

of scarlet fever, which in the two previous weeks had been 11 and 5, rose to 12 last week. The 7 deaths from diarrhoeal diseases showed a further decline from recent weekly numbers, and the fatal cases of "fever" were 4 less than those recorded in the previous week. Five inquest cases and 6 deaths from violence were registered during the week, and 56 deaths occurred in public institutions. The deaths both of infants and of elderly persons showed a decline from the numbers in the previous week. The causes of 18, or 10 per cent., of the deaths registered during the week were not certified.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE LATE DR. RABBETH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The exemplary, generous, and fatal devotion of Dr. Samuel Rabbeth to the duties of his profession has added his name to the list of our medical heroes. We should all be losers if his example were forgotten. It suggests itself therefore to me that a gold medal, bearing Dr. Rabbeth's name, and to be annually awarded to a Bachelor of Medicine of the University of London, on terms to be hereafter considered, might be a suitable memento of his heroism, as of that of many others. I cannot doubt that the Senate would gladly become trustees of any fund for such a purpose, and charge themselves with the duty of awarding the medal. I shall gladly contribute to any such fund.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM W. GULL.

Brook-street, Grosvenor-square, W., Oct. 27th, 1884.

P.S.—The question whether such risk need have been incurred is quite another matter, and upon which I will write later.

CORROSIVE SUBLIMATE AS A SURGICAL DRESSING.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In his address on this subject Sir Joseph Lister called attention to the irritating properties of the sublimate solution in a case of amputation of the mamma. He says, "On the day after the operation, when we changed the dressing, I found that under the oiled silk, exactly corresponding to its extent, the skin was highly irritated, and was covered with small vesicles. I also found that the inner side of the arm, where there was no wound, was in the same state of intense irritation." The explanation of the latter he gives as follows:—"In the case of the arm what occurred was, free perspiration had taken place, and the perspiration forming with the corrosive sublimate in the gauze, a watery solution had produced irritation where the perspiration was, on the same principle as the watery solution had caused irritation under the protective." Whatever may have been the cause of the eruption under the protective, it appears to me that the cause of the irritation in the arm is to be found in the irritating properties of the eucalyptol, and the following case seems to confirm this view.

On April 28th last I removed the mamma of a woman aged thirty-four, and cleared out the axilla. According to my usual practice, the operation was performed without any antiseptic. The wound was immediately covered with thymol gauze, which I prefer on account of its absorbent property; over this was placed a thick pad of absorbent wool (Von Bruns' Red Cross), and these dressings were kept in place by a many-tailed bandage of eucalyptol gauze—a method which I would commend to the notice of surgeons instead of the old-fashioned plaster and roller bandage. The left bare arm lay on the chest in contact with the gauze. On the following day, corresponding exactly with Sir Joseph Lister's case, the arm was intensely irritated, and the limits were those of direct and close contact with the gauze. So great was the irritation that near the wrist the vesicles coalesced, and in the course of another day alone formed a blister as large as a half-crown piece. After the second day, of course, the skin was protected from the gauze. On the skin of the body there was very little effect produced, probably on account

of its greater power of resistance. The wound, which, with one-half of the chest, was protected by the thymol gauze and wool, healed by first intention and without a blush, as I am accustomed to see it; the tube, on its removal on the fifth day for the purpose of clearing and shortening, contained a beautiful specimen of organised blood-clot, which is now before me, and the patient went home quite well on the fifteenth day.

Here, then, there could be no doubt as to the cause of the irritation, and I would suggest that the same cause operated in the case in question, rather than that the sublimate should have passed through the "abundant eucalyptus dressing," which was put on outside the sublimate gauze.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

GEO. GRANVILLE BANTOCK.

Granville-place, W., Oct. 28th, 1884.

THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS EXAMINATIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—At a time when there is a probability of the coalition of the Colleges of Physicians and Surgeons it may be opportune to express the views of a teacher on what he considers the unsatisfactory results of the College of Surgeons examination. It has become a trite saying amongst students "that there is no disgrace attending a rejection by the College of Surgeons, since the examination is of such a fluky character." I put this in the words of one who had recently obtained his membership, and I believe it echoes the sentiments of a considerable number of teachers as well as students. I speak as a teacher when I say that I think the College of Surgeons examination is a most unfair one, for I am perfectly certain that it often rejects very good men, whilst inferior ones are occasionally allowed to pass. At present it is impossible for any teacher to send up his pupils with confidence; for he feels that it is almost as likely that the better men will be referred and the worse accepted, as that the weak student will be rejected and the good one pass. To the London student this may perhaps be no very great hardship, for if there be no great loss of prestige he has not been put to much expense, and possibly no one knows that he has been in for an examination; but to the provincial student no little inconvenience ensues, for the necessity of a several days' absence in London compels him to acquaint his friends and puts him to a considerable amount of expense; thus to the financial loss is added the multiplication of friendly condolence. If the rejections were just I should be the last to protest against them, but I am convinced that many referred candidates are extremely well up in their work, and have been rejected from simple nervousness, the time allowed being too short and the examiners too hasty to elicit the knowledge, which though present is incapable of being roughly extracted. To mention a few examples:—

Of two students, one, rejected several times for his primary, and again for his final, advised by his teachers not to go for examination, proceeds to London with a gentleman who had passed his primary creditably, had done well at the school, had acted as resident assistant house-surgeon for a year, where he was highly appreciated for his good work and was advised by his teachers to enter his name for the final. Result: the former passed, the latter was referred, and, strange to say, only in the subject which it was well-known he knew best—viz., surgery. A medalist in all the subjects of examination was referred for six months. The medalist of the year in anatomy and physiology, but a reticent, somewhat shy man, was rejected; whereas several, whom he was head and shoulders above in knowledge of the subjects, passed. A qualified practitioner, well acquainted with his work and known by his teachers to be extremely well up, was rejected because he could not recognise a pathological specimen, and so by losing the greater part of the ten minutes allotted for this section, getting a bad mark and spoiling an otherwise good examination. An excellent student, as proved by school and clinical examinations, was rejected, and yet very shortly afterwards was able to obtain his final M.B. at one of the universities. Were it necessary, the above list could be increased, but I think these cases are sufficient to show that there is some ground for complaint. Where does the fault lie

1. With the hurried character of the examination—e.g., ten minutes for pathology, which time is utterly inadequate

quate for the examiner to elicit more than one or two points of such an extensive subject; and which ten minutes may be entirely wasted by trying to make a student recognise something which the examiner has himself had to ask the curator the nature of before he began the examination. This is a fact which, to my knowledge, occurred some time ago. The time for the *viva voce* should be considerably increased, so as to give a nervous student the chance of collecting his thoughts; it is manifestly unjust that any man who knows his subject should be rejected simply because he is rather slow in answering under excitement; but at present an examiner cannot give him the time, since only a few minutes elapse before he has to take another student, and if the unfortunate candidate happens to bungle a little over his first specimen or case, there is no possibility of making up for lost time. 2. The system of marking is essentially a bad one, and might be easily remedied. 3. Those who have gone through the portals of the two Colleges in London cannot fail to contrast the courteous and gentlemanly treatment they receive at the College of Physicians as compared with the hurried rush through customary at Lincoln's-inn-fields. I am, Sir, yours truly,

A. W. MAYO ROBSON, F.R.C.S. Eng.,
Hon. Surgeon, Leeds General Infirmary, &c.
Oct. 1884.

"THE SINS OF THE SOUTH-WESTERN."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The shortcomings of the London and South-Western Railway Company have recently been the subject of some censorious comments in *The Times*. Permit me to point to a medical aspect of its shortcomings.

A large area of the south coast, embracing many of our most famous seaside resorts, especially winter health resorts, is more or less completely under the sway of this railway company. I should have liked to have written "served" by it, but "commanded" is the most appropriate term. A very large section of its best-paying patrons are invalids and persons suffering under bodily infirmities—persons indeed in every sense worthy of consideration. Yet what does this line do for the comfort or convenience of these travellers?

At no station is a space of time greater than three minutes allowed to the passengers. Other lines have certain places where the stay is five or even ten minutes, whether the train be late or punctual. What these three minutes may mean at times is an indefinite space, and after having hustled the passengers into the train a space of time is wasted before starting, which, if allowed to the passengers, would have made all comfortable. This line has a slow rate of speed, and studies but little the comfort of its patrons, yet it is notoriously unpunctual. Where is the time lost? The answer is, On the runs betwixt station and station. Its rate of speed is not so great but that it might "make up" time on this run, instead of "losing" more. Its unpunctuality is not due to the study of the convenience of its patrons, but to bad working arrangements. It is not good for invalids, in my opinion, to be kept unduly in railway carriages, either as to mind or body. This is one sin.

