

been, "I had not the five shillings for the surgeon, which the union board might require me to pay." This fear leads to the druggist. I wrote to the Poor-law Commissioners on the evil tendency of uncertainty on this subject; they inquired of the board, and were informed, indefinitely, that the five shillings were charged at the discretion of the said board! But this uncertain anticipation operates in the mischievous manner I have stated, to the loss of many lives. Certainty on this subject is indispensable to the salutary working of the concern.

I attended large parishes many years, without orders, in families with three or more children, or in case of a disabled father; attendance was also further extended under emergent circumstances. A healthy, industrious, sober, agricultural labourer, having beer found him, earns nine shillings a week, ten shillings without beer. With the sharpest economy he can barely house, coarsely feed, and clothe himself, wife, and, at the most, two or three children: an increase of family occasions, of necessity, a decrease of both food and clothing—you well know the result. Several of the family may, in the course of the year, be ill in succession, and the liability for the five shillings payment for each remains. When I have remonstrated on the severity of this state of things, the answer was—"We wish to create a state of independence in this class." Does not this approach to something like mockery and insult?

Another evil arises from the remote residence of the relieving officer. In this, and very many other parishes, a sick person has to send miles to the officer for a medical order. Were the overseer on the spot, empowered to issue it, much labour and loss of time would be avoided, advantageously to the sick, and often to the surgeon. I appeal to you, Sir, as a well-known popular and professional advocate, and I remain, yours truly,

T. C. HARROLD.

Teering, Kelvedon, Sept. 1846.

#### MEDICAL CORONERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am induced to forward you a copy of the following letter, which I addressed to the Editor of the *Times*, being anxious to arouse the attention of the public to the absolute necessity which exists, of appointing none but medical men to the office of coroner.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Cheapside, Halifax, Aug. 1846.

FRED. SMITH GARLICK

To the Editor of the *Times*.

SIR,—I am desirous of calling your attention to the paramount advantage to the public of having the office of "Coroner" filled by a medical man, and am induced to do so from a comparison of numerous recent cases which have occurred.

It must be clear, I think, to every observing mind, that no man is so well adapted for pursuing accurate investigations into the cause of death, as he who has thoroughly studied the various intricate relations on which life depends. A non-medical coroner is often at a woful loss. Incapable of forming any idea of the anatomical, medical, or chemical bearings of any given case, he must frequently enter on most important inquiries under a feeling that he is not only deficient in that particular knowledge most essential to a proper understanding and due appreciation of facts, but that it is utterly impossible for him, by any display of serious solidity or stretch of a powerful imagination, to enlighten the jurors on even the simplest medical or hygienic statement.

It is the most difficult thing in the world for any man to teach others what he himself does not comprehend. *Learned* judges themselves may haughtily tell medical men to speak English, that is, reduce matters to a level with their capacities; but I beg to intimate, that even this is a hopeless task, as but too many attempts have proved. Only mention a single anatomical, medical, or chemical term, in the presence of a judge or non-medical coroner, and all you get for your pains is a learned hint to *speaking English*. To broach a term of this kind, acts on the sensoria of these gentlemen like a blow on the pit of the stomach; it makes them gape and gasp.

A certain judge once asked a sailor if he was a witness for the plaintiff or defendant?

"I know nothing about that," says Jack, "but I have come to speak for Tom Jones."

"What an ignorant man you must be," says the judge, "not to know the difference between plaintiff and defendant. Well, where did this occurrence happen?"

"Abaft the binnacle, my lord."

"Abaft the binnacle! where's that?"

"Well," says Jack, "what an ignorant judge you must be not to know where abaft the binnacle is!"

It does not, therefore, seem to be a mark of consummate wisdom, after all, to tell medical men to speak English. The doltish part of the business seems misplaced.

Now, it is a well-known fact that the inquisitions of the coroner, from a mistaken and reprehensible parsimony, are by no means so frequent as they should be—and it gave me much pleasure to read the following remarks in a leading article in the *Times*, while commenting on the 'murders in Norfolk:—"It appears that coroners' inquests were looked upon as expensive burdens on the county, to be alleviated by all practicable methods; and a circular was actually sent to this village of Happisburgh, amongst others, to inculcate the necessary economy. We trust the frightful result of this flagitious and illegal parsimony will be a warning to the whole kingdom. Had an inquiry been instituted at the first death, there is little doubt, even if detection had not ensued, that numberless lives would have been spared, and this atrocious career of guilt cut short. Nor can we omit drawing the attention of the medical profession to their imperative duties in all cases like these. The suspicions of a surgeon should never be disarmed. He should take nothing for granted, (except that he must talk English in presence of a judge;) he should discard antecedent ideas and probabilities as completely as a jurymen. By his opinion and advice the whole proceedings will probably be guided, and his responsibility equals his authority."

