

doubtful, however, whether the most skilful oesophagoscopist would have had success in the case quoted owing to the infant's size and age, but it is comforting to know that if he fails intestinal peristalsis with the patient in the recumbent posture may successfully remove the offending body without having recourse to a cutting operation.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Oldham, Feb. 2nd, 1908.

J. S. MANSON.

IS THE DEATH-RATE THE BEST MEASURE OF SEVERITY IN DISEASE?

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—May I ask you to insert the following correction in my article published in your last number under the above title? In Table II. the grand total should be 1823·8, not 183·8.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

New Cross-road, S.E., Feb. 11th, 1908.

F. M. TURNER.

THE MEDICAL INSPECTION OF SCHOOL CHILDREN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The Memorandum of the Education Board on the Medical Inspection of School Children recommends that it shall be carried out "under the direct supervision of the medical officer of health," and goes on to say that "some authorities will find that the teachers are able to undertake without undue strain a share of the work of furnishing data respecting each child and even perhaps to carry out some portion of the inspection." As a matter of fact, the teachers, with the aid of a school nurse, could carry out the whole inspection after a fashion; the teacher could fill in the names, ages, addresses, heights, and weights of the children, and could test their sight and hearing; the nurse could inspect their skins, teeth, and throats. Finally, to the children found defective the head master or mistress could give cards advising their parents to take the child to an oculist, dentist, aurist, or, if it is thought he could be trusted, to an ordinary doctor.

But the Memorandum does not stop at inspection, but goes on to say that school nurses are "to assist in carrying out medical advice concerning simple complaints"; similarly the medical officer (education) of the London County Council tells us in his report that "it is quite absurd to say a nurse cannot recognise ringworm." It is; a nurse can do anything she is trained to; woman doctors recognise and treat all diseases, and what makes the woman doctor is not the degree but the training before and after graduation. Nurses could therefore treat cases under the supervision of the medical officer of health. That they should do so is, I submit, absolutely wrong; it is as if in a hospital the surgeons and house surgeons were abolished and the surgical cases treated by the nurses under the supervision of the sanitary engineer. Local authorities themselves do not seem quite to approve of nurse treatment and are beginning to appoint junior members of the profession to hold office for a year or two as assistants to the medical officer of health, primarily to inspect school children, but also to discharge any other duty their chief may delegate to them. But this, too, is wrong; the treatment of disease is not a minor matter, one to be safely left to medical underlings and "suitable persons"; the treatment doctor must remain the equal of the more recently invented preventive doctor. To separate simple ailments from complex is impossible; the man who never sees a simple case will not understand a complex one; the profession cannot survive the confiscation of its experience.

Whether or not there should be State treatment is a matter on which opinions will differ; it will be decided not by us but by education authorities; we, however, can share in the decision by our votes and by becoming members of local councils and of health and education committees. If State treatment is to come it must be properly carried out; there will probably be no question between whole- and part-time appointments, for there will be no work left for doctors to do in their own time; private practitioners may read their fate in that of private teachers; voluntary hospitals in that of voluntary schools.

I am much obliged to "A Lawyer" for his answers to my former questions.¹ If his kindness is not ex-

hausted I should like to ask one more. If a medical officer of health supervises the treatment of simple ailments by a school nurse is he liable to actions for malpraxis; and can the General Medical Council remove his name from the Register for covering? If this is done can he continue to hold his office?

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Feb. 8th, 1908.

J. S.

THE DESTINY OF CASE-BOOKS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I had an experience quite as unpleasant as that related by your correspondent "M.R.C.S." concerning the destiny of case-books. Some years ago I consulted a West-End specialist. I knew him pretty well and he showed me his case-book then in use, and for my comfort explained that it was written in a shorthand invented by himself. A few months later this physician died and I received an envelope which contained a letter from his widow stating that she had disposed of the practice to Dr. X. There was another letter from Dr. X explaining that he had purchased the practice and had all the case-books of the deceased consultant. Remembering that the case-books were in cypher I hoped they would be useless; their proper destination was certainly the fire. The first doctor was a gynaecologist.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Feb. 8th, 1908.

DOMINA.

LIVERPOOL.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

Liverpool Royal Infirmary: Annual Meeting; The Position of the Abattoirs.

THE annual meeting of the subscribers to the Royal Infirmary was held on Jan. 29th. Allusion was made by the treasurer in flattering terms to the retirement of Mr. Rushton Parker from the active staff. Mr. Parker had had a connexion of 30 years with the Royal Infirmary. For 12 years as assistant surgeon and 18 years as honorary surgeon he concentrated his care and attention on the hospital to which he unsparingly devoted his best ability and time. Beds had been endowed during the year by Miss A. W. Hignett, Mr. James Lister, and Mr. Bruce Ismay in memory of their parents. The contribution from the Hospital Sunday and Saturday Funds had been £3378. Legacies, always a varying source of income, amounted to £1246. The total expenditure was £16,208 and the ordinary income was £14,034. On balance, £2600 having been transferred from the long-lived but now nearly exhausted maintenance fund, the charity was still in debt to the amount of £2335, and the convalescent fund was in debt to the extent of £164. 3875 patients had been treated in the wards, 20,434 as out-patients, and for redressing of wounds, &c., 52,082 had attended. The Lord Mayor (Dr. Richard Caton), in proposing the adoption of the report and accounts, said that he trusted that such charities as the Royal Infirmary would not, as some people thought, be placed upon the rates. The present method of hospital governance was infinitely better than anything that could take its place in the form of State-aided hospitals. He trusted that they would do everything in their power to carry on that and other hospitals on their present basis. He regretted to find that the committee was in debt as regarded the convalescent fund, as that was such an important matter which led to the relief of their bed accommodation. Mr. T. H. Bickerton alluded to the question of the possibility of the renewal of the lease of the abattoirs in their present position near the infirmary. He expressed the hope that the corporation would not on any account consent to the renewal of the lease. The Liverpool Medical Institution had prepared a resolution to which some 200 to 250 medical men had attached their signatures, which would be sent to the Lord Mayor for presentation to the city council. He hoped that the city would confirm the opinion of the medical profession that abattoirs should not be allowed to remain in densely populated centres. Mr. G. G. Hamilton said that his operating theatre in the infirmary was only at a short distance from the abattoirs, and he joined in the hope that the lease would not be renewed. Several times he had had to stop surgical operations to get rid of flies which were now recognised as such a medium for spreading disease. If it were proved that the flies had a

¹ THE LANCET, Jan. 4th, 1908, p. 51.