

siderably swollen. Pain in opening the mouth. Tendency to looseness of the bowels and sickness.

Wednesday evening.—The submaxillary and parotid glands were more enlarged than in the morning. To allay restlessness and procure sleep, liq. morph. acet., 10 minims, was given, and directions left that the dose should be repeated in three or four hours if sleep was not induced.

Thursday morning.—The patient took the second dose of morphia, had passed a quiet night, and was rather drowsy. No further swelling about the face, and the diarrhoea and sickness had ceased. I requested that some coffee should be given at once, and the nourishment pressed as much as possible through the day.

Thursday evening.—I thought that the swelling of the parotid and submaxillary glands had subsided slightly. The patient was rather drowsy. She had taken during the day some essence of meat, milk, and brandy-and-water. On the whole I considered her better.

Friday morning.—The patient got out of bed unassisted and went to the night-stool. She remained out some minutes, and in attempting to get into bed she fainted, and although assistance was at hand, she did not rally. During the previous night she took nourishment better than she had done through the week.

No mercurial medicine was given by me or by anyone else throughout the treatment; and I fear it is indisputable that salivation was induced by one single application of the alcoholic solution of mercury. The child was, in fact, poisoned by the mineral. It is almost unnecessary to say that this very sad case has caused me the deepest sorrow—a sorrow that will never be altogether effaced. The practice of the profession is always attended with anxiety and uncertainty, but a calamity like the present is enough to crush a man in his work.—I am, Sir, yours &c.,

EDWARD E. MEERES, M.D.

Melksham, September 12th, 1871.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Now that I have obtained a detailed account of the sad case of accidental poisoning by bichloride of mercury applied to the scalp by Dr. Meeres for the cure of a case of tinea tonsurans, I have no hesitation in saying that the verdict of the coroner's jury is atrociously unjust towards Dr. Meeres. At the same time I feel the deepest sympathy for the parents of the little child.

Dr. Meeres seems to have used the remedy with sufficient care, and he was not using it for the first time. It is clear to me that the patient was one of those who have an idiosyncrasy against mercury. We all know that a single dose of blue pill or calomel will occasionally produce the very gravest symptoms in certain persons. I must admit that the mercurial was actually absorbed in the present instance. The remedy is not mine at all. It was used before I was born, but it is described with other formulæ in one of my works. But I have used it very freely and extensively for about thirteen years, and have never seen its application followed by a single evil consequence in any case. When I published the first edition of my work on "Parasitic Diseases of the Skin," in 1861, I had already used the remedy a long time, and it was on the strength of my experience that I then approved it. I have had since that time ten years' more acquaintance with its action. It is true I do not use the remedy now, but that is solely because I like other things better. I contend that my very large acquaintance with the remedy proves that in Dr. Meeres' case there must have been some very exceptional circumstance operating, and that I feel sure was idiosyncrasy; and, as far as I can see, no foresight on his part could have appreciated this.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

TILBURY FOX, M.D., F.R.C.P.

Sackville-street, W., Sept. 12th, 1871.

A QUESTION OF MEDICO-LEGAL RESPONSIBILITY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your edition of September 2nd, you give a leading article commenting upon the inquest recently held at Kingsland, near Leominster, and pass censure upon us, the

medical witnesses at this inquest, in the two following sentences:—

(1) "We have nothing to do with the coroner, who is amenable to a much higher authority than ourselves, but we must express our great regret that two medical men should have acted in the way they did. We have no doubt they were actuated by the best intentions; but what, we ask, was more likely to bring about the melancholy result which followed than the method they pursued? To go to the house in the absence of its master, to communicate directly with the object of suspicion, and then to keep watch over their patient, was not the conduct we should have looked for in two educated gentlemen."

(2) "We think, moreover, that it is very undesirable that medical men should, in any way, lend themselves to police requirements."

Now, Sir, this commentary by you is written, of course, upon the perusal of a newspaper report only of the proceedings; and we think it alike unjust and injurious towards us, and wanting in the high tone and useful purpose that would be more becoming in the editor of so leading a medical journal. In reply, therefore, to your remarks, allow us to make comment, and to correct you as to some of the facts in this most painful case.

