

THE LANCET.

*London, Saturday, February 2, 1839.*THE
CORONERSHIP OF MIDDLESEX.

THE friends of Mr. WAKLEY who are desirous of supporting him in the present contest, are most urgently and respectfully entreated to forward their names and addresses, *without the delay of a single day*, to the SECRETARY of the CENTRAL COMMITTEE, at the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Strand.

They are also requested to name the places where they can interfere on behalf of Mr. WAKLEY with the best effect.

It is also hoped that they will forward, with equal dispatch, the names and addresses of gentlemen whom it would be advantageous to solicit to *cavass* on behalf of Mr. WAKLEY.

It will be gratifying to the members of the medical profession to know, that there is every reason to believe that the election of Mr. WAKLEY is secure; but in a contest of this kind it is right to make assurance doubly sure.

ELECTION OF CORONER FOR
MIDDLESEX.

THE Address of Mr. WAKLEY, which was read at the preliminary meeting of freeholders, held in the Committee-room of the Crown and Anchor Tavern, Friday, Jan. 25, was published in THE LANCET of last week. The following Address to the freeholders has since been circulated throughout the entire county:—

TO THE FREEHOLDERS OF MIDDLESEX.

GENTLEMEN:—

The death of Mr. Stirling has caused a vacancy in the office of Coroner for your highly important county.

On my return to town last night, I ascertained, with feelings of pride and satisfaction, that a desire had been unequivocally and urgently expressed by an immense number of your body who are resident in various parts of the county, that I should instantly become a candidate for the vacant office.

No. 805.

Having been thus called upon to enter the field of honourable contention, by a vast portion of influential freeholders, whose powerful support removes all doubt as to what must be the issue of the struggle, I unhesitatingly and fearlessly engage in the contest, and respectfully announce myself a candidate for your suffrages.

The zeal which has already been, and continues to be, manifested on my behalf, is of the most lively and ardent kind. Gentlemen of whom I had no previous knowledge,—with whom I had no previous connection, social, political, or literary—have requested, most strenuously and emphatically, that I would, apart from all political grounds, solicit your support in the present contest. Of the numerous strangers and friends who have thus applied to me, many are members of the legal profession,—barristers as well as solicitors. They all declare that the cause of public justice demands that the office of Coroner should henceforth be wrested from the control of incompetent men, and that no individual can be adequate to the due discharge of that important appointment, if he do not possess a considerable portion of medical knowledge. This opinion is now rapidly taking possession of the public mind. Eight years since, when this subject was first mooted in the county, I polled within 136 of the number that was recorded for the candidate who united in his own person—by purchase, bargain, and agreement—the interests of the last three of my opponents. There were then registered on my behalf, *three thousand five hundred and seventy-nine votes*. That demonstration of public opinion was in itself a great triumph. The final victory is now to be achieved.

It is not a *new* practice to appoint *Medical* Coroners in this country. Such officers have long since presided, and *now* preside, at inquests, in several counties in England and Wales, and many *medical practitioners* have been elected Coroners under the Municipal Corporation Act. Not a single complaint has been made in the superior courts against the official labours of any of those gentlemen. On the contrary, their conduct, so far as I have been enabled to learn, has been productive of a lively feeling of satisfaction in the neighbourhoods where they have acted. Since the last election for Coroner in this county, *two* verdicts which had been recorded by Coroners have been

quashed in the Court of Queen's Bench. In both of those instances, the Coroners were *attorneys*. The mere relation of facts of this description, renders it unnecessary that I should say one word on the subject of my not being a *lawyer by profession*; but, if my opponents think it prudent to attack me on that ground, I trust I may refer them, without being accused of arrogance or presumption, to my successful efforts in our courts of law, when I acted as my own advocate, and had to contend against the law, tact, and rhetoric of the most eminent counsel at the bar.

It is to be hoped that the discussion of the question, and the whole contest, will be conducted in a tone of good temper and good faith,—free from the acrimony and partizanship which, but too frequently, attend the agitation of political subjects. The arena of contention presents no place for the intrigues of faction, or for the evil workings of the mischievous spirit of *party*. There are far higher and nobler incentives to exertion. The cause is that of humanity and public justice.

As one of the means of securing the due administration of the criminal law of this country, the "Inquest" is a great and powerful institution, and so remote is its antiquity, that the date of its origin is not to be found in the pages of our history. But, from the earliest time to which it has been traced, the right of electing the presiding officer has been vested in the freeholders of the county. Where could it be more safely deposited than with the people, when every man—the possessor of even the smallest portion of the soil—must feel that an efficient execution of the duties of the Coroner's Court, furnishes the best instrument for affording protection to the innocent, and for inflicting punishment upon the guilty? But of what public utility is such a court, if the presiding officer be *entirely* ignorant of the science and practice of medicine? The great majority of inquests demands a *medical* inquiry. In cases of murder, or suspected murder, by poison, the investigation is often of a most difficult description, and involves intricate questions in pathology and chemistry. In such instances, the security of the public imperatively requires that the Coroner should be enabled to point out whatever discrepancies may exist in the medical testimony; he should be capable of

putting such questions in relation to the medical facts of the case, of eliciting such explanations and opinions from the medical witnesses, as may have the effect of rendering the jury fully capable of forming correct conclusions; in other terms, of recording just verdicts.