Let me furnish another instance of its care (?) of its passengers. Having a lady in delicate health in charge, it was thought desirable to reach Waterloo in good time in order to get comfortably seated for the journey. What was the result? We had to wait amidst an increasing crowd till five minutes from the time to start, when the train was backed in, and the crowd on the platform rushed to their seats—the weakest getting the worst places. Surely the rules of other companies might be followed on a line so very largely—if unavoidably—used by invalids. Yet another instance of their study (?) of the comfort of their passengers. A medical *confrère* assures me that it is not two years since a lady in infirm health had to be moved from the south coast to London. The South-Western had no invalid carriages, and one had to be procured from the Great Northern Railway Company. Yet this line and the seaside resorts long its route are largely maintained by invalid visitors, whose comfort ought to deserve some study. Many others are deterred by "the journey." Nature has done much for the south coast, but it cannot be said that the London and South-Western Railway Company does much to second her efforts. It is cruel to treat the weakly as it habitually does.

I remain, Sir, yours faithfully,

October 28th, 1884.

J. MILNER FOTHERGILL.

NEWCASTLE-ON-TYNE

(From our own Correspondent.)

PRESENTATION TO THE MAYOR OF NEWCASTLE.

A LARGE number of leading citizens, including several prominent members of our profession, assembled in the council chamber of our City Hall last week to witness the presentation to our mayor, Mr. H. W. Newton, surgeon, in recognition of his valuable services on the late visit of the Prince and Princess of Wales. The testimonial, which was subscribed to by all classes in the city and its vicinity, took the form of a massive and very handsome candelabrum, forming an epergne for flowers, &c. beautifully designed in the Renaissance style, the base being surmounted by four finely modelled figures, emblematical of the seasons, with side pieces for fruit in the same style of ornamentation, and decorated with figures symbolical of fishing, shooting, &c. There was also presented to the mayoress—who, as the deputy mayor, Mr. T. L. Gregson, surgeon, who presided, said, "had so ably seconded the mayor in every effort in his public capacity"—a very handsome case of brilliants and earrings, with a large diamond brooch, "which he hoped she would long have strength and happiness to wear." The deputy mayor remarked that he felt proud that a colleague of his own profession had held the office of mayor on the Royal visit, and still more proud of his success; indeed, the Royal visit would appear to have produced the happiest effects here in the way of binding all classes together to make the occasion worthy of the North.

DARLINGTON HOSPITAL DISPENSARY.

A bazaar and fair in aid of the new hospital building fund was opened at Darlington a few days since by the Duchess of Cleveland. It is estimated that the new hospital will, with all necessary appliances, cost at least £10,000. Beyond this it is desirable to provide at least £5000 for an endowment fund. Towards this sum of £15,000, £9500 has already been promised. The present annual expenses amount to about £1250, and the income, which is always liable to great fluctuations, does not exceed £1100. In the new hospital the expenses will necessarily be increased by £300 or £400 per annum. A good deal of interest has been taken by the public press in this effort, and I hope to be able to report to you some very satisfactory results from the bazaar.

ALNWICK INFIRMARY.

At the annual meeting, just held, Earl Percy presiding, an increase was reported in the number of patients admitted, but it was mentioned as a hardship on the subscribers that eleven of the in-patients were connected with the construction of the Alnwick and Cornhill Railway, and that their share of the expenditure amounted to about £40, while the only additional subscription received from the contractors was £5 5s. It appeared clear to the committee that the institution could not continue to admit such patients unless a much larger sum was paid on their account. The committee also expressed their pleasure with the way in which Dr. Davidson had performed the duties of house-surgeon during the year.

Newcastle-on-Tyne, Oct. 27th.

EDINBURGH.

(From our own Correspondent.)

THE WINTER SESSION.

THE winter session opened on Tuesday both in the University and Extra-Academical Schools, and, so far as can be at present judged, the number of students will be fully up to, if not beyond, the average of the past few years. Reviving what used formerly to be an annual custom in connexion with the opening of the winter session in the University, the Principal, Sir Alexander Grant, delivered an address to the students. Referring to the recent Tercentenary festival, he said that the lesson of the celebration should remind students and office-bearers alike of their responsibilities, and stimulate them to maintain and carry on the