

measure was complete. The progress of the epidemic was suddenly arrested, when there remained no other subjects for attack than vaccinated children below twelve years of age, and revaccinated adults.

The preceding examples are sufficient, we should imagine, to convince all who are open to conviction, of the expediency and efficacy of revaccination. We have, therefore, only to inquire, if revaccination be expedient, at what age or period after the primary vaccination should it be practised? Opinions are much divided on this point, but our own conviction is, that the most opportune period is the one which immediately succeeds puberty.

Before drawing to a close the lengthened inquiry into which we have entered on the important subject of vaccination, we feel it to be our duty to make "a profession of faith" on one or two points connected with it. In the first place, we declare that the value of JENNER'S discovery has not fallen one iota in our estimation, and that the conscientious scrutiny of the various documents which we have consulted only tends to confirm our ancient opinion, that vaccination is the greatest boon which the science of medicine has conferred upon mankind. We, therefore, insist on the necessity of diffusing this inestimable blessing as widely as possible; we exhort our medical brethren to use all their influence towards the removal of the prejudices which have hitherto impeded its progress; and we sincerely deplore the culpable negligence of those who, through want of foresight or zeal, have permitted the practice of vaccination in this country to fall into comparative disuse. It is true that we have been instrumental in determining the *real* protective influence of the vaccine virus, and in dissipating certain illusions which were only calculated to bring vaccination into public disrepute; but we have, at the same time, shown that if the prophylactic power of the vaccine virus decline, and almost disappear, after a certain lapse of time, it may be renewed at the expiration of that period; and we have

pointed out a measure by which the full benefit of JENNER'S immortal discovery may be realised without difficulty or danger. This measure is revaccination. Our advice, then, to the profession and the public may be summed up in a single sentence: Vaccinate all children speedily after birth, and revaccinate them after the period of puberty. This practice will not, as some have too fondly imagined, extirpate small-pox, but it will do all that human power is permitted to do—disarm a deadly disease of all its terrors.

LUNATIC ASYLUMS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In my last letter, published in *THE LANCET* Dec. 22, 1838, on the Statistics of Lunatic Asylums, I stated an opinion that in small establishments only, conducted by medical men, taking an especial interest in the pursuits, and personally attending to the moral, medical, and physical treatment of each patient,—not delegating this office extensively to underlings, servants, or assistants, who can scarcely ever be found sufficiently zealous or interested to accomplish the task in a way it ought to be done,—could the successful treatment of lunacy to the utmost degree of perfection hitherto attained be found; and also, that in the large establishments, indifference, apathy, and neglect, were the natural effects of the delegation of the trust and treatment of the patients to paid officers, keepers, servants, &c. These opinions I find very fully confirmed by the statements of an experienced foreigner, M. Leuret, who having visited many of the large asylums in Europe, expresses himself, according to the report in *THE LANCET*, Jan. 5, 1839, page 564, thus:—"In the present state of things a large number of lunatics may be physicked by a single physician; but scientific treatment *imperatively demands small hospitals* and a limited number of patients; under one system we meet nothing but ill success; the latter would reward us with numerous cures."

In my own establishment, limited to twelve patients, the number of cures effected has been at the rate of 70 per cent: since my published statistical table in *THE LANCET* Dec. 22, 1838, two patients have been added to the list of cured and discharged. I have not heard of any relapses of those discharged from this asylum. In *THE LANCET*, Dec. 8, 1838, page 412, I find stated, that at the Gloucester County Asylum 50 per cent. recovered; at Hanwell, 19; and at Stafford, 46 per cent.; the mean duration of the treatment at Gloucester was $1\frac{3}{4}$ years; at

