

permit me to state, in the columns of your journal, why I agreed as to the cause of the man's death.

I must set out by observing, that during the evidence brought out by the searching, and I may now say impartial, inquiry, I was much struck by the first suspicious circumstance of application having been made to Mr. Trimmer to have the man buried, without a hint being thrown out as to the flagellation, the death being stated to have happened from disease of the liver! If the disease had been acute, it was a long time destroying the patient; and if chronic, he ought not to have been punished. This "liver opinion," I presume, was given without an autopsy, and the poor fellow would forthwith have been consigned to his silent resting-place but for the proper conduct of Mr. Trimmer, and for Rumour, who hath as many tongues as Briareus is stated to have had hands.

I was induced to attend the inquest from the intense excitement caused in our extensive village, and I there heard all the medical evidence touching White's death. It was evident to me that the spinal column, and the muscular tissues of the back and loins, ought to have been examined; and the post-mortem evidence of the military medical gentlemen, who changed disease of the liver into inflammation of the heart and pleura, gave another phase to the tale. I thought, even then, something remained to come out, and the evidence of Mr. Wilson supplied the deficiency. Without any ill compliment to the other medical testimony, I felt, and indeed knew, from the extensive anatomical opportunities he had, and from his admirable works on the subject, that in the scale of scientific acquirements it was "a dukedom to a beggarly denier," and that his evidence had made the deficiency good. I was for nearly four years a private pupil of the late Joshua Brookes, and the late Dr. Barclay, of Edinburgh, and I never saw any post-mortem appearances, from decomposition, in any degree resembling the descriptive statement made by that gentleman. We had old and young, and the antiseptic process used did not prevent "haut gout," nor can a decomposed muscular tissue ever assume a pulpy state, unless the whole body, long after death, is involved in the putrefactive process.

I have known three instances where death has ensued from slight scalds or burns within a few hours. Does not this prove the extraordinary sensitiveness of the vital organs to injuries of the skin? Do we not know that gout in the toe flies often to the internal parts, and destroys the patient? Have we not multiplied instances, where simple laceration of a nervous filament has caused tetanus of the most fearful kind, and the unfortunate sufferer has died from spasms, with the body arched either backwards or forwards, from the convulsive struggles of nervous agony? Can it be a wonderment, that when the naked human frame receives 150 lashes on the back, multiplied by nine, making 1350 cuts, that the most intense pain is caused, or that the terrible feeling of helplessness, from being tied up, renders that pain almost beyond bearing, and during the infliction of which disgusting, inhuman, and unchristian punishment, the muscles should have violent, terrible, and convulsive spasms, from intense nervous irritation? Is it, then, beyond possibility, that laceration should happen of the deeper-seated tissues under the writhing of this infernal system? If any one doubts it, let him try the taste of a score such lashes, tied up as soldiers are, and then speak fairly of the sensation experienced. "A devilish good flogging at school," indeed, compared with flogging at the triangle! Why, the poles are not wider asunder than such a comparison; and in all decent establishments the former system has long since been discarded, and justly so.

Can the opponents of Mr. Wilson's evidence produce a solitary instance where a post-mortem examination of the back and spine had been made upon any cadavre which had suffered from the lash? Can they do this, I ask? If they cannot, (and the task would be a difficult one,) the opinion he gave, though a novel one, need be no wonderful event, but owing to the sagacity of a sound anatomical and physiological mind, capable of propounding the matter stated from careful looking into. When will decomposition in ten or twelve days produce a pulpy softening of the spinal column, almost deepening into fluidity, or convert the theca into the appearance shown upon dissection? Are muscles never lacerated in tetanic spasm? Could the paralysis of the lower limbs have ensued but from this fluid state of the medulla, and was this paralyzed state the result of decomposition? If any one stands forth to say it was the result of the latter, I can only answer, in the words of ancient Pistol, "A fico for thee, base pickthank."

The trial with a special jury has ended in the utter discomfiture of the libellous journalist and his supporters; and if the Hounslow inquest be ever remembered by those who follow in our wake, it will prove that the circumstances were fairly looked into, and that the result has been to deliver the hide-bound soldier from a

sufferance of 1000 cuts, from a general court-martial, to a maximum of fifty, and will eventually abolish a law disgraceful even in the time of Draco.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Twickenham, Feb. 15, 1849.

THOMAS LITCHFIELD.

NAVAL ASSISTANT SURGEONS.

RESOLUTIONS, adopted at a meeting of the Royal College of Surgeons of Edinburgh, held on Friday, the 19th of January, 1849, relative to the grievances of assistant-surgeons of the navy:—

1. That the college have long regarded the position of naval assistant-surgeons on board ship as unbecoming the members of a liberal profession, and unfavourable to the discharge of their duties.

2. That the college have endeavoured, by petition and remonstrance, to obtain redress of the grievances, in respect to their social position, under which these gentlemen at present labour, but without success.

3. That until redress is afforded, it would not be proper for the college to exercise their privilege of recommending candidates for appointment in the medical service in the navy.

