

Lectures" is contemplated, and many other works have only been put aside by the Council because it cannot see its way to the probability of being able to afford to issue them within a reasonable period. There is no lack of works in foreign languages, the reproduction of which in English would be a direct and great boon to professional knowledge amongst ourselves. No machinery can possibly be devised better fitted for the production of such works than a mutual translation company, such as is our Society. The works which we publish cost our members certainly less than half of what they would do if purchased through the trade. The recent remarkable cheapening of medical works has, I have no doubt, to some extent conflicted with our interests. It is, however, a fact on which we congratulate ourselves, partly because we believe that what we have done has had a share in bringing about the reformation, and in part because it helps to attain the end which the Society seeks. When, however, medical publishers have done the utmost that enterprise can attempt, we still feel that there will be abundant room for our Society's special function. In that belief, on behalf of the Council, I now appeal to the English-speaking profession all over the world to come forward and recruit our ranks. We have no formalities of election, and all who send their names and subscriptions are enrolled at once. Those who may possibly feel, respecting some of our works, that they do not personally wish to possess them, may yet have the satisfaction of knowing that they are helping the success of a Society which has in the past done much honest work in the cause of medicine, and which trusts to be enabled in the future to do much more.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

JONATHAN HUTCHINSON,

Hon. Secretary, New Sydenham Society.
Cavendish-square, W., June, 1886.

LEICESTER AND ITS IMMUNITY FROM SMALL-POX.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your Special Commissioner has visited Leicester and discovered that the immunity we have enjoyed from outbreaks of small-pox is due to our "sanitary and disinfecting appliances," *plus* vaccination and revaccination of medical officer of health, hospital nurses, inspectors, &c. His statements in regard to the extent of the revaccination are somewhat exaggerated, but that is of little consequence; what I do complain of, however, is that your Commissioner should assume that the plan adopted by us as a sanitary authority has anything whatever to do with opposition to vaccination, or has any reference to the opinion of the people for or against that article of the medical faith. If vaccination were unknown our "sanitary and disinfecting appliances" would be necessary: if vaccination and revaccination were universal our methods would still be invaluable. Your Special Commissioner says, speaking of the vaccination of officials, "Without this protection of vaccination the perfect sanitary arrangements of Leicester would break down in a month"; and he adds, "If her sanitary authorities really believe in their sanitary and disinfecting appliances *per se*, let them put our statements to the test; let them remove the *cordon* of protected persons about the cases, and their boasted arrangements will prove a delusion." I am at a loss to understand why such a proposition should be put before us. I explicitly stated to your Commissioner that the sanitary authorities here did not pursue their methods of treating small-pox cases, when they arose, with any idea of setting up a theory as against vaccination. The sanitary authority is not connected with the anti-vaccination movement, and it has nothing to do with enforcing the law of vaccination—that duty being cast upon boards of guardians. If we discontinued our "sanitary and disinfecting appliances" I have no doubt we should soon have the terrible scourge so often promised us by medical men—but we do not intend to discontinue them; and as to the "*cordon* of protected persons," that is a matter for the officer of health, with whom we do not wish to interfere.

This conclusion, however, is apparent to all who study the subject: in Leicester, with vaccination largely neglected, small-pox does not spread; in many other towns where vaccination is religiously observed the epidemics of small-pox are constantly recurring. Surely it is this fact which should attract the attention of the profession, for if

they agree with us, as they now say, that sanitation *plus* vaccination and revaccination is *the* cure and remedy for small-pox, how it is they cannot point us to towns where they have had equal immunity with Leicester from the dread scourge?

Would it not have been wiser if your Special Commissioner had impressed upon other authorities the desirability of adopting the sanitary arrangements carried out here, which he admits are "perfect," instead of bringing a railing accusation against us, and submitting to us an extraordinary proposal as to withdrawing the *cordon* of protected persons from the infected cases, as though we set up our sanitary appliances to prove the worthlessness of vaccination? I venture to submit that the sanitary authorities in this town have adopted a plan of dealing with this horrible disease, when it is imported into our midst, which deserves the highest commendation; and personally I feel that we are under the deepest obligation to the late medical officer of health, Dr. Johnston, by whom the method was first introduced. A great amount of human suffering, misery, and pecuniary loss, and in all probability many deaths, have been prevented by the course we have pursued; and I see no reason why these blessed results should not follow the carrying out of the same methods in other towns.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

THOS. WINDLEY,

June 7th, 1886.

Chairman, Sanitary Committee, Leicester.

