

distributing the 36 fatal hospital cases, the Registrar-General reports that 7 of the deceased small-pox patients had resided in Lambeth, 5 in Bow, 5 in Islington, and 4 in Paddington. It is noteworthy that no less than 20 of the 61 deaths from small-pox were of children under five years of age, of whom fifteen were certified to be unvaccinated, and the rest "not stated" as to vaccination. Since the commencement of the present epidemic 722 children, aged less than five years, have died from small-pox in London, affording conclusive evidence either of the neglect of vaccination or of inefficient vaccination. There is too much reason to fear that certificates of successful vaccination are frequently issued when the vaccination has been far from satisfactory or of a character to afford trustworthy protection from small-pox. These defects in the administration of vaccination can only now be remedied by a careful inspection of the vaccination marks of children in elementary schools, which may be regarded as the only reliable evidence of true successful vaccination. Of the twenty-five deaths from small-pox registered last week in private dwellings, three occurred in Islington, three in Walworth, and three in Peckham.

In the outer ring of suburban London eight deaths from small-pox were registered, of which five occurred in West Ham, one in Stratford, one in Acton, and one in Hendon.

### THE FAMINE IN INDIA.

THE accompanying extracts from *The Times* of June 4th, concerning the famine in Southern India, fully bear out the remarks on the same topic which appeared in THE LANCET of May 12th.

"Our correspondent in Southern India writes under date Madras, May 5th:—There is no change for the better in regard to famine prospects. In fact, in most districts affairs are becoming critical, and nothing but an early and plentiful rain can avert disaster. Since my letter of the 28th of April the sky has been almost without a cloud, and no sign of rain has appeared to cheer the hearts of the drooping peasantry. Prices of grain are advancing, and it is feared that the principal part of the Burmese rice crop has been secured for the European markets, and it will only be diverted to Madras under the stimulus of advancing rates. It seems doubtful whether Bengal and our own northern districts are capable of sending much more grain to the famine tracts, and if Burmah cannot help, I fear the food-supplies will be very deficient in the course of the next three or four months. Our local merchants are beginning to be anxious, and to think that present stocks will not long hold out if the up-country demand is likely to increase. .... It is interesting to note, in connexion with the deteriorated health of the people, the official returns of mortality in the famine districts. These have been published in the *Gazette* for the months of December and January—that is, for the period of the commencement of the famine,—but the later returns have not yet seen the light. The death-ratios of the afflicted districts for the two months were as shown below for every 1000 of the population. The ratio for each month is, of course, the annual ratio of mortality.

District.	Dec., 1876.	Jan., 1877.	District.	Dec., 1876.	Jan., 1877.
Kurnool . .	148·3	78·2	Chingleput . .	36·6	78·1
Bellary . .	53·5	67·4	Nellore . . .	59·1	97·1
Cuddapah . .	58·7	118·7	North Arcot . .	37·3	83·1
Madras . .	62·2	112·9	Salem . . . .	42·9	62·6

Now, the usual death-rate, or registered deaths, in these districts for the same season of the year does not average more than 20 per 1000 of the population. .... There is no evidence of any value, I think, to show that the population in India is beyond the capacity of the land to support. It must be remembered that every pound of grain consumed in the famine tract of the south during the present scarcity has been supplied by India itself, and that the transfer has been accomplished mainly by the railways and ocean steamers; and while an enormous local failure of crops over an area inhabited by 20,000,000 of people has prevailed, India has still been able to add largely to her exports of wheat to Europe. There is nothing in the con-

dition of the famine-stricken district of this presidency to point to over-population, and when the famine is over it may be found that the districts are suffering from want of people to till the soil."

### SOCIAL SCIENCE ASSOCIATION.

The Council of the Association has presented the following resolutions to the Secretary of State for the Home Department:—

#### *Coroner's Courts.*

1. That in the opinion of this Council a Parliamentary inquiry into the mode of appointment, the office, duties, and jurisdiction of coroners, is imperatively demanded.

2. The Council draw attention to the fact that the office of coroner is one of high antiquity and great utility; that it has been the subject of much and intricate legislation, and has come in process of time to be attended with inconveniences in respect to the constituency by which the coroner is elected, the manner of election, the abolition of a standard of qualification, the mode of remuneration, the procedure and place of holding the courts, as well as many points relating to functions, procedure, and responsibility. The Council are of opinion that in consequence of various social changes since the time of the original creation of the coroner's office, the expediency of retaining the coroner's jury, either at all, or at least in its present form, the existing relations of the coroner to the justices of the peace, and the provisions for the use of expert witnesses, have become matters demanding fresh and special arrangements.

3. That the question of inquiry into the cause of fires is one of urgency, and should be considered in regard to the appointments, duties, and functions of coroners.

#### *River and Canal Population.*

That in the opinion of this Council the condition of the canal and river population is such as to demand the early attention of the Legislature in order to prevent—(1) Over-crowding. (2) The spread of infectious diseases. (3) The evasion of the Acts for the Registration of Births and Deaths and Vaccination. (4) The neglect of education and the deterioration of morality, as necessarily prejudicial to health and social advancement.

### SPIRILLA IN TROPICAL FEVERS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I beg to announce that in the blood of individuals who are attacked with fever at the present time in Bombay, there may often be found numerous and active spirilla. Commonly, but not quite invariably, the presence of these minute organisms is limited to the periods of high temperature, and in my experience hitherto the spirillum may always be found in those fevers which present a clear tendency to relapse, after an interval longer than any yet recognised amongst intermittents so-called. From a number of instances, however, which have come before me, and of which I possess full notes, it is already evident that also in types of fever which ordinarily would be termed "remittent," or possibly "intermittent" (for intermediate grades are many), the blood may sometimes be found to contain the spirillar filaments. The latter here closely resemble those alluded to by Dr. B. Sanderson in his summary on European relapsing fever, printed in the Health Reports of the Privy Council (New Series, No. iii., London, 1874), and I may add that further inquiries are now in hand regarding the import of this new observation.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Bombay, May 14th, 1877.

H. VANDYKE CARTER, M.D.

### "STRIKING THE FLAG."

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I beg to thank you for having inserted my letter on the 2nd June in your pages, and for your flattering observations regarding myself.

I trust, however, you will permit me to say that you have