

solution, and so the relative contraction or dilatation of all the arterioles of the body.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Brook-street, W., Sept. 19th, 1892.

ALEXANDER HAIG.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I should be glad if Dr. Mouat would specify the sentence in which occurs "the insinuation that the corruption of the subordinate agents of the prisons caused the smuggling of opium in such quantities as to cause a prejudicial influence on death-rates." Dr. Pringle, I observe, suggested that the smuggling exerted an opposite influence. What is Dr. Mouat's explanation of the apparent discrepancy in his vouching "absolutely for the correctness of the returns themselves," and yet saying of one of them, "This record again I believe to be inexact"?

Dr. Mouat says "the diseases chiefly influenced by opium were dysentery and diarrhoea," and that one-fourth at least of the whole mortality was due to dysentery alone. Is this an approval of the suggestion that opium predisposes to dysentery?—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. BARCROFT ANDERSON, M.B., B.Ch. Dub. Univ., &c.
Dublin, Sept. 20th, 1892.

THE MIDWIVES' REGISTRATION BILL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of Sept. 17th you publish a letter from Dr. Alderson relative to "Midwives and Abnormal Cases." Will you allow me to point out some of the errors he has fallen into? He opposed the late Midwives Bill, he says, because it would have certificated hopelessly incapable people; but he has forgotten that there was a clause requiring proof of a fair amount of knowledge before registration. In the case he gives, supposing the hopelessly ignorant woman who assumed the name of midwife had had her name placed on the Midwives' Register, it would have changed the verdict into one of culpable negligence; and even if she had succeeded in persuading the jury that registration did not imply necessarily knowledge, she would still have had her name removed from the Register and have experienced that amount of punishment now noticeable by its entire absence. He thinks that "midwives should only be allowed to act under the eye and responsibility of a medical man," and that a poor patient should be attended by the club or parish doctor. This might be desirable. These women have the opportunity of so doing now, and will not have the one while they either cannot or will not have the other; at any rate, they do not have doctors to attend them, and indeed it would be quite impossible for doctors to do all the "cheap" work thus thrown on them and live on the results. I would ask him why a medical man should bear the misdeeds of an "obstetric nurse" on his shoulders merely because he was engaged by a patient to assist in case of the requirement of his services. He would have to wait till sent for and then be responsible for not having come sooner. Who is to pay the expense of this arrangement, for which alternative Dr. Alderson has thrown his weight against the Bill? The patient can hardly pay the midwife, let alone paying retaining fees or fees for services rendered. The fact is that the poorer classes, in their very laudable endeavours to be independent, prefer, in their ignorance of the risks they run, to be attended by a person whose charges come within their means. It cannot be denied that an immense number of poor people are attended by incompetent or untrained women. I have in front of me letters just received from two medical men practising in a manufacturing town of 60,000 inhabitants, mostly poor, and these are nearly all attended (so they tell me) by untrained women because they cannot pay doctors' fees. Dr. Alderson has opposed a much-needed Bill for fear of a provision in it which could not have been left out and which would have been remedied by lapse of time in a few years.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

F. ROWLAND HUMPHREYS.

Fellows-road, N.W., Sept. 20th, 1892.

THE SANITARY CONDITION OF WELLINGTON, NEW ZEALAND.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of June 11th appears a critique upon the sanitary condition of Wellington, in which the writer states that "dirt, disease and death have given this

city an unenviable notoriety among the cities of the colony." This is painfully unjust, as my report most clearly proved. Previously to 1890 there was comparatively little typhoid fever. During that year there were 109 cases, 50 of which occurred in a small area of several blocks of buildings in the Te Clio end of the town. In 1891 there were 107 cases and 57 came from this same area; while during the first quarter of 1892 there were 62 cases and 56 came from exactly the same locality, leaving 6 only from the remaining part of the city. The area under notice covers a space of about 100 acres, while the populated area of the city is 1500 acres. It is obvious therefore that only one little spot, one-fifteenth of the town area, deserves the severe criticism of your correspondent; the rest of our town enjoys comparative immunity from all forms of zymotic disease. My report clearly shows this; and of all the things said of Wellington, sanitation was the most just and at the same time the most complimentary, for it freed fourteen-fifteenths of the city from the cloud that hung over it. New arrivals who have read the scathing criticism of this our empire city must be very pleasantly surprised at the general cleanliness of our streets, the elevation of our houses on the hill-side and the ample space around each, admitting light and air and sunshine in rich abundance and surpassing purity. The affliction of a prince, not the zymotic mortality, has given Wellington a reputation almost wholly undeserved. Defects in house and town drainage may occur anywhere and at any time. Local house-drain defects caused the illness of Lord Cranley and local town defects caused the epidemic of Te Clio. The former of these have been successfully remedied and the latter are being remedied by the Council, who, despite the aspersions cast upon them, have overcome many difficulties and accomplished much in sanitary reform.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Wellington, N.Z., Aug. 11th, 1892.