As to the question raised whether a coroner in cases of suspected infanticide and concealment of birth has authority to order the physical examination of a woman upon whom grave suspicion has been thrown, or has not this authority, we know not; but of course we acted upon the presumption that the coroner knew the law and the duties and powers which it imposed upon him; and we acted under the impression that we were, *sub-pæna*, bound to obey his precept to us, otherwise we should have most gladly declined so anxious and painful a duty.

We were neither desirous nor pleased "to lend ourselves to police requirements" excepting so far as orderly and good citizens should do so.

Allow us now, Sir, to correct you in your assumed facts. Before we went to the rectory-house, we were made aware by the coroner that the suspected lady was *in charge of the police*, and that the master of the house—viz., the rector of the parish—had been *personally informed by the coroner* of the grave suspicions laid before him, and which suspicions necessitated that he (the coroner) should order a medical examination to be made of his sister. The rector wished a full inquiry to be prosecuted, and expressed his desire to throw no obstacle in the way of the coroner's painful duty; he also took upon himself to inform and prepare his sister for the medical visit and its purpose; and he returned home after his interview with the coroner and saw his sister, and then left home for Hereford for the day, of his own act and purpose.

Mr. Barnett was desired, by written order of the coroner, to undertake the examination of this poor lady, and at Mr. B.'s request the rector's medical attendant, Mr. Chattaway, was associated with him in the order given.

On our arrival at the house, Mr. Chattaway (who was known to the lady, and who had been consulted professionally by her only three days previously) requested an interview with his patient, who was then up-stairs in her bed-room. This was refused through the servant, and Mr. Chattaway then himself solicited an interview, speaking through the closed bedroom door; but the only reply we could get was, that she could not see us until her brother's return at three o'clock, and we then decided to patiently wait until this hour.

There was only one maid-servant kept in the house, and she had herself voluntarily (as well as through a sister) expressed her desire to be cleared of all suspicion by submitting herself to a medical examination; but no examination was made or requested by us.

We kept no watch over the poor lady, as you say we did, but patiently awaited the expected return of the brother at three o'clock.

In further comment, we may say that a well-known and leading solicitor in this county was present at the inquest on behalf of the family involved, and he raised no question as to the coroner's proceedings.

Since the inquest we have seen the coroner, and also the written opinion of a coroner of twenty-eight years' standing, and both these gentlemen concur in saying that they have power to order such examinations where grave sus-

picion exists, and when by no other means can the truth be elicited or their duty fulfilled.

Now, Sir, instead of waiving your blame and censure, so easily and readily, through the press, we think you would benefit us and our professional brethren more if you would give us some "sound legal authority" to go upon in safely refusing to act upon a coroner's precept when we are called upon to perform such anxious, distasteful, and painful duties. We feel confident that the majority of the profession would gladly disobey, and set at nought, not only coroners', but police and magisterial summonses, if they could do so legally, seeing that the duties required of us are generally painful and responsible ones—the examination as a witness, frequently an insolent one, and the payment awarded signally small and inadequate.

We are told that by Act 6 and 7 of William IV., chap. 89, section 6, penalties and fines are imposeable upon medical practitioners refusing to give evidence and to obey coroners' mandates.

In common justice to us we request your insertion of this our vindication in your next number, and

We beg to remain yours faithfully,

SAMUEL BARNETT,
Leominster.

ALLEN G. CHATTAWAY,
Kingsland, near Leominster.

P.S.—If, in similar cases to this, medical, exact evidence cannot be obtained by law, in how few cases will any chance of detection exist. And it would be better that infanticide and concealment of birth should no longer be by statute punishable crimes than that detection and justice should often miscarry. In this case the establishment of foundling hospitals in each county as national institutions would probably save poor victimised mothers from crime and inhumanity, and prove protective to infant life.

. We are happy to give publicity to Messrs. Barnett and Chattaway's explanation; but we adhere to our former opinion, that they were not justified in the proceeding they, in perfect innocence, undertook. The Act of William IV. has no bearing on the case, for it refers only to evidence relating to making a post-mortem examination upon a dead body, and the refusal of a medical man to make such examination. There is no power given in that Act (or any other that we can discover) to any coroner or magistrate to order the forcible examination of any woman, and such examination has been proved to be illegal by the recovery of damages at Hitchin in a similar case two years ago. No coroner, even of twenty-eight years' standing, can order the performance of an illegal act, and, if he does so, refusal is clearly justifiable.—ED. L.