* * We are glad that the chairman of the Sanitary Committee has so little to find fault with in our Commissioner's demonstration that Leicester is protected from small-pox by vaccination and revaccination. It is also satisfactory to find that the sanitary authorities have evidently no intention of trying the experiment of perfect sanitary arrangements *minus* vaccination. No sanitary arrangements will save those exposed to small-pox from taking it, though such arrangements ought to be enforced in all towns. Our Special Commissioner cannot admit any exaggeration in his statement of the extent of revaccination of exposed persons. He has rather to confess to a great under-statement which we may now supplement—though it is part of what should not be told in Gath—that the chairman of the Sanitary Committee himself is *revaccinated*!—ED. L.

BURIAL REFORM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Referring to your annotation in last week's LANCET, it appears to me that the reforms needed now in our present burial system have been narrowed to within a very small compass, and comprise simply (a) the construction of the coffin, (b) the mode of conveying it to the grave, and (c) the formation of the grave itself. Having within the last seventeen years witnessed the removal of five burial-grounds, and the exhumation of hundreds of bodies therefrom, as well as of others for medico-legal purposes, I am perfectly satisfied that if burial is to continue as the more general method of disposal of the dead, it must be in accordance with the "earth-to-earth" system so ably advocated by Mr. Seymour Haden. Admitting, which I freely do, all the advantages of cremation, I see many objections to and difficulties in the way of its general adoption. Hence it appears to me wiser that we should concentrate all our efforts in improving the present mode of burial.

In three cases of poisoning by arsenic, in which the deceased were just above the level of paupers, and had been buried in common graves, the coffins, all of pine deal, were intact after ten months, fifteen months, and even three and a quarter years' burial. I have seen, in a damp soil, coffin boards preserved after thirty or forty years' burial. On the other hand, in a dry, suitable soil, I have seen everything absorbed into the earth except the skeleton, coffin plate, and the handles. Even the skeleton will, I believe, in time disappear and mingle with the earth. These facts of the past ought to guide us in our regulations for the future. The leaden coffins, with vault or bricked grave burials, are slowly becoming things of the past. But the wooden coffins still used are too massive and heavy, as well as much too imperishable. It is evident that even pine deal, which is said to be the most perishable of all woods, is not perishable enough

It is therefore unsuitable, and some other material is desirable. The "earth-to-earth" coffins appear to supply what is required, being constructed of material sufficiently strong to convey the body to the grave, but not to retard the resolution of the body to the earth; on the contrary, they are said to facilitate disintegration and absorption. Their use, therefore, ought to be promoted in every way.

It is greatly to be regretted that undertaking monopoly should have been successful in retarding the use of the "hand bier," or bier on wheels. Their superiority to the practice of carrying the body on the shoulders of bearers is obvious, and requires no arguments in their favour, being more economical, safer, and more wholesome.

The arguments in favour of burial in the earth, pure and simple, are overwhelming. They have the sanction of religion, of law, and of sanitation. It is with the latter aspect that we have to deal. In advocating cremation, Sir Spencer Wells wrote just twelve months ago a letter, of which the following is an extract.

"In this metropolitan district, in the twenty-five years 1859 to 1883, the deaths registered number 1,896,314. Of course the dead have been buried, and, with scarcely an exception, in and around London. Grant that in ten years a body may become harmless—although I do not at all believe that it does so within twenty years in our soil and climate,—can any imagination conceive the enormous mass of decaying animal matter by which we are surrounded? Could anyone be surprised at the outbreak of some devastating pestilence a hundredfold more destructive than the plague or black death of the middle ages?"

These remarks apply rather to the manner than the number of burials. Were all these bodies buried in suitable coffins, and in a sufficiency of dry soil, no harm could possibly result to the living. With proper burial our cemeteries might be made to serve not only the present but future generations. In all that relates to the actual burial of the body, medical practitioners are strictly within their province in advising such mode of burial of the dead as is least hurtful to the living, as well as most effective of its purpose; and the work of the Church of England Funeral and Mourning Reform Association deserves in these matters the hearty support of all members of the profession.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Liverpool, May 31st, 1886.

FRED. W. LOWNDES.

DEGREES FOR LONDON MEDICAL STUDENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the discussion on the subject of degrees in medicine, nothing has been said about the important fact that without a degree a man cannot obtain the post of physician to any good hospital. It is no wonder that the public attaches so much value to the title of M.D. when the profession itself has always thus made such a point of doing so. How, then, can we expect a young colonist and others to forego the acquisition of a Scotch M.D. after he has been shown that a medical degree is the passport to the post of physician at a hospital in this or in his own country. The degree, therefore, which is to be given in London must not rank in a title only, but it must confer privileges similar to those implied by the possession of a University degree.

