

## "DIRECT TREATMENT OF SPINAL CARIES BY OPERATION."

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I have read Mr. Treves's paper on the above subject, brought before the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society of London, and can endorse his views to a partial extent as evidenced by my own practice. From my own personal experience, and from facts observed at the mortuary, I have learnt to view with slight favour the opening of abscesses in connexion with vertebral disease, and have taught that, as a rule, any such interference is fraught with inconveniences both to the patient and surgeon. A man, aged thirty-eight, was admitted into the Westminster Hospital in May, 1879, suffering from diseased lumbar vertebrae with deformity, associated with a large psoas abscess which had burst below Poupart's ligament in the right thigh. I wished to ascertain, by making a dependent opening in his loin, if good drainage might not assist in promoting a cure. On May 29th, having had a silver probe specially made twenty inches long, I passed it carefully through the abscess opening in Scarpa's triangle along the sheath of the psoas muscle towards the right loin, and without any difficulty I could feel exposed bone. Having withdrawn the probe and made a short bend at its point (45°), I reintroduced it along the psoas sheath until it touched the top of the abscess wall, directing the point of the probe towards the loin. I then cut down on it, introduced my forefinger through the lumbar wound into the abscess sac, felt the denuded bone, and washed out the detritus with a stream of warm water through the tunnel from the right groin to the loin. The lumbar wound was maintained open by a drainage anchor. The patient was discharged with both wounds healed, but the old abscess opening in the groin seemed inclined to reopen on his assuming the erect posture. When compulsorily pressed to open a psoas abscess I have always chosen the loin as the point of selection, being unable to see why a lumbar abscess should have the honour of exemption from ordinary surgical customs—viz., a large dependent opening for the promotion of cleanliness and good drainage.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

RICHARD DAVY,

Jan. 14th, 1884.

Surgeon to the Westminster Hospital.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—An operation very similar to that described by Mr Treves in your issue of to-day (proceedings of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society) has been already performed on three occasions by Dr. William Macewen in the Royal Infirmary and Sick Children's Hospital of this city. I had the pleasure of assisting Dr. Macewen in each of these cases, and was present at a lecture delivered by him on the subject during the course of the last summer session to the students attending his clinical class. In a communication of this kind it would be out of place to enter into matters of detail; but I may be permitted to state that in two of the patients numerous small sequestra were found, and in the third surgical interference was resorted to, in order to prevent the burrowing of pus into the psoas muscle. The results subsequently obtained were excellent, and leave no doubt in the minds of those who have watched the cases during their progress towards recovery that the course pursued was the right one.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JAS. WHITSON, M.D., F.F.P. & S.G.

Glasgow, Jan. 12th, 1884.

## THE DEGREE OF TEMPERATURE NECESSARY TO DESTROY INFECTIOUS GERMS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—A question of much practical interest and one about which authorities have no very decided opinions, yet a question of vital importance in staying the spread of infectious disease, is, What is the minimum heat required to render the germs of disease inert? In the stoving of infected materials to what heat should the oven be raised? and for how long should the temperature be sustained? In nearly every parish throughout the country disinfection is carried out by means of dry heat. It is a convenient mode, inexpensive, and generally thought to be effective. Dr. Parkes

writes ("Practical Hygiene," p. 482): "The temperature ought not to be less than 220° F., and probably a temperature of 250° F. is desirable." Dr. Ransom of Nottingham used a temperature of 235° F. to 255° F. Dr. Henry of Manchester employed a temperature of 212° F., sustained for one hour. Mr. Wynter Blyth, in his "Dictionary of Hygiene," referring to some experiments in Hungary, states: "A temperature of 278° F. considerably retards decomposition, but certain forms of bacteria cannot be destroyed by it." Dr. Esse of Berlin uses a steam chamber with a pressure of two atmospheres and a temperature of 234° F., and Mr. Lyon of this country has invented a machine which will attain a temperature of 324°, with pressure of 40 lb. to the square inch. It is probable that a moist is more potent than a dry heat, but it must be employed considerably above boiling point. Prof. Tyndall, in experiments upon floating matter in the air, found that some fluids were not sterilised by continued boiling. It is probable, however, that an apparatus which gives a moist heat of 250° F. is effectual. The cost will seriously militate against the general use of high pressure disinfection. In large parishes a first cost of £300 might be met, but in many small parishes the expense would be sufficient to exclude this process.