THE SYME TESTIMONIAL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The bust of the late Mr. Syme being now completed, it is proposed to have some copies of it made in statuary porcelain. These copies will be one foot in height, and should one hundred be ordered, they can be made at a cost of one guinea each. Before making arrangements for the preparation of these small busts, I shall be glad to receive the names of any gentlemen who may wish to have one.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

THOMAS ANNANDALE.

34, Charlotte-square, Edinburgh, Sept. 8th, 1871.

PARIS.

(FROM OUR OWN CORRESPONDENT.)

THE health of Paris is much the same as was pointed out by the sanitary bulletins which I sent you a fortnight ago. Diseases of the alimentary canal are still very prevalent; and, as is usual at this time of the year, cases of diarrhoea and dysentery are common. The municipal bulletin of deaths published for the week ending September 2nd, mentions 36 cases of cholera, and 4 of cholera; whilst

the one for the week ending September 7th reports 40 cases of cholera, and only 2 of cholera. The cases alluded to are of course sporadic. Until now no signs of epidemic or Asiatic cholera have made their appearance. At the last sitting of the Academy of Medicine, M. Fauvel, Chief Inspector of the Sanitary Service in France, took a very favourable view of the present state of things, and after comparing the present condition of health with preceding years, when the approach of an epidemic was not to be apprehended, he concluded that there was nothing in the present "medical constitution" of Paris to justify the fear of an approaching outbreak of cholera. The weather has been rainy for the last few days. The temperature has fallen much, and the evenings and mornings are positively bleak.

The French Government has just appointed the committee to supervise the proceedings of the Assistance Publique, that immense and complicated administration which governs all the hospitals and hospices of Paris. Among the newly appointed councillors are to be noticed five medical men (out of a total number of seventeen councillors)—namely, Professors Wurtz and Bouchardat, of the Paris Faculty; M. Tiélat, Town Councillor, and surgeon to St. Louis; M. Alphonse Guérin, of St. Louis; and Dr. Moissenet, of the Hôtel Dieu.

The committee which had been appointed by the National Assembly at Versailles to decide the much vexed question of the removal of the Strasburg School of Medicine to Nancy, has just published its report. M. Bouisson, Dean of the Faculty of Montpellier, and the mouthpiece of the committee, states that they have come to the conclusion that for the time being no change can be made in regard to the Strasburg faculty, as it would prejudice many important determinations touching the liberty of teaching, educational reform, and other kindred points which are now awaiting a new legislature. The towns of Nancy, Lyons, and Rouen, which had put forward their claims to the succession of Strasburg, must therefore lay by for the time being their rival pretensions, and abide the decision of the Chambers concerning the more general question of educational reform.

Garibaldi has now almost completely recovered from his recent sufferings (rheumatic pains), and is now able to go out on horseback and resume his ordinary occupations.

A Society of Anthropology has been instituted at Florence, with Prof. Paul Mantegazza as president.

The Faculty of Moscow has finally determined to admit ladies to attend the lectures on medicine, and graduate at the University after having undergone the necessary examinations. They have found it impossible, however, to institute separate lectures and provide distinct classrooms for the female students, so that both sexes will intermingle in the general class-rooms. The Council of the University of Moscow have confirmed these views of the School of Medicine, so that the question may now be considered as having been finally decided in favour of the ladies.

The President of the French Medical Association has just issued a circular to all the local societies, announcing an extraordinary meeting for next month. Amongst the questions (touching upon internal arrangements) which are to be discussed, is "the possibility of keeping up their connexion with the three Societies of Alsatia and Lorraine."

Paris, September 12th, 1871.

Obituary.

HENRY HYDE SALTER, M.D., F.R.S.

DR. HYDE SALTER, whose death, after a tedious illness, occurred in Harley-street on August 31st, was the second son of the late Thomas Salter, F.R.C.S., the well-known surgeon of Poole, in Dorsetshire, and was born in 1823. Educated under the eye of a father who, notwithstanding the cares of a large and wide-spread practice, found time to labour successfully in the paths of science, Hyde Salter and his brothers enjoyed unusual opportunities for learning their profession, and he himself attributed all his after-success in life to the example and precept of his father.