I am, Sir, yours truly,

June, 1886.

Z.

EDINBURGH.

(From our own Correspondent.)

EDINBURGH UNIVERSITY.

It has been decided to institute a new degree in connexion with the University Faculty of Science, as a goal attainable by students of agriculture who have till now received no university recognition at the end of their studies. The course of study will extend over three years, commencing from the completion by candidates of the usual preliminary examination in general knowledge. There is to be an intermediate examination upon the general applications of the various sciences to that of agriculture, after passing which the student may proceed to the final examination when he has completed an additional session, the final examination dealing chiefly with more purely technical matters. The practical departments in connexion with this

new curriculum have been thoroughly elaborated, the surrounding districts of the Lothians having been put under requisition to supply the necessary opportunities of personal training in various practical details. Candidates who successfully pass the final examination will receive the degree of B.Sc. in Agriculture, and will bear with it a recognition as thoroughly trained agricultural scientists.

POST-GRADUATE HOLIDAY COURSES.

An attempt is at present being made in Edinburgh to arrange for a series of clinical demonstrations, to be held during October, for the sake of medical graduates of this school who might find it convenient to revisit Edinburgh for a short time at that season, and by means of which they might have personal opportunities of observing the most recent advances made in the school in the methods of treating various diseases. It is not proposed, in the meantime at least, to set on foot distinct courses for medical men upon the various branches of clinical work; but it is hoped that an arrangement may be made by which facilities for clinical instruction under our ablest teachers may be afforded to all such as may attend. A meeting of all the clinical teachers in the school has been summoned to meet in the board-room of the Royal Infirmary, under the presidency of Sir Douglas MacLagan, to discuss the subject. Should their deliberations prove satisfactory, it may be confidently hoped that a most important branch in the work of this school as a teaching centre will have been established. Experience elsewhere has shown that such arrangements afford a golden opportunity to the practitioner of which he is not slow to avail himself; and there can be little doubt that, if the preliminary difficulties in the way of concerting arrangements and concentrating the whole force of the teaching fraternity can be surmounted, the proposal will lead to a most successful result.

MEDICO-CHIRURGICAL SOCIETY.

At the last meeting of this Society an interesting case of atrophy of the whole upper extremity following diffuse cellulitis was exhibited by Mr. A. G. Miller. The atrophic process was not confined to the soft parts, but involved also the bones. Ankylosis had taken place at all the joints. Dr. Jamieson communicated some interesting results of new methods of treatment in diseases of the skin; he demonstrated the methods of application of several remedial agents introduced by Dr. Unna of Hamburg, and showed the results of treatment in the case of several patients. Perhaps the most important of these remedies is that employed as a varnish in intractable eczema in the moist stage—a glycerine jelly, containing as its most active ingredient the sulpho-ichthyolate of soda, combined with extract of cannabisindica, to allay the irritation. This rapidly accelerates the progress of the condition from its moist to its dry retrogressive stage. Dr. J. S. McLaren read an interesting communication upon the effects of the inhalation of flame. The paper was illustrated with specimens and drawings, which demonstrated very clearly the lesions produced. A point of considerable interest was that in the case upon which the communication was based, marked duodenal lesions were found after death, which occurred in less than nine hours from the time of the accident.

THE MELBOURNE CHAIR OF CHEMISTRY.

The Chair of Chemistry in the University of Melbourne has been filled by the appointment of Dr. Orme Masson, a graduate of, and Research Fellow in, the University of Edinburgh. Dr. Masson is a son of Professor Masson, of the Chair of English Literature and Rhetoric in the University. He is a Doctor in Science of this University, and a Fellow of the Royal Society of Edinburgh and of other learned societies. In chemistry, to which he has devoted his undivided energies, he has had a career marked by success, both in his original investigations and in recent contributions to the literature of the subject in certain branches. His appointment will be a great gain to the University of Melbourne, for he has shown himself no less successful as an organiser and administrator than as a specialist in his own department of science.

Edinburgh, June 8th.

At a meeting of Volunteer officers, held on the 8th inst. at the Bristol Medical School, it was resolved to establish a branch of the Volunteer Medical Association for the City, and to call a public meeting in reference to the formation of a medical staff corps.