W. A. CHAPPLE.

THE PATHOLOGY OF DROPSY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—At the present time, when the pathology of dropsy is being so much discussed, the subjoined case of dropsy without albuminuria following scarlet fever may be worth recording:—On Sept. 5th I was called to see L. M.—, a little boy aged six, who was suffering from well-marked scarlet fever; throat, tongue and rash were all typical; the temperature was 102°. The case ran an ordinary course, and by Sept. 9th the temperature was normal and the rash had almost disappeared. I had tested the urine daily as a matter of routine, but had found nothing abnormal. On Sept. 10th when I called I found considerable swelling of the whole face, especially marked on the upper lip, and the complexion pale and rather waxy-looking; there was also swelling of the left leg and slightly of the scrotum; the temperature had run up to 100.4°. I expected to find the urine highly albuminous, but was surprised to see, on testing by boiling, that there was no precipitate, nor was there any reaction with either nitric or picric acid. The amount of urine passed was unfortunately not measured, but the patient's mother stated that he had not passed nearly as much as usual. I ordered a mixture containing digitalis, and on the next day (Sept. 11th) the swelling had nearly disappeared, while to-day (Sept. 12th) there is none discoverable and the waxy complexion has given way to a more healthy colour. I have examined the urine at different times, before and after meals, but have quite failed to find any albumen. I offer no explanation of these facts, but content myself with recording them.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Southend, Sept. 13th, 1892.

W. A. MURRAY, B.A., M.B.

THE RADICAL CURE OF INGUINAL HERNIA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—If it were admitted that a particular method of obtaining a definite result was the best, then I take it many methods of attempting to do so would not be recommended; but for the radical cure of hernia several operations are advocated, and no one has been adopted as the best. In drawing attention to another, the peculiarity of which is the introduction of a new principle, I hope I have not done injustice to any other procedure. I congratulate Mr. Burghard upon the success of his eight cases of radical cure by Bassini's operation, but I still think that by Halsted's recurrence is less

likely to occur than by any other plan with which I am acquainted. Naturally I cannot expect Mr. Burghard to agree with me, as he is enthusiastically in favour of another operation, but I should be very much gratified if I could persuade him to give Halsted's a trial.

I am, Sirs, very truly yours,
Newcastle-on-Tyne, Sept. 19th, 1892. FREDERICK PAGE.

"PSYCHO-THERAPEUTICS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In Dr. Robertson's article on "Psycho-Therapeutics" in THE LANCET of last week he corroborates my views on the subject, as stated in the summing up of my article which he criticises. For speaking of certain occult power which some few persons possess over the minds of others through suggestion, he says "the possession of this power by one or two members is of very little value to the profession as a whole." Just so. He might have added—and there are few upon whom this power has any influence. I stop at "relics," "magnetic healing" and tricks with "cold water," "bread pills" &c., believing that in the end they can only do harm. Nor have I any faith in hypnotism, which is merely another form of the miserable farce, mesmerism, which in my youth wrecked poor Dr. Elliotson's reputation. But in the observations in Dr. Robertson's article respecting certain "physicians of celebrity" and family doctors and their success in the treatment of disease I think he corroborates my views; for by their tact and personality that "faith and hope" of which I have spoken are created in their patients which will enable them "to make at least a brave stand against their foes." I still believe, therefore, and regret that "he who expects more than this from the influence of the mind on the body in treating disease will be disappointed."

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,
Bishop's Tsginton, South Devon, Sept. 20th, 1892. WM. DALE.

"OUR DUTY TO OUR PATIENTS."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the last issue of THE LANCET I notice a letter on this subject signed "Spes," which calls attention to the desirability of having some simple common-sense rules printed for circulation on various health subjects which would educate the working classes on matters pertaining to the health and comfort of their children and themselves. It is not so generally known as it ought to be that there is an institution whose special work is in this direction—viz., the Ladies' Sanitary Association, of 22, Berners-street, W. They publish a large variety of leaflets, cards, tracts &c. on all health subjects, including those which "Spes" mentions as most needed: "The Care of Mothers recently Confined," "How to Wash and Dress the Baby," "How to Feed the Baby." A list of these useful and inexpensive publications can be obtained by application to the Secretary, Miss Rose Adams.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,
J. SINCLAIR HOLDEN, M.D., M.O.H.
Sudbury, Suffolk, Sept. 20th, 1892.