Hanwell, 4 years; at Stafford, 1½ year; at the Driffold Asylum it has been 21 weeks, 5 days. Does not this prove the truth of the remarks of M. Leuret in behalf of small asylums, and of my own in a former communication to THE LANCET on the subject, previous to the publication of M. Leuret's opinions? Yet, notwithstanding that experience and observation prove the superiority of the small private asylums in the cure of lunacy, an attempt is now making to establish a monopoly* on a more extensive scale than has hitherto been done in this country, for the treatment of lunatics, by a joint-stock company, who have opened their proceedings by advertising to the world the following totally untrue, and I must add, very calumnious statement respecting the private asylums. Their prospectus runs thus:—"It is a *melancholy fact*, that, while the pauper lunatics in the county asylums are protected by the disinterested surveillance of the independent magistracy of the county, and are blessed with the medical attendance of a resident paid officer of first-rate talent, whose emoluments do not depend in any way on the number of patients he can retain in the county asylum, the unfortunate sufferer in the higher walks has no refuge but the ordinary licensed madhouse, or private residence, where there is no surveillance, and where the interests of the medical man, and of every one by whom the invalids are surrounded, are notoriously so much more promoted by their remaining lunatic than by their recovery, that a constant struggle between principle and self-interest must be the result," &c. Whenever any man or set of men have fully determined to delude the public mind, they commonly adopt the stale trick of assuring it of some "melancholy fact" which, although a sheer invention of their own, is supposed to have great weight. Thus, the proprietors of Denham Hall assure the public that the pauper lunatics are watched over by an independent magistracy, the "ordinary private asylums not so;" therefore, the magistrates who watch over the latter are dependent, venal, corrupt, of course; the former "are blest with a paid officer of first-rate talent" (at Hanwell, for instance, through this blessing 19 per cent. of the patients are cured, after four years treatment), whereas the unfortunate sufferer in the "ordinary licensed madhouse" is under no surveillance, and "the interests of the medical man are notoriously so much more promoted by his remaining lunatic than by recovery," that the proprietor of the Driffold Asylum, "constantly struggling between principle and self-interest," has discharged cured only 70 per cent. of his patients, after a mean treatment of each case of four months and ten

days.* In conclusion, let the proprietors of the "Invalid Institution" carry on their measures with more fairness, and withdraw from their advertisements those unjust attacks upon their neighbours, or I shall make it my business to apply to the "patrons," severally, to ascertain how far such conduct will continue to obtain their sanction, when they become fully acquainted with the facts. I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

GEORGE BODINGTON.
Driffold Asylum, Sutton Coldfield,
Jan. 17, 1839.

APPRENTICESHIP TO ILLEGAL MEDICAL PRACTITIONERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—That portion of the leading article in THE LANCET of Jan. 5 which refers to unqualified practitioners requires to be noticed. It seems to me to be not a little extraordinary that even *ten* men of sense and education should address you every year upon the question of the legality or illegality of an individual exercising the functions of a general practitioner, who has not served an apprenticeship of five years to "an apothecary," because the terms of the Act are so clearly expressed that no one, I should have thought, could have misunderstood their meaning. I am afraid that your estimate of the aggregate number of illegal practitioners in England and Wales is much too low, if I may judge from the number who are suffered to pursue their nefarious course in "silly Suffolk" alone. I purpose, in my present letter, to give you a short outline of an individual of this class.

In the early part of 1829, Mr. —, who was at that time verging upon forty years of age, and who had, during the season of 1827-8, been "studying" at Guy's Hospital, passed his examinations at the College of Surgeons and Apothecaries' Hall; but how it was possible that he could do so I cannot divine, for knowing, as I did, some little of him during his sojourn in London, I have no hesitation in saying that he was about the dullest of the dull. It is, or was at that time, the practice at Guy's, to hold examinations of those pupils who were about to present themselves at the College or Hall, and on one of those occasions, at which I was present, the Esculapius in question being requested to describe the humerus,

* Wholesale statistical assertions of this nature are of little value, and instead of clearing up the subject of insanity, are calculated to involve it in further obscurity. It is obvious that the proportion of cures in any given number of cases of insanity will mainly depend on the form of the malady, and its acute or chronic nature.—ED. L.

* We cannot perceive anything resembling a "monopoly" in the constitution of the Denham Hall Asylum.—ED. L.