Would the late case of military flogging have received the attention and development it did had there not been a medical coroner? Would the exterminator of the late Mrs. Elizabeth Monro, of Plymouth, have been allowed to escape so easily if the judge and the jury could have been made to understand English? A medical coroner would have explained this case satisfactorily to the jury, and shown, at once, that death was the result of gross neglect and complete misunderstanding of the important and urgent nature of the affection. Would the man who applied corrosive sublimate to the sore heads of two children, thereby causing their death, have been allowed to escape with impunity? I could instance many cases in addition, but am afraid to trespass on your valuable space.

It is not necessary for me to tell you, Sir, that the whole medical profession have been very badly—nay, ignominiously treated; and though they play a most important part in securing the welfare of the community at large, yet they have to endure every degree of neglect,—have had, hitherto, no recognition by the state,—and last, though not least, have had to submit to the goadings of those kind-hearted and estimable drovers, the trio at Somerset House.

Into your hands I commit this letter. I trust it will be found to contain, not only English, but grammar too—and if it should not be beneath your high office to lend a hand in furtherance of its views, I humbly crave your best assistance.—I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

Cheapside, Halifax, Aug. 1846.

FREDERICK SMITH GARLICK.

#### EFFECTS OF CAMPHOR ON THE TEETH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—During a minute attention paid to affections of the teeth for several years, I have met with very many cases of unnatural brittleness, (*fragilitas dentium*;) and on inquiring of the individuals subject to it what dentifrices they used, they have invariably answered, "camphorated chalk." The quantity of camphor is very small in the powders generally vended; but I have been induced to make a few experiments, to ascertain the nature of the action of camphor on the teeth. I have allowed teeth to remain in chalk, impregnated with this substance, for a few days, when I have found the enamel to be appreciably altered. I have put teeth into camphorated spirit, and have perceived a similar result; the enamel becomes more brittle and more readily removed by an instrument—in fact, it appears to be rendered somewhat lighter and porous; and finally, if teeth are exposed to the fumes of camphor, morbid condition is found to supervene to a still greater extent. I have consulted many eminent professors of the dental art on the subject, but none (one excepted) had noticed this fact. I have asked one of the most eminent professors of chemistry of the day to aid me in detecting, through analysis, the action of camphor (a substance almost *sui generis*) upon the enamel, and he has kindly accorded his assistance during my researches. He recommends me to

examine, through the aid of the microscope, sections of the teeth after their exposure to camphor, and I hope, after further investigation, to be able to state the real alteration which the enamel undergoes when subjected to the influence of this substance. No time, however, should be lost in cautioning society against the use of camphor as a dentifrice, as I and others who have witnessed my experiments are satisfied that this fragility (when arising from external causes) originates from its application. I have been strongly persuaded to offer these remarks to the public, as seven-tenths of the dentifrices now used contain more or less of this destroying agent; and they are therefore with pleasure submitted to you, Mr. Editor, by your obedient servant,

THEODORE S. TEARNE, Student of Medicine.

Chambers, King's College, August, 1846.

## FUNERAL OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

A MEETING, consisting of between thirty and forty members of the National Association, was held on Wednesday evening, September 9th, to appoint treasurers and trustees of the new establishment, to be called the "National Institute," and to consider measures for electing a council to conduct the affairs of the Institute,—Mr. Pennington in the chair,—when Mr. Clifton announced, that the National Association was now about to merge into the "National Institute of General Practitioners in Medicine, Surgery, and Midwifery," Mr. George Ross, secretary *pro tem*.

Mr. Pennington said, that he held in his hand a letter from Messrs. Bird and Ancell, which he would read. It was addressed "To the Members of the National Association," and stated, that since the general meeting held on the 12th of August last, the period had arrived when the duties which had devolved upon them for nearly two years as honorary secretaries, were necessarily brought to a conclusion.

The writers then proceeded to review the history of the Association from the year 1844, when the St. Marylebone and Westminster practitioners united to promote the cause of medical reform, and subsequently merged themselves in a general association, which at last numbered between four and five thousand members. The secretaries next referred to their own acceptance of office with "considerable misgivings as to their abilities to perform the duties." Business, they stated, rapidly accumulated, though without relaxation of their labours as secretaries, ultimately affording them the opportunity of deriving a "firm conviction, that a measure of medical reform which would promote the interests of all classes was attainable." The writers next bestowed some eulogies on Mr. Pennington as "the exemplar and type of the physicians and surgeons of the great mass of the people of this country." They then "congratulated their coadjutors, that their organization, which took its rise, and was to a considerable extent matured, to serve the purposes of an emergency, was not to be broken up," but was "to be rendered permanent as an *Institute*," which they "wished might be prosperous, and should use their best exertions to promote."

Messrs. Todd and Tegart were then appointed treasurers by the thirty odd individuals present, with a hope, on the part of Mr. Propert, that the Institute would "give them full employment for some years to come," as "without ammunition no good could be done."

