taken to afford assistance to the bereaved sufferers? There is a "Benevolent Fund Society" in Dublin, presided over and conducted by the leading physicians and surgeons of Ireland, the object of which institution is to relieve medical men under severe and urgent distress, occasioned by sickness, accident, or any other calamity; but the means at their disposal are utterly inadequate to the end in view. That most energetic friend of his brethren, Mr. Wilde, has, in the last number of the *Dublin Quarterly Journal*, appealed to the profession generally in aid of the Society at the present time. Now might we not make it the almoner of our bounty?—and as its active members have an exact acquaintance with the real condition of every applicant, we should have the

satisfaction of knowing that the funds committed to their care would be faithfully and judiciously applied.

I could have wished much that some prominent and influential member of our ranks had taken up this subject, so that a prompt and efficient response might have been anticipated to the suggestion thrown out. I cordially hope, however, that my humble attempt may not have been made altogether in vain; and in conclusion beg to say, that nothing will give me greater pleasure than to work with and under any gentleman or body of gentlemen who may think that my services can be of any use in promoting the good cause.

February, 1848.

GAVIN MILROY, M.D.

POOR-LAW MEDICAL RELIEF.—LORD ASHLEY'S RESOLUTIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your last two numbers of *THE LANCET* I find Lord Ashley is about bringing certain resolutions before the House of Commons, respecting the poor-law medical officers, nearly all of which are very old, and have been in operation for years—I may say all, except that part relating to their salaries. In March, 1842, certain orders were issued by the Poor-Law Commissioners, and article twenty related to the medical officer's permanent appointment, &c. My appointment was conferred in that year. Consequently, I am now appointed for life, or until I resign, or am disqualified. In June, 1847, a fresh number of orders were issued, and article 191 still further confirms article twenty, in 1842. Consequently, I do not see that Lord Ashley is going to do such great things for us—I am, Sir, yours, &c.,

A UNION MEDICAL OFFICER OF TWELVE YEARS' STANDING.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In reference to the resolutions about to be submitted to the House of Commons for the medical treatment of the poor, by Lord Ashley, I beg to observe that the fifth resolution excludes members of the College of Surgeons unless they possess also a public medical degree or licence. Consequently, the great majority of the medical officers of the army and navy would be excluded from those civil appointments when they may retire from the service; as the diploma of the College of Surgeons, though indispensable, is the only collegiate qualification required from candidates for public employment, yet they are also required to produce testimonials of adequate medical studies in all branches of the profession, and to undergo examinations before the respective Boards; yet they could be objected to, notwithstanding their practical experience, and their acquired acquaintance with sanitary measures, so strictly enforced in the public services. This in itself would be a hardship to the medical officers, and probably an injury to the public; but it would, moreover, by implication, prove a serious detriment to retired officers entering private practice, as the question might be asked—"How can you consult an army doctor? they are not fit or qualified men to attend the poor!"

I would, then, hope that members of the College of Surgeons, having served in the army or navy for five years, may be included in the fifth resolution as competent persons.

Douglas, Isle of Man, Feb. 1848.

Yours, &c.,

L. S.

NEW MEDICAL REGISTRATION COMMITTEE.—THE NATIONAL INSTITUTE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is with feelings of infinite pleasure that I read in your journal of last week of the nomination of the members of the new committee for inquiring into that perplexing subject, medical reform, or better regulation of the medical profession. Sincerely do I hope, and am confident I do not by any means stand alone in my desire, that ere this session of Parliament shall have passed away, your untiring endeavours and zeal for the great body of surgeons, civil, naval, and military, will ultimately produce some permanent benefit to all. Much as there is to contend with, nothing seems to me so absurd as the striving of a body, self-styled the National Institute, and whose actions are continually receiving wholesome reproof from your powerful pen. That their boastings about head and home can have any operation upon the legislature, I cannot for one moment conceive; or that the House of Commons can believe that they are the representatives of that great body, the English surgeons, is too ridiculous for me to entertain the slightest idea. There are enough medical corporations now for granting degrees, and ascertaining the fitness of candidates to practise the science of medicine, and the several branches of knowledge connected with