With a view of finding a safe mode of disinfection, I made some experiments with a Harvey stove, a dry-heat stove already in use in the parish. Linen, calico, flock, and cotton articles became scorched and brittle at 255° F. and ignited at 380°; hemp and horsehair singed at 260° F. and ignited at 400°. At the time the ticks singed, the temperature in the centre of a feather pillow was only 180° F., that in a flock pillow 215°. In order to get a moist heat, six buckets of water were placed in the oven, and the heat raised to 300° F.; a feather and a flock pillow were then placed in the oven, and the heat gently raised until a thermometer lying on one of the pillows registered 340° F. The thermometer in the centre of the flock pillow stood at 280°, that in the feather pillow registered much less; but with this great heat there was no scorching or discolouration.

These experiments point to the unreliability of the dry-heat process; for at a temperature which one would consider insufficient for disinfecting, the material is singed and rendered useless. At the same time they suggest a remedy which is easy of application and inexpensive. The employment of a steam jet or a few buckets of water in the stove places a thoroughly effective process in the hands of those who already have the dry-heat arrangement at command.

In conclusion, I would say that the systematic use of the thermometer should be considered an essential part in the process of disinfection, upon which the health of the community so much depends, and that this important duty should not be entrusted without definite regulations to unskilful hands.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. WALTER VERDON, M.D., F.R.C.S.,

Dec., 1883.

Medical Officer of Health, Lambeth.

## REGULATION OF DAIRIES.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I send you herewith a copy of a memorial which I have this day forwarded to the President of the Local Government Board.

I am, Sir, yours sincerely,

Manchester, Jan. 14th, 1884.

FRANCIS VACHER.

*To the Right Honourable Charles Wentworth Dilke, Bart., M.P., President of the Local Government Board.*

The Memorial of the North-Western Association of Medical Officers of Health respectfully sheweth:

That your memorialists are a body of medical officers of health practising in the counties of Lancaster, Chester, Derby, and the West Riding of the county of York.

That your memorialists trust your Honourable Board will take steps that the Public Health (Dairies, &c.) Bill of 1883 be introduced in the approaching session of Parliament, and that on its introduction the following four clauses, or clauses to the same effect, may be added to the Bill:—

1. Any local authority may require all dairymen and milk-sellers trading as such within the authority's district to notify all cases of dangerous infectious disease appearing on their premises so soon as they shall be aware of the existence of the same, under a penalty for failing to notify not exceeding ten pounds.

2. Any local authority may on receiving such notification

at once close the infected premises till the removal or recovery of the infected subject, and the disinfection of the premises to the satisfaction of the authority.

3. Any local authority may forbid and prevent the sale of milk by milk-sellers or dairymen coming from without the authority's boundaries when there is reason to believe the milk comes from premises infected or otherwise unfit for dairy purposes.

4. Any local authority may require any dairyman or milk-seller to furnish on application a list of the customers served by him on any day or days, and may, if they think fit, pay him for the same, and also to furnish on application such particulars as may be required of the source from whence he obtained his milk-supply on any day or days.

And your memorialists will ever pray.

Signed on behalf of the North-Western Association of Medical Officers of Health.

JOHN MAKINSON FOX, President.  
FRANCIS VACHER, Hon. Sec.

## SCOTTISH NOTES.

(From our own Correspondent.)

### PERTH INFIRMARY.

FOR some time past, and indeed fitfully for some years, the profession in Perth have complained of what had become a monopoly in the medical attendance at the infirmary. About fifteen years since, in deference to a spirit similar to that now pervading the younger members, the directors appointed two gentlemen as visiting surgeons, on the understanding that they should retire after a stated number of years' service. The recent discontent is due to the fact that this agreement has not been carried out, and the infusion of fresh blood has up till now been impossible. The subject has at last found its way into the correspondence columns of a local paper; and it is now stated that Dr. Stirling has resigned office. This gentleman has taken a very active interest in all that concerned the infirmary for many years, was frequently in the confidence of the directors when changes were proposed, exercised a somewhat preponderating influence, and was generally regarded as chief of the staff. For some time Dr. Stirling's health has not been robust, and his extensive practice has been exacting. It is understood that Messrs. A. Barclay Calder, M.B., and Simpson, M.B., are avowed candidates for the vacant office. The former gentleman is Dr. Stirling's partner, has had the immense advantage of serving both as house-physician and house-surgeon in the Edinburgh Royal Infirmary, and is eminently qualified for the work; but Mr. Simpson also shows good testimonials, and his past success in securing appointments in Perth may again stand him in good stead. There may be another candidate before the election takes place. It is fortunate that the above amicable arrangement has been come to, as it will ensure for some time the valuable services of Dr. J. P. Bramwell as senior surgeon.