If the mind of the Coroner be not fortified by acquirements and capabilities of this nature, it may be truly stated, that he is *wholly* unfit for the duties of his office; and this opinion is held, not only by some of our most distinguished *barristers*, but by *some of the most eminent of THE JUDGES*. Probably, it will soon become a question whether the office of Coroner had not better be *abolished* than that it should continue to be a heavy burden upon the county rates, under the presidency of an incompetent officer. All I ask is, that you will examine the subject *for yourselves*. I respectfully and earnestly entreat of you to weigh, well and deliberately, the claims of the different candidates, as I rely with implicit confidence on the sound judgment which will govern you in the selection of a competitor for your suffrages. I know that you will remember that the duty which you have to discharge in this contest, is one of deep and paramount importance to the vital interests, not only of the inhabitants of this county, but of the nation. I know that you will be only impressed with an opinion, that your decision ought to improve the police of the county, ameliorate the treatment of the unhappy lunatics in your public and private asylums, and amend the condition of the afflicted and destitute persons who are sustained by your generous bounty in the hospitals and infirmaries of the metropolis. The feelings of the philanthropist must be excited and enlisted in such a cause. I make no appeal to you on political grounds, although I trust that since I have had the honour of occupying a seat in the House of Commons, my conduct has not been that of a factious and spiteful partizan, but has been characterised on all occasions by a sincere desire to promote the best interests of the whole community. No, Gentlemen, I assume a higher position, and solicit your aid and support, on the simple, but clear and just ground, of possessing the requisite qualifications for performing with efficiency, fidelity, and zeal, the duties which your Coroner is called upon to execute.

In conclusion, it only remains for me to

entreat that you will attend early at the poll, on the FIRST DAY OF THE ELECTION (which will be duly announced), and, by recording your votes *without delay*, impressively intimate to my opponents, that from the commencement of the contest they had not the slightest chance of success. I have the honour to remain, Gentlemen, your faithful and obedient servant,

THOMAS WAKLEY.

35, Bedford-square, Jan. 25, 1839.

The Surgical Anatomy of the Perinæum, illustrated with Lithographic Plates and Wood Engravings. By THOMAS MORTON. 8vo. pp. 80.

WE are not quite sure how far the plan of devoting monographs to each of the surgical regions (as they are called) of the body may be attended with advantage to the student or practitioner. We are rather inclined to think that the adoption of such a plan, if carried out extensively, would have the effect of rendering the study of regional anatomy extremely laborious, not to say tedious, and comparatively beyond the reach of ordinary intellects. It, therefore, seems to us that Mr. Morton would have acted more judiciously had he extended the scope of the book which now lies before us, and embraced in one volume the surgical anatomy of the more important regions, including the groin, neck, axilla, &c. An author, however, is, it may be supposed, the best judge of the limits within which his work should be confined, and we are not disposed to quarrel with the form of a treatise when it contains, as in the present instance, a variety of solid and useful information. Mr. Morton informs us that the object of his work is to present the student engaged in anatomical pursuits with a systematic plan, by which he may proceed in his dissections of the perineum; and, at the same time, to induce him to connect the knowledge which he thus attains of the anatomy of this region, with the study of the diseases occurring within its limits, and the surgical operations which may be required for their relief. Keeping this object in view, the author commences by a description of the manner in which the subject should be placed; he then traces the different stages of the dissection of the perineal region, from the external fascia and super-

ficial sphincter to the neck of the bladder. The anatomical relations of each structure are carefully and correctly explained, and as he goes along the author does not fail to draw attention to the most important practical points which are connected with the different fasciæ and other parts under consideration.

The title of Mr. Morton's work would lead us to imagine that his researches were confined to the anatomy of the perineal region; unlike, however, many productions of the present day, our author's treatise performs more than it promises. Chapter 2 contains a well-written description of the organs which are exposed by a lateral section of the pelvis; and in Chapter 3 we find some judicious practical observations on the introduction of the catheter and the operation of lithotomy. On the whole, we are disposed to regard this first essay of Mr. Morton as one which reflects credit on himself and the school at which he has been educated.

The Quarantine Laws; their Abuses and Inconsistencies. By ARTHUR T. HOLROYD, Esq. Simpkin and Co., London, 1838. 8vo, pp. 65.

THIS pamphlet may be regarded as a supplement to that of Dr. Bowring, an analysis of which we published in a recent number of THE LANCET. The author resided two years in Egypt and Syria, and seems to have investigated with great care the various points connected with the mode of communication of the plague and the working of quarantine laws. We understand that Mr. Holroyd was at one period of his life a medical practitioner; his opinions are, therefore, entitled to peculiar attention, and cannot be opposed by the objection which has frequently been made to writers on the plague, viz., that they have been formed by persons who were unacquainted with the general laws of the propagation of disease, and consequently incapable of forming a correct judgment on the particular disease in question.

In order to arrive at a knowledge of such facts as are best calculated to throw light on the mode of communication of the plague, and the working of quarantine regulations, Mr. Holroyd addressed a series of judicious questions to Mr. Thurburn, H.B.M. Consul