

well clad, fed, and lodged. I shall feel much obliged by your giving insertion to this note, and am your obedient servant,

H. MAUNSELL.

Moleworth-street, Dublin,
Dec. 18, 1838.

DOSES OF MORPHIA. ANALYTICAL CHEMISTRY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—If you find, on perusal, the following to merit a place in your excellent Journal, your giving insertion to it will confer an obligation on one of your earliest subscribers. Your Number of *THE LANCET* for Nov. 10th contains an account of a supposed death from an overdose of morphia. Having been in the habit of prescribing morphia in large doses, in some cases to the extent of four and six grains, I was naturally much surprised at the statement in the article referred to, and sent that Number of *THE LANCET* to Mr. S. Burgess, of 20, New-street, Dorset-square, who has repeatedly dispensed my prescriptions for the large doses stated above, requesting his opinion on the subject. The following is his reply:—

“Sir:—With a view of ascertaining the accuracy of Messrs. Battley and Heathfield’s statement in *THE LANCET* you were kind enough to forward to me, concerning the duplicate of a draught supposed to have caused the death of a lady at Dorchester, I made three separate portions of camphor mixture with *distilled, river, and fresh spring water*, and in two drachms of each I dissolved half a grain of acetate of morphia, weighed very exactly. I evaporated each separately to dryness, and the following is the result:—That made with distilled water yielded a residue of 0.45 gr.; that with river water 0.5 gr., and that with spring water 1.9 gr., this you will perceive is as much as 2 grains. Each, of course, answered to the test of morphia, and on further examination of the last-named, I discovered the presence of muriate of soda and sulphate of lime in sufficient quantities to account satisfactorily for the surprising difference in the weight. It may be as well to add, that it is a very common practice to prepare the camphor mixture with spring water, on account of its dissolving a larger portion of camphor acid; I am inclined to believe that Mr. Arden had done so, and that had Mr. Battley done as I have, by the draughts submitted to him, his statement would have worn a very a different aspect. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

“ALFRED BURGESS,

“Operative Chemist.

“To Dr. Edward Blundell.”

It is surprising on what trifles the reputation of a medical man often stands, and

I should consider it an injustice to Mr. Arden to let the article in *THE LANCET* on the subject remain unanswered; the impression conveyed in it is, certainly, that a life was sacrificed to his carelessness.* Why was there not a post-mortem examination? Mr. Arden’s character is, with me, perfectly unimpaired. I feel convinced that had an examination of the body taken place, the death might have been accounted for from other causes, unless, indeed, the half grain of morphia has produced the lamented result in a very singular case of idiosyncrasy, which, of course, no human foresight could have prevented. I remain, Sir, yours faithfully,

EDWARD S. BLUNDELL.

18, Lower Seymour-street,
Dec. 18, 1838.

LETTER FROM MR. J. H. CURTIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In reference to a letter signed “J. T.,” which appeared in the last week’s *LANCET*, I beg to say, that I have long since found, by experience, that I am much better occupied in attending to the duties of my profession than in replying to the objections of an anonymous writer. The question between us is, of course, altogether one of fact; and I repeat the substance of my former communication by saying, that in the large majority of cases of deafness which have come under my notice (which in twenty-two years’ experience have not been a few), absence of cerumen has been a marked symptom; and that restoration of the healthy function of the ear has always been accompanied by increased secretion of cerumen. I have found, also, that the use of creosote has succeeded in producing this effect more rapidly, and more certainly, than any other remedy; and on these two facts I founded my communication. That the secretion of wax is a natural function of the healthy ear, will, of course, be admitted by all; and as Nature never made an organ in vain, nor gave it a peculiar function that was useless in the animal economy, it appears to follow, as a necessary consequence, that either as effect or cause, the interruption of the function must be connected with some kind of disease.

The verification of my cases would leave this question resting still upon my assertion, to be confirmed or neutralised by the experience of others; and as, therefore, no good result could follow from a discussion which would occupy much of my time and atten-

* If Dr. Blundell will re-read the last few lines of the article alluded to, he will arrive, we venture to affirm, at an opposite conclusion.