

a very considerable diminution of hearing; this, however, depends upon circumstances, which forbid any general rule to be given as a guide.

Contraction of the external auditory passage is mostly occasioned by a thickening of the integuments, and this I have frequently traced to the use of "stimulants," composed of "ammonia and volatile oil," applied to cases where they were highly improper.

The observation "that the external auditory tube becomes contracted in deafness," is much on a par with Stard's remark, that the fenestra rotunda becomes smaller in advanced life. Who can see it during youth in the same person? We know that every part of the auditory organ varies materially in point of size in different persons. Before deafness comes on, professional advice is unnecessary, therefore the practitioner can have little or no opportunity of seeing the same ear in health, and afterwards in disease; at least not to afford him sufficient data upon which to promulgate any such opinion.

INQUEST AT LIVERPOOL.

THE LIVERPOOL CORONER, TOWN CLERK,
AND CORPORATION DOCTOR.

"A threefold cord is not easily broken."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The following report of a coroner's inquest is copied from *The Liverpool Chronicle* of the 14th June:—

"On Monday the 9th instant, an inquisition was taken before Anthony Molyneux, Esq., one of the bailiffs and coroners of this borough, touching the death of *Jane Evans*. The deceased was the wife of a seafaring man, living in Naylor's Court, Ray Street, and between nine and ten o'clock she was at home with her husband and a young girl, their daughter, when their son, a boy about fourteen years of age, ran into the house apparently in great alarm, and locked the door. The deceased, who was pouring out a cup of tea for her husband, asked what was the matter, and he said a drunken man was in chase of him, and presently a great noise was heard from a man on the out-side, cursing and swearing he would break the door open if they did not let him in. The deceased immediately sat down in the chair much frightened, and never spoke afterwards. Her daughter opened the door, and the man (named Johnson Buchanan) entered, and continued making a noise, swearing he would wait until morning for the boy he was in chase of. The deceased was presently found to be in a fit, and a female neighbour who came in, bathed her temples with vinegar, while medical assistance was sent for. Mr. Roose came and tried to bleed her, but in vain—she was dead. The brute, whose violence had terrified her, had found the son of the deceased at play with some other boys in Ray Street, among whom he went staggering and swearing, and calling on any one to fight him, which caused the boys

to hoot and laugh at him, upon which he singled out the deceased's son, and kicked at him, and on his running away, pursued him home. Mr. Davies, the surgeon, examined the body by order of the coroner, and deposed that, from the statement of the witnesses, and the appearance of the body of the deceased, he had no doubt that she died in consequence of the fright.—Verdict accordingly."

There are three things in this inquest which more especially deserve attention, viz.—the verdict, the absence of Mr. Roose at the inquest, and the appearance of the body after death.

After such a verdict as the above, it may be asked, Of what use is a coroner's court? Surely not to institute an *inquiry* into the cause of violent or sudden death merely, for this could seldom answer the demands of justice, but to commit also to prison the party or parties implicated in, and found guilty of having in any way, or by any means, criminally occasioned such death, for further trial? It is not stated that Buchanan was even called upon for his defence, and yet it is made manifest at the inquisition, that his violence and brutal conduct were the occasion of her death, the woman being in perfect health at the time this ruffian entered her house. What would be said of that coroner and that jury, who, after finding a person to be guilty of murder or manslaughter, should by their verdict acquit him, because the victim of his depravity had died from the loss of blood? Every-body would account them unfit for their office, and they would be held liable to be prosecuted at the instance of the king. Admitting that *Jane Evans* did die in consequence of fright, the verdict, which did not reach the person of Buchanan, was imperfect, unjust, and contrary to law. The inquest, therefore, is worthless and nullified.

Where was Mr. Roose? This surgeon was called in and administered to the deceased before any other medical man attended; in fact Mr. Roose was the only medical man in attendance, and ought certainly to have been present, and examined at the inquest. This gentleman received no notice of the inquest, and the public have a right to be made acquainted with the reason why he did not. The duty and custom of the coroner's court have been violated by his exclusion, and the inquest without him was a most disgraceful and wanton prevarication of the law.

The coroner (a merchant), it appears, deputed Mr. Davies, without consulting Mr. Roose, or requesting his co operation, to examine the body. On what grounds this predilection was founded, I should like to be informed. Mr. Davies had virtually nothing to do with the case; how then was he brought to act so conspicuous a part in it! The treatment of Mr. Roose in this instance, necessarily implies either that the coroner

was grossly ignorant of his duty, or that he was prepossessed in favour of Mr. Davies from a cause not less disgraceful. But this kind of treatment, contemptuous and illegal as it is, I am given to understand, is of common occurrence here; so much so, indeed, that medical men find themselves almost daily insulted by it. Had the mischief, however, ended with the insult, the subject would not have assumed importance; but any violation of the law is an injury to the community, and therefore the abuse complained of merits the most serious attention.

It is not long since a certain individual, it is said, made a strong effort to have this same Mr. Davies appointed "doctor in ordinary" to the coroners; his services in that situation were to be requited by a yearly salary. What a speculation! The scheme failed; at any rate the appointment is not confirmed, and God forbid it ever should. If, however, he be not nominally "doctor" to the coroners, or, as some will have it, "doctor to the corporation," he is virtually so; scarcely an inquest escapes him; if not "in at the death," he is close at hand, and near enough to secure to himself a share of the spoil. He reminds one of that large black bird, yclept the crow, for he too *feeds* upon dead bodies.