ADULTERATION AND THE INSPECTION OF MEAT: RECENT BELGIAN LEGISLATION.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

THE Belgian Government has been working quietly but very earnestly during the last few years, with the result that the laws framed to ensure the wholesomeness of alimentary substances have been considerably improved and strengthened. It is a difficult and tedious matter to analyse the legislation of a country, even if such analysis is limited to one single subject. Considerations of space make it impossible to give a complete synopsis of the Belgian law on markets, slaughter-houses, and on the adulteration of food. But in the laws recently enacted there are such good points that these improvements at least merit full notice. For ampler information the reader must consult the text of the laws. Thus the entire law on the adulteration of alimentary substances, published in the

Moniteur Belge of Aug. 18th and 19th, 1890, might be studied with advantage. For the present purpose, however, it may suffice to merely point out the more important clauses. Article 1, Clause A, authorises the inspection of the preparation and the manufacture of substances intended for food. In many countries inspection only is permitted of objects actually offered for sale, whereas it is the process and methods of manufacture, the utensils and materials employed, which should be carefully watched. Article 2 states that: "The burgomaster and the agents of the Government whose mission it is to see to the execution of the duties prescribed by the present law may freely examine the shops, warehouses and any place whatsoever where alimentary or medical substances are sold during the whole of the time that these places are open to the public. They may also examine during the same hours the dépôts annexed to these shops or warehouses, even if these dépôts are not open to the public; such places as serve for the manufacture and preparation of alimentary substances destined to be sold, though these places are not open to the public, are equally subject to such visit or inspection, and that at all hours."

This clause embodies a very important innovation. On discussing the matter with some of the authorities the latter expressed the opinion that the clause gives inspectors the right to visit the kitchen of restaurants and see how the food is cooked and whether it is in good condition. It is precisely in restaurants that the law up to the present day has failed to protect the public. Meat, fish &c., when sold in the market, may be in a perfect condition, but when these things have sojourned some time in a high-class restaurant and then, not having been utilised, are sold at a discount to the owner of a cheap restaurant, where they may be kept for some considerable time longer before they are cooked, their condition is far from offering that security to health which they possessed when first purchased. It is now actually proposed to organise a service of inspectors to control and watch the kitchens &c. of restaurants. If resistance is offered to inspection and the taking of samples prevented, a fine of £2 to £3 can be inflicted; and if within the following two years the offence is repeated a fine of £20 can be inflicted, with a term of imprisonment of from eight days to two months. The last clause of the Act is also an innovation and important in its way. It states in Article 8: "Every two years the Government shall present to the Chambers a report of measures it has taken to ensure the execution of this law and the effects that have resulted therefrom." This last clause is a prudent precaution to prevent the law remaining a dead letter. This Act is known as the Law of Aug. 4th, 1890.

The *Moniteur Belge* of Dec. 17th, 1890, contains a report to the King by the Minister of Agriculture, Industry and Public Works, who is the highest sanitary authority in Belgium. This report, dealing with the application of the above law, comments upon the difficulties arising from the trade in margarine, the use of saccharin, of colouring materials and of dangerous utensils and substances for packing, cooking and preserving food and drink. M. Léon de Bruyn, the Minister of Agriculture, in his report, remarks that "it cannot be said public health suffers, for margarine is not in itself an injurious alimentary substance; but the material interests of the consumers suffer, since they pay the price for natural butter and receive in exchange only butter mixed with grease of inferior value. From this it results that our agriculturists also suffer serious injury, for the farmers find that one of their principal products is driven out of the markets by a disloyal competition."

In the same way, with regard to saccharin, though this may not be a poisonous substance, it is a fraud on the public to sell sweets, pastry &c. apparently made with sugar when in reality they are sweetened only with saccharin. In response to this report another law or decree, bearing the date of Dec. 10th, 1890, was signed by the King. This law defines margarine as any sort of butter which has not been manufactured exclusively with milk. Then there follows a stipulation similar to the English Margarine Act, by which all margarine offered for sale must be labelled very distinctly, both in Flemish and in French, with the word "margarine." All cases or barrels containing margarine must also be inscribed with the name and address of the manufacturer. On all bills of lading, invoices &c. the denomination "margarine" must be employed. The same penalties as those mentioned above as the punishment for offering resistance to inspectors apply to any neglect in the observance of those regulations governing the margarine trade.