

Again, from the patient's point of view it is much less distress to have the chest-piece of a binaural lightly on one's tender chest than to have a man pressing at the end of a wooden instrument. In this I can speak from experience of the chest end of the stethoscope. I am sorry Dr. Syers's criticisms are so belated; 20 years ago they would have been almost in time to have influenced perhaps a few men to avoid these "new-fangled toys," but, alas, the times move, and the obvious thing to do is to teach students to diagnose with such imperfect instruments as we have nowadays.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Feb. 10th, 1902. A. CHARPENTIER, M.D. Durh., D.P.H.

SUPERANNUATION OF POOR-LAW OFFICERS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The actuarial report on the Poor Law Superannuation Bill (Ireland) has now been made public. It is based to a considerable extent on assumptions. First, that the salaries of poor-law officials are subject, as a matter of course, to a periodical and substantial increase. The past history of salary increments shows that they are rarely increased, and therefore the claims upon the pension fund would fall much below the sum named by the actuary. Secondly, that poor-law officials do not resign or otherwise cease to hold office, or that they do not die before reaching the pensionable age of 65 years. Probably Dr. Howell had no data upon which to base a reliable report in this respect. They are facts nevertheless, and must have an important bearing on the average payments from the fund. The percentage deductions in the English Act of 1896 embodied in the present Bill were based upon the percentages adopted by large public bodies in England for the superannuation of their officers—e.g., the Corporation of London, the Liverpool Corporation, the North-Western Railway, the North-Eastern railway, the School Boards, the Metropolitan Board of Works, and the London County Council. It was not expected that the fund created by the deductions from income would at first be sufficient to meet all claims. There was, however, reason to believe, from the experience of other similar funds under the management of the public bodies mentioned, that the percentages would be found sufficient more than to cover the proportion of the superannuation fund which Poor-law officers should be asked to bear; more particularly so having regard to the equitable claim already possessed by some of these officers under existing Acts. The actuarial report further states that in the event of the Bill becoming law it was absolutely necessary that the fund should be a national and not a union fund. This would be a most advisable arrangement, inasmuch as Clause 4 of the proposed Bill provides that all service, whether continuous or not, shall be aggregated.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Irish Medical Association, Feb. 8th, 1902. THOMAS GICK.

FUNERALS IN INCLEMENT WEATHER.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In inclement weather might not all the Funeral Service, except the words of committal and the grace, be said in the church or cemetery chapel?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
F. LAWRENCE,
Honorary Secretary, Funeral Reform Association.
Westow Vicarage, York, Feb. 10th, 1902.

PROPOSED WATER BOARD FOR LONDON.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The very important remarks contained in the leading article on "The Metropolitan Water-supply," in THE LANCET of Feb. 8th, p. 384, cannot but prove valuable to all concerned. It appears to me, therefore, that now is the time that the present position and condition of the mains and service pipes now used in carrying the water from the various companies' reservoirs to the users (especially in central London) should be seriously considered, because (beyond the question of loss by leakage underground from unsound pipes, joints, valves, connexions, &c.) there cannot be much doubt that if

an absolutely pure sterile water should ultimately be turned into the present system of distributing mains and service pipes it would be rendered far more unwholesome and unfit for dietetic use than the worst of the present waters used in the metropolis. Provision should be made for a new system of mains and services for wholesome waters, carried in properly constructed and well-ventilated subways, and thus safe from the filthy surroundings in which all the present mains and services are buried.

Should the new water-supply be separated in the manner I propose not only would an enormous amount of underground loss be saved, but also a very large amount of inconvenience.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Ebury-street, S.W., Feb. 8th, 1902. D. T. BOSTEL, Sen.

TWO CASES OF SOLID ABDOMINAL TUMOUR WITH ASCITES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. T. W. Eden in his clinical lecture on "Two Cases of Solid Abdominal Tumour with Ascites," published in THE LANCET of Feb. 8th, p. 349, mentions that "an extended search in text-books and monographs and in the transactions of obstetrical societies has only revealed one such case, recorded by Thomas Keith." Dr. Eden possibly has overlooked a case reported by me in the *British Medical Journal*, Dec. 21st, 1900, p. 1773: "Notes on a Case of Profuse Hydroperitoneum complicating Uterine Fibroids."

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
A. C. BUTLER-SMYTHE, F.R.C.S. Edin.
Brook-street, W., Feb. 12th, 1902.

DIFFICULTIES UNDER THE INFECTIOUS DISEASES (NOTIFICATION) ACT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Some days ago I, as medical officer of health, received a notification from a medical practitioner notifying that E. R. was suffering from diphtheria. On the form, at foot, was written, "This child is suffering from scarlatina as well as diphtheria, see next form." The next form inclosed with the other was a notification that E. R. was suffering from diphtheria. Would you be good enough to let me know whether the notifier is entitled to two fees? Am I to make a double entry as regards the child? If so, I have apparently two cases, instead of one, ill at the same time.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,
Jan. 30th, 1902. H. W.

* * * The practitioner notifying is entitled to a fee for each disease notified, albeit the two diseases here in question existed simultaneously in the same individual. Had, say, a month elapsed between the two notifications "H. W." would have had no hesitation as to his line of action, and there is no time-limit laid down by the statutes. Possibly, the present law in this particular may eventually be modified, seeing that the control of the patient is the chief object to be attained by notification; but as the law now stands two fees can be claimed. We assume, of course, that "H. W." has no reason to question the *bonâ fide* nature of the notifications. A double entry should be made and an explanatory note appended. We suppose that the second form was a notification of scarlet fever, and not, as the letter reads, of diphtheria.—ED. L.

LABELS AND LIABILITIES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—So far as the law is concerned little doubt can be raised in the matter which you discussed last week under this heading (p. 387). Certain articles are scheduled as poisons and these may only be handed to the public on certain conditions. Moreover, they may only be so handed either by qualified medical practitioners or by chemists registered under the Pharmacy Act. For one set of poisons these conditions are that the person wishing to obtain the drug in question shall be either personally known to the person dispensing the drug or