The medical evidence given at the inquest on the body of *Jane Evans* is, to say the least of it, curious and paradoxical; and it is a tolerably good sample of the medical lore possessed and passed off by this sapient "Doctor." It demonstrates pretty clearly the kind of connexion there exists between him and the coroners; for surely it will not be urged that his services are sought after on account of his *scientific* attainments. Had Mr. Davies been interrogated by the coroner, as he ought to have been, concerning the appearances of a body deprived of existence by fright, it would have tortured him from head to foot, and, as school-boys say, set him fast for an answer. Talk of "appearances!" Why "Doctor" Davies, what appearances do you speak of? There was no internal examination of the dead body. There was the absence of external injury no doubt, and therefore the body *appeared* as it usually does after death from natural causes. A medical coroner would have reduced this *learned gentleman* to his proper level.

The whole affair is really a serious matter, and represents the executive in the coroner's court of Liverpool to be in a most wretched condition. Here is a "Doctor" brought, some might say bought, by the coroner, and sworn before a jury, to give medical evidence about the causes of the death of a human being concerning whom he knew nothing more than what fell from the testimony of previous witnesses. Here

is a verdict given on the deposition of a man who swears to the existence of morbid appearances, and those, too, sufficient to account for death, without any examination of the dead body, and without even being called to the scene of the melancholy catastrophe. In a word, here is all the pageantry of an inquest gone through, and for what purpose? Yes, this is the question, for what purpose? I blush, I grieve, Sir, to have to record the answer, the only answer which can be given to this inquiry. By this inquest, and the verdict that accompanies it, the medical profession are insulted, justice and the law of the land have been violated, and the slaughterer of a human being protected and encouraged in his diabolical practices—commissioned, in fact, to destroy the life of the first man, woman, or child, with whom he may chance to come in contact.

Of what consequence is it who is coroner, Dick, Tom, or Harry? Dick may be an attorney, Tom a parson, and Harry a merchant; make your selection, and attend a few of the inquests under his direction, and you will be satisfied of his inability. The most iniquitous proceedings issue from his court, and continually pass before the eyes of the public clad in all the hideousness of deformity. One would think the belief of mankind was irrevocably fixed, that such kind of proceedings must be tolerated as consistent with the prerogatives of the office of coroner. But the evil of maladministration of the law may always be successfully assailed; in a civilized country at least; the power remains with the people, and when properly directed, never fails to have a wholesome influence. In this abuse-reforming time, coroners and coroners' courts should not be neglected. Instead of confining the appointment of these judges, as it now generally is done, to one or two individuals, I trust their election will be wholly and universally confided to the people. Let this be the case, and away will fly all attorney-coroners, all parson-coroners, and all merchant-coroners. It is time they were gone. Such men are very unfit persons to fill the office of coroner. But what would you think of a town-clerk for a coroner? Some half a dozen years back an attempt was made to overturn the old-fashioned way of manufacturing the coroners for the borough of Liverpool. The scheme, it is said, originated with our "worthy" town-clerk, who is an attorney of course. In his great zeal on the occasion, however, he overstept his boundary. He was ingenious, and perhaps philanthropic, and if he failed to convince his neighbours and townsmen that the duties of the two situations of town-clerk and coroner were compatible with his ability

and love of servitude, I can see no reason in the world why his ingenuity, philanthropy, or devotion, should be scandalised. The thing was said to be detected. Had he attempted to transfer the right of choosing coroners from the mayor to the citizens, the latter no doubt would have approved of the measure; but they discovered that this transfer merely conveyed that right into the hands of another individual, with a perpetuation of it during his natural life. The attorney, they thought, went to work too like a man of this world. True to the very letter of the common hook-and-crook character of his calling, the auspices of the reign under the new order of things were to commence with no less a personage than himself! This, however, was rather too glaring. The town-clerk coroner! Oh the sweets of office where nothing is done without a fee! Modesty and moderation this with a vengeance. I am, Sir, most respectfully, your very obedient servant,

T. WEATHERILL, M.D.

Liverpool, June 20, 1831.

THE LANCET.

London, Saturday, July 16, 1831.

LONDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE.

THE OFFICES of this institution are now open at No. 9, Lancaster Place, Strand. The SECRETARY has taken possession, books are prepared for the inscription of the names of candidates, and the members of the Committee have arranged to assemble on every Tuesday evening, at eight o'clock precisely, to conduct the admissions to the FELLOWSHIP, and to receive payments of annual subscriptions, and the donations of the benevolent to the Widows' and Orphans' Fund.

The extraordinary success which has already attended the establishment of this College, holds out a strong encouragement to men of liberal minds not to be deterred by apparently arduous difficulties from embarking in a great, noble, and generous undertaking.

If the members of the medical profession had withheld their support from a College

of this description, they could not with propriety complain of the Legislature, nor of any other constituted authority, for showing a disrespect for medical science, and a disregard for medical interests.

Under the fostering support of all the intelligent and independent members of the three branches of the profession, and fortified by its pure and incorruptible constitution, the LONDON COLLEGE OF MEDICINE will rise into a dignity and importance never before attained by any medical institution in the world.

THE proprietors of the LONDON UNIVERSITY have at last directed inquiry in the proper channel, and we have reason to believe, that the Committee will very speedily furnish the Council with the means for riding the institution of every obstacle which is opposed to its permanent success. If we mistake not, the medical department will open, in October, under auspices of a most favourable character, and with a combination of talent certainly not surpassed, if equalled, by any school in Europe. One thing alone is wanting to give this establishment an agreeable aspect in the eyes of the whole scientific community—We of course allude to the "CONCOURS." Without the intervention of this ordeal,—so salutary and effective when properly conducted,—we cannot regard the election of any professor as entirely free from the suspicion of partiality. There should be no toll-gates erected upon the paths which lead to the fields of science. The freest scope should be given for the display and exercise of genius; and, in the noble struggle for reward and pre-eminence, a competitor should be obliged neither to acknowledge, nor to yield to, any superiority, save that of intellectual acquirement, which, in fact, constitutes the only solid pillar of the republic of science.