### TESTIMONIAL TO MR. CAMPBELL.

Mr. Campbell, M.B. (Newport), having recently been appointed to a vacancy at Elie, was agreeably surprised at the manifestations of regard which his proposed removal evoked from the people of Newport. A hastily prepared address requesting Mr. Campbell to remain was taken round the town and signed by the leading inhabitants, and a few nights afterwards he was presented with the handsome testimonial of £300 and a beautiful gold watch. Mr. Campbell settled as an entire stranger in Newport about three years ago.

### THE HABITS OF FOOD FISHES.

It appears that, besides the inquiries to be made by Professor M'Intosh on behalf of the Trawling Commissioners, formerly mentioned in these notes, he has arranged to carry on experiments with the view of throwing some light on the habits and time of spawning of the various flat fish. Professor M'Intosh will be supplied with tanks and other appliances for work in St. Andrew's Bay. Along the coast and at different stations fish other than of the flat variety will have attention; and in carrying out the work the Fishery Board seems to have secured the assistance of the best of our biologists. Already Professors Cossar Ewart, M'Intosh, Stirling, M'Kendrick, and Schafer are engaged in

different branches of the inquiry, which is expected to have distinct value in indicating the best methods of artificial cultivation for those fishes which are now scarce and dear.

### THE DUNDEE WHALE.

For more than a week a monster from the northern seas succeeded, through sporting himself in the Tay, in baffling the efforts of the united whale fleet of Dundee; but ultimately he was so hacked and wounded and cruelly treated that he died at sea and was towed into Stonehaven. A spirited fight for possession then took place between Prof. Struthers, in the interests of the Aberdeen University, and a showman from Dundee, who had to pay £226 to secure the carcase. The whale has been taken back to Dundee for exhibition, and he is as anxiously watched now by contending scientists as he was before by the harpooners. The skeleton is eagerly sought for different museums, but after the zeal shown by Prof. Struthers we may be pretty sure it will go north.

### DEATH OF DR. THOMAS B. HOWIE (MACDUFF).

I regret to record the death, at the early age of thirty years, of one for whom his friends anticipated a long and useful career. Dr. Howie died at his father's house in Alyth on Friday last, after sufferings which had extended over more than a year, and had included attacks of jaundice and dropsy. Graduating in Glasgow in 1875 as M.B. and C.M., he subsequently obtained his M.D. After acting as an assistant in the north of England, Dr. Howie obtained a practice at Methven, in Perthshire, but in a short time he removed to Macduff, in Banffshire, where he met with considerable success. He was pre-deceased by a young wife, and leaves two children.

## IRELAND.

(From our own Correspondent.)

THE seventh annual general meeting of the Dublin Branch of the British Medical Association will be held at the College of Physicians on Thursday, the 31st inst., when the officers and council for the ensuing year will be elected. Mr. Edward Hamilton, surgeon to Steevens's Hospital, an ex-president of the Royal College of Surgeons, and the President elect, will deliver the annual address.

### THE PHARMACY ACT.

The Chief Secretary for Ireland last week received a deputation from the Council of the Pharmaceutical Society of Ireland, who asked for certain amendments of the Pharmacy Act of 1875 in reference to the sale of poisons in Ireland. It was shown that in the greater part of Ireland at present the Sale of Poisons Act was a dead letter; for in small country towns and villages lethal drugs were sold by hucksters, grocers, stationers, and others. Until the passing of the Act of 1875 chemists and druggists had the right of retailing poisons, but they could not compound medicines. Such chemists and druggists as were in existence at the time were allowed to continue in business, but were obliged to pass an examination. By section 31 such persons had reserved to them the right to continue to sell poisons without any examination, but no machinery was created whereby such persons should be registered. It was desirable that the Pharmaceutical Society should possess the power to register these persons. The question was whether such a grade of men should be allowed to continue, but the Council by a majority thought that "it would be in the interest of the public that in future all persons should be licensed to sell poisons only on passing a moderate examination, whom it was proposed to call registered druggists." Further, the Council desired certain words in the Act to be made more specific, to prevent what at present existed—namely, that a qualified man and an unqualified man could carry on business jointly, while an unqualified man could not carry on business alone. A member of the deputation expressed his dissatisfaction with the results of the Act, and with the average number of licentiates of the Pharmaceutical Society. Last year the number admitted was nineteen, and the previous year fifteen. The chief secretary said he would, unless he heard any counter arguments, do all in his power to promote their wishes, but it would be quite impossible to bring forward in Parliament any opposed Bill on Irish matters early in the session with any chance of its passing.