The resolutions were moved by Professor Syme, and seconded by Sir George Ballingall.

"DR. SPURGIN'S CONDIMENT."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Some of my patients have of late become enamoured of a liquid, which they call "Dr. Spurgin's Condiment." It is a clear, transparent liquid, consisting, so far as I can judge by a rough analysis, of chloride of potassium and sodium, with a little free alkali. This appears to be used in an infinity of ways. It is put into tea, coffee, water-gruel, soup, fish-sauce, and, in fact, into every liquid article of food that you can mention, and my friends seem to think that it has as many virtues as "My Lord Peter's Universal Pickle," which is immortalized by Dean Swift in his "Tale of a Tub."

Seriously speaking, however, may I ask, through your columns, is this pickle or condiment really the invention of the learned and ingenious physician whose name it bears? If so, will Dr. Spurgin be good enough to tell his professional brethren what its composition, virtues, and uses really are? By so doing, he will clear his own good name from any taint of empiricism, and will oblige your humble servant,

London, Jan. 19, 1849.

AN APOTHECARY.

POISONOUS ORNAMENTAL CONFECTIONARY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Public attention has been drawn to this source of danger to young children by Dr. Fergus, of Marlborough College, and that his case may not be considered solitary, or of rare occurrence, I beg of you to notice the following:—I was called, a few years since, to a little boy, about five years old, who was suddenly seized with severe vomiting. I found him pale and prostrate, with profuse cold perspiration. I immediately suspected that he must have partaken of something of a poisonous nature, and found, on inquiry, that he had just eaten some rich ornamented cake, presented to him by some friends. Part of the ornament still remaining, I was assured, by the strong styptic taste, that it contained a large portion of some salt of copper. By appropriate remedies, the child was restored, after several days' suffering from severe gastric irritation. I have still a portion of the substance in my possession, and I find it so strongly impregnated with copper, that on dissolving half a grain of it in a little dilute sulphuric acid, I am enabled to precipitate metallic copper so abundantly on a bright steel knife, as to leave no doubt that it must contain a large fractional amount of a poisonous salt of copper.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Hamilton-terrace, St. John's Wood,
Feb. 20, 1849.

JOSEPH WELLS.

MEDICAL FEES AT ASSURANCE OFFICES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Although your correspondents on this subject have been numerous, and many flagrant cases of attempted fraud adduced, yet I do not remember to have seen one so plainly illustrative of assurance office policy as this which I now submit for the opinion, and perhaps condemnation, of your readers, and, indeed, of any honest man.

A highly respectable patient of mine, (Mr. H——,) to whom the fee, or fees, as a matter of money, was not of the slightest

consequence, wished to insure the life of his brother-in-law, (Mr. S—,) about thirty-five years of age, as, again, the brother-in-law's mother, (Mrs. S—,) aged about seventy-three, both lives being thought to be equally good, consistent with the different periods. The reason for this assurance being thought needful by Mr. H— was, and is, a simple precaution against unexpected visitation of Providence.

I was referred to; but, not having seen Mr. S— for some time, I declined certifying until I had both seen him (Mr. S—) and had my fee assured. Mr. S— waited on me, and finding him in the same good health as usual, I certified accordingly, and on the very day of examination forwarded my certificate to the office! Now, Sir, judge the astonishment of my patients (Mr. H— and Mr. S—) when the latter waited on his brother-in-law, Mr. H—, with the enclosed letter, (No. 1,) which, in effect, informed him, (Mr. H—,) that beside the pleasure of paying me my £1 ls., the office had thought fit to make a special case of it, and that in addition he must furnish another £1 ls. to its own medical referee!!! Of course, Mr. H— very properly refused to submit to this fresh demand, and, having so refused, received the following polite official circular, (No. 2.)

I believe, Sir, you will think any comment from me perfectly needless.

I have ever thought the medical staff of assurance offices a mere humbug, which took from the real medical attendant his just due! If I then only thought so, I now no longer make it a matter of thinking, feeling the question to be resolved into certainty.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Farringdon-street, Feb. 1849.

FRANCIS BULLIN.

(No. 1.)

Atlas Assurance Office, London, Feb. 3, 1849.

SIR,—With regard to the proposed assurance upon your life in this office, I beg to state that the directors would feel obliged if you would be so good as call here so soon next week as may be convenient to you, in order that a medical gentleman may see you on behalf of the company. The directors will trouble you to call before eleven o'clock, and inasmuch as it appears from the proposal made by you that the case is somewhat special, it will be necessary you should be prepared to pay the medical fee of one guinea.—I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

Mr. H. S—.

CHARLES ANSELL, Actuary.

(No. 2.)

Atlas Assurance Office, London, Feb. 9, 1849.

SIR,—The proposal made to this company for an assurance on the life of Mr. H. S— having been submitted to the court of directors, I am desired by them to communicate that they beg respectfully to decline accepting the same. They request, however, to offer their best thanks for the preference shown to the Atlas Office. I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

Mr. H. H—.

CHARLES ANSELL, Actuary.