It was further carried, that the two treasurers, and Messrs. James Clayton and Thomas Davies, should act as "trustees of the property of the Institute, the books, preparations, &c."

It was then resolved that the trustees, with the treasurers and provisional committee appointed at the Hanover-square Rooms on the 12th of August last, be a special committee to conduct the election of the council, and prepare a list of members eligible to constitute the first council, with an intimation that every member voting was at liberty to substitute any other members' names in his polling paper, and that the polling papers be returned by the 31st of October, 1846.

The next resolution fixed the first annual contribution, by members of the Institute, at one guinea each, payable, in advance, from the 1st of August in each year, no member being allowed to vote for the council without having paid his subscription, Mr. Sutton feeling convinced, that as the subscription was so small, all would be prompt in their payment.

The other resolutions related to advertising the result of the election, &c., within ten days after the return of the polling papers, and to the calling a meeting of the council, which, it was hoped, would form a body "the reverse of the councils of

the existing colleges." Also, to the enrolment of members by the first council, the stipendiary officers, a code of by-laws for future consideration, &c. In moving this resolution, Mr. Clifton said, that he "believed the Institute would grow to be the highest in the kingdom; but that, at the same time, he must warn the members not to expect too much at once." Some feelings of doubt having been expressed as to the consequence of forming a *committee* "to carry out the election of members of the council," (Mr. Joseph wishing to know "how that election was to be decided, and how, and by whom, the scrutiny was to be conducted,") Mr. Bird "suggested that the gentlemen present should appoint the scrutineers;" but he added, that "he thought the committee were not called upon, at that stage of the proceedings, to explain more fully than had been done already the plan on which they proposed to conduct the election;" and, accordingly, the committee were *not* called upon to give any explanations on the subject, and Mr. Joseph, Mr. Robins, and Mr. Copley, were appointed scrutineers of the votes.

The obsequies of the Association having been thus decently performed, the handful of mourners solemnly left the tomb, and ate the "funeral-baked meats" at home. The whole of the melancholy proceedings did not occupy more than one hour. The two sextons, Messrs. Bird and Ancell, exhibited woful countenances—perfectly characteristic of the dolorous occasion.

## UNION MEDICAL OFFICERS.

THERE has been considerable excitement, during the last week, in the parishes of Radford and Lenton, near Nottingham, in consequence of an attempt of the poor-law guardians to remove the present parish surgeon, Mr. W. Small, from office, on account of Mr. Small's "too great liberality" to the sick paupers. A public meeting was therefore convened on Tuesday week, and a memorial prepared, stating that, with the exception of his being "too liberal," there had not been one charge brought against him, and that by his uniform attention he had secured the confidence of the ratepayers, and was considered to be a man of talent. The memorial prayed that the guardians would regard the wishes of the ratepayers, and continue the services of Mr. Small, and during the day it received 2039 signatures, being nearly the whole of the ratepayers in the two parishes.

A deputation waited on the guardians with the memorial on the 10th inst. In the first instance the chairman refused to receive it; but on the motion of the Rev. S. Cresswell, vicar of the parish, it was ultimately allowed to be laid on the table, some of the guardians ridiculing the memorialists, the Rev. S. Cresswell requiring that those who were dissatisfied with Mr. Small should state the "specific grounds" upon which they were about to dismiss him. This the chairman refused to comply with; and upon the votes being taken (by ballot), Mr. Yates, a young man of twenty-three years of age, was elected. On account of his want of practice the parishioners consider Mr. Yates cannot properly discharge his duties; and that such important responsibilities ought not to be confided to one who is as yet so young.

At Mr. Small's election last year the chairman addressed him in these words,—“And now you are about to enter upon your important duties, take care that you attend upon the sick poor, and prescribe for them in the same manner as if they were members of my family.” Similar language was uttered upon the inauguration of Mr. Yates on Thursday, though Mr. Small was dismissed for carrying out these instructions, the only charge brought against him at the board having been, that he had ordered beef-tea and wine for the paupers, and had incurred too great an expense; and at the visit of Mr. Weale, the assistant poor-law commissioner, so much emphasis was laid upon the prescribing beef-tea and wine, as to induce Mr. Weale to state that he considered Mr. Small had not exceeded his duty by ordering them when he thought them necessary. Owing to the unhealthy season, and greater distress this year, there was an increase in the number of patients; there being in 1845 thirty-four cases per week, and in 1846 fifty-three cases; yet there was a decrease in the deaths. The salary of the medical officer was still sixty pounds per year, though the cases had increased from thirty-four to fifty-three weekly.

The memorial, which the deputation applied to the guardians to return, on account of the insulting manner with which it was treated, has been forwarded to the poor-law commissioners, with a request that an inquiry may be instituted. The guardians appear to envy those who have figured in the Andover case.—*Times*, Sept. 16.