

The lunatic "will be a burthen on the nation as long as he lives." No doubt of the fact. It is indeed lamentable that the heavily taxed ratepayers should have to support in chronic idleness so many dangerous as well as harmless lunatics, and that the State should have to contribute towards the maintenance of the man who so suddenly deprived the country of the valuable services of an upright and useful public servant. Can Mr. Coates suggest a remedy for these admitted grievances apart from acting on the *lex talionis* principle? Mr. Coates says that the death of Mr. Lutwidge by an act of murderous violence must be considered as "a happy termination of a useful and honourable career." "Happy termination" indeed! In what does Mr. Lutwidge's happiness consist, apart altogether from his being the recipient of the rewards which no doubt will be meted to him for having lived a "sober, godly, and righteous life"? Death, under its most favourable aspects, is a solemn and awful event; but how terribly appalling it is to our every sense when one so highly respected by all who knew him is suddenly struck down by the hands of an assassin (whose interests he was in the act of promoting) be he sane or insane, responsible or irresponsible.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

FORBES WINSLOW, M.D.

Cavendish-square, June 14th, 1873.

THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS' ELECTION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I have ever taken a lively interest in the election of Fellows to serve as members of the Council of the Royal College of Surgeons.

Mr. Thomas Wakley, having been nominated as a candidate for the membership of the Council, I have been at some unusual pains to ascertain his medico-political views, and I find them to be as follows:—

1. The proceedings of the Council should be published.
2. The representation of the College in the General Medical Council should be vested in the suffrages of the fellows and members of the College.
3. The examiners should be elected from the body of the profession, and not be (exclusively?) members of the Council. They should hold office for two or three years, and be eligible once only for re-election.
4. Fellows residing at a certain distance from the College should be allowed to vote by proxy.
5. Presidents and vice-presidents should be chosen from the members of the Council generally, and not from the examiners only.
6. Successive re-election of retiring councillors is highly objectionable.
7. A proportionate number of provincial surgeons should always be chosen to serve upon the Council.
8. Meetings of members and fellows within the walls of the College should be permitted under certain conditions.

Mr. Wakley is a proprietor of THE LANCET. Having been exclusively engaged in the practice of his profession, he has never taken the slightest part in the editorial conduct of that journal.

The medico-political school in which Mr. Wakley has been brought up should not be forgotten. His father, the late Mr. Wakley, half a century ago inaugurated, and to the close of his career consistently and indefatigably promoted, those very reforms in the College of Surgeons to which we owe the voice we have in the elections of members of Council to-day.

These are summarily Mr. Wakley's views on these all-important subjects. The only proposition I dissent to is that which suggests, "That fellows residing at a certain distance from the College should be allowed to vote by proxy"; but from my personal knowledge of Mr. Wakley's professional and medico-political qualifications I consider him pre-eminently qualified to become a member of Council of the Royal College of Surgeons of England.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN WIBLIN, F.R.C.S. (Exam.)

Southampton, June 17th, 1873.

THE APPLICATION OF EARTH IN SURGERY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It was my good fortune during the winter to be residing in the same hotels, both at Nice and Rome, with the eminent American surgeon, Dr. Hewson, of Philadelphia, who brought to my notice the advantages attending the use of earth as a dressing in surgical cases. He told me he attributed his great success at the Pennsylvania General Hospital—a success which has been remarkable since the American war, especially in connexion with cases of amputation—entirely to the use of this agent. The results of its use which have come more or less directly under my own observation have been so successful that I venture to send you brief outlines of the cases.

1. A case of epithelioma of the cheek, of twelve years' standing. In December there was an ulcer on the right cheek larger than a half-crown piece, which was being treated with dry-earth applications. In March I saw the case dressed in Rome, as did also Dr. Pantaleoni and other physicians. There were then, instead of the extensive ulcer of three months before, superficial points of ulceration which, had they been collected together, a fourpenny-piece would have covered. The patient, a gentleman of sixty-two years of age, was not very sanguine, having had the unfavourable opinions of several distinguished surgeons, but he expressed himself most gratefully for the relief from pain and from the horribly fetid odour, which made life a burden to him before the earth was applied.

2. A physician at Mentone, under Dr. Hughes Bennett's care I believe, sent for Dr. Hewson from Nice to resect his knee-joint, or to amputate his leg. Dr. Hewson found an abscess, thought to be metastatic, in the head of the fibula. He begged to be allowed to try earth dressing before proceeding to an operation. The case did perfectly well, and the joint is apparently as good as ever.

3. The American chaplain in Rome was thrown from his horse, and struck his leg against a rail. The trowsers were not cut, but the tibia, the spine of which was laid bare for several inches, sustained a comminuted fracture, and the tibialis anticus was partly stripped from its attachment. Dr. Hewson put in two or three stitches, and applied earth dressing. The patient had scarcely any pain; there was but little discharge, and the leg rapidly healed. The almost total absence of pain was very remarkable.

4. At Naples a poor woman accosted me in the street, and asked me to cure a large chronic ulcer on the right leg, which extended from the external malleolus to midway between the ankle and knee. I offered her a few soldi, and told her to go to the hospital. She said she was not begging for money, but to be cured, and as I was an English doctor, I could cure her if I would. Her grandfather had been in the service of an English nobleman, it seemed. I managed to find some light-yellow clay, allowed it to dry, pounded it and sifted it through fine muslin, and applied it to the sore, covering it with ordinary grocer's blue paper, the edges of which I wetted in order to make it adhere to the skin. I told the poor creature to remain at home and rest the ulcerated leg on a chair even when she sat spinning at her door. The next morning I found her waiting for me at the gate of the hotel. She said she was quite free from pain; she had slept all night, a thing she had not done for months before; and with tears in her eyes she thanked me for the relief I had given her. In three weeks the ulcer was almost well. It is right to say I took means to improve the general health.

5. An American gentleman in Rome asked me to prescribe for him, as he had gonorrhœa. The gonorrhœa was very acute, with chordæ and severe pain during micturition. As he bound me to secrecy, I could not borrow a small double-tubed catheter which Dr. Hewson uses in these cases, and was obliged to inject a large quantity of muddy water with an ordinary syringe. The patient was greatly relieved by the first application, which was repeated on the two succeeding days, though the discharge and pain had ceased on the second day. The patient had a dose of chloral and an aperient each night.

6. A young Roman, a friend of the previous patient, came to me complaining of rheumatism. He had had a gleet