EXAMINATIONS AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I must beg the favour of the insertion of a few lines, by way of rectifying the misrepresentations of "Causticus" in a recent number of THE LANCET.

It appears to me that "Causticus" is pitifully ignorant of the requirements of the university whose examinations he has chosen to attack; and so, for his information, in case he may one day wish to avail himself of what he considers so "easy" a path to M.D., I will just tell him what will be required of him. He must, then, pass four examinations, at intervals of from one to three years, each examination occupying three days, and including from eighteen to twenty-four hours' hard writing, besides *viva voce* interrogation. The first (or matriculation) examination (although it does not include "Hippocrates and Galen") requires him to translate authors, which he, with his great love for the classics, might like better—such as Euripides, Xenophon, Homer, Livy, Virgil, Sallust, &c.; also a knowledge of mathematics, natural philosophy, ancient and modern history, English language, &c. The fourth (or M.D. examination) embraces logic, moral and intellectual philosophy; and the two intermediate examinations are more strictly medical. I will not enter into further details, as "Causticus" may find them in the printed regulations; but let him not henceforth imagine, when he reads the questions for the second M.B. examination, that he sees all that is required of a candidate for this degree; nor let him deceive others, as well as himself, by such misrepresentation.

And now, Mr. Editor, permit me to say, that during all the recent agitation for medical reform, one very important fact has been overlooked—I mean, the imperfect preliminary education of medical men. I am convinced, that until some good examination in mathematics, classics, and other subjects, which form

the basis of all knowledge, (and which the London matriculation or B.A. examination embraces,) is made to precede that for a diploma or a degree, our profession will never occupy the high position which it might attain, but will continue to be disgraced by ignorant members, and neglected by the public and the sister professions.—I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

London, Feb. 14, 1849.

GUYENSIS.

HEALTH APPOINTMENT AT BATH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As I am not a regular reader of THE LANCET, I did not see the letter signed "M.D. Bath," on the appointment of a retired army sergeant as an inspector, till this day. I beg to assure your readers that its contents are quite true. The Board of Health in Bath consists of a committee of the board of guardians, and two members each from the several boards of commissioners and waywardens in the city; and these boards of commissioners have their own inspectors and surveyors, and powers under their local acts, which render the appointment of such an officer for the city, at present, quite unnecessary. But in the union there are several parishes, and the Board of Health wanted information as to the state of drains, ditches, &c., and the man appointed was thought to be quite capable of procuring this information. I agree with "M.D." that his salary is too high; but if a man is employed to do dirty work, he will expect to be paid for it. But £50 is not, as "M.D." supposes, the highest medical payment by the board of guardians—they give one of their medical officers £100 a year. When it may be considered by the Board of Health proper to appoint a person to inspect the dwellings of the paupers, and others, I have no doubt that appointment will be creditable to themselves, and satisfactory to "M.D."—I am, Sir, yours &c.,

ARGUS.

Bath, Jan. 31, 1849.

THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH AND SOME OF ITS GRADUATES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—There are few of your readers who will not regret you have given insertion, in last Saturday's LANCET, to a letter signed "Verax," headed as above.

I am totally unacquainted either with "the Medical Paragon," or his assailant, "Verax," but no one will read that letter without at once seeing some petty pique—some longing after "the fried salmon and strong ale"—or, it may be, (and I think very probable,) after the "aristocratic badge" of the M.D.-ship itself, (in this case like the sour grapes to the fox,) has influenced the immaculate "Verax" to indulge in such an unworthy and unprofessional tirade, not only against an individual who evidently hits him hard in his practice, but against an university, about which he clearly knows nothing.

The University of Edinburgh needs no aid from any one to uphold her high reputation, or the honour of her M.D.-ship, and I attempt none; but admitting that some recreant son should be guilty of all the errors attributed to him by "Verax," is that a reason, Sir, why the bile of such a man should find vent, or space be given in your valuable journal to malign an institution ranking so high as the university in question does—or to wound the feelings of so large a body as those who are proud to acknowledge her as their "alma mater"?

If "Verax" does not like the title he has, let him earn another, and a higher. Let us only hope, if he seeks to be "capped" at Edinburgh, the senators may not dub him with his own "M.B.-ship," proving him a "blunderer" in more things than medicine.

Trusting you will find room for these remarks, I am, Sir, with respect, your constant reader,

SUUM CUIQUE.

London, Feb. 8, 1849.

ON THE EFFECTS OF CHLORINE GAS IN PHTHISIS AND OTHER DISEASES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I suppose I have already adduced sufficient evidence to prove to Dr. A. T. Thomson the erroneousness of his statements in the "Cyclopædia of Practical Medicine," as well as the dangerous tendency of the inferences deducible from them, both of which are as contrary to experience as to the account of the exciting causes of phthisis given in every elementary work on medicine. But as the subject is important, I trust it will not be deemed improper to publish the following short statistical account of the deaths of the labourers employed in the chlorine chambers of St. Rollox Chemical Works which have occurred within the last twelvemonth. It both shows that the vicinity of these works is not

"La terra molle e lieta e diletta,"