

therefore, is not so much to find fault with what your correspondent says, as to remind him of one or two important matters closely connected with this question, which he has omitted to refer to.

In the letter before mentioned, a very graphic picture is drawn, in which is presented to us the "sickly babe of a sickly mother, pining for that sustenance which a *faulty one* in the next street is able and willing to afford it." But there is another and a darker picture in the background, which must be brought forward and placed side by side with the first. What becomes of the "poor girl's" child, which is put aside to make way for the interloper?—we are told not of its fate. Now its death is sometimes sudden, sometimes slow, but in any case it almost always falls a sacrifice to that tyrant custom, *wet-nursing*.

When Mr. Acton speaks of the beneficial effects of the "charge of infancy" in reclaiming the girl, he forgets that the most "solemn task" of that description which she can undertake is the care of her own child. Can any softening influence from another quarter take effect upon her nature, whilst she hardens her heart against the cries of her own offspring, whom, from its otherwise forlorn condition, she is doubly bound to protect?

Let me remind Mr. Acton that the tables of infant mortality are greatly swelled by the premature deaths of the children of *wet-nurses*; and we have yet to learn how many of the vast numbers that are sacrificed annually to the demon *Infanticide* are derived from the same pernicious source.

Mr. Acton says, "hundreds of mothers are physically incapable of nursing their own children." Numbers, doubtless, by luxurious habits, by the pursuit of fashionable pleasures, or by worry and excitement of some sort, render themselves unfit to perform that first and dearest duty to their babes; but that more than a very small proportion of mothers are by *nature* incapacitated for suckling, cannot be conceded. The artificial mode of life which leads to these evils must be blamed, and not Dame Nature, who is innocent of such offence. Far from excusing them on these grounds for hiring a substitute, it appears to me greatly to aggravate their fault, and I do not hesitate to say that the indulgence in such selfish and enervating pleasures, and the habitual neglect of the maternal duty, form a foul blot on the moral escutcheon of the mothers of England!

Briefly I would reply to Mr. Acton on one point—viz., the transmission of moral taint to the suckling through the nurse's milk. It has been demonstrated by undoubted authorities that "intangible moral qualities *can* be conveyed by the agency of a material substance such as human milk." More than this: "there are some diseases in the human constitution so insidious that they may escape detection, though the nurse's milk may be subjected to the test of chemical analysis," so that it is *not* (as Mr. Acton asserts) "possible to ascertain that the woman's milk is perfectly wholesome." This fact ought to prove to mothers and medical men how great a risk to the child is incurred by the employment of a *wet-nurse* under any circumstances.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

MATER.

February, 1859.

P.S.—I enclose my name and address.

PURCHASED DIPLOMAS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—To my surprise and disgust, see that, in THE LANCET of Feb. 5th, there are two gentlemen in the Medical Council, advocating the registration of purchased diplomas. Such a step would be encouraging quackery in its vilest forms. I ask you, Sir, knowing you to be, and always to have been, a great supporter of the medical profession, what you think of so degrading a proposition? The present Act is far from what the profession had a right to expect; but to countenance such a proceeding as the above, would be, in my opinion, and I think I may say in that of all those gentlemen who have legally obtained their diplomas, a most flagrant and gross injustice and insult to the whole medical profession. What must the nations abroad think of it? Is not England looked up to as the first country in the whole world? are not her laws superior to those of any other? Let us prove such to be the case, then, and not boast of our laurels till we have obtained them in an honourable and righteous manner; and then, and not till then, will the medical profession be looked up to as it ought to be. I feel quite sure that such a course would be contrary to your wishes, and trust that you will not let the matter pass without comment.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Lowestoft, Feb. 1859.

WILLIAM GRAY, M.R.C.S.

ELECTRO-CHEMICAL ANÆSTHESIA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As you have taken notice, in the pages of your journal, of Dr. B. W. Richardson's exceedingly clever adaptation, "Voltaic Narcotism," I should feel obliged by your allowing me space for a few words upon the subject.

Some six months ago, when the dentists had the run of *The Times*, and were allowed to make the most extraordinary assertions in reference to the anæsthetic powers of the interrupted current of electro-magnetism, Dr. Richardson wrote a very good and temperate letter, denying that the interrupted current could produce anæsthesia. This letter was followed by one from me, confirming Dr. Richardson's statement, but declaring that the continuous current was a true anæsthetic, and that I had succeeded in inducing anæsthesia with its aid.

For the last four months Dr. Richardson has been engaged with me, at the College of Dentists, in studying the question of the practicability of inducing anæsthesia by the galvanic current in dentistry, and I have demonstrated to him the anæsthetic powers of the continuous current. Dr. Richardson has taken advantage of this, makes use of the very apparatus I employ, and yet does not mention my name in his paper. He also forestalls the Report of the Electrical Committee of the College of Dentists, for which I had reserved my discovery.

I do not think Dr. Richardson has in this instance behaved in his usual straightforward manner; and as the junior of that gentleman, both in years and standing, I cannot calmly sit by whilst he appropriates the fruits of my labours without acknowledgment.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Gloucester-terrace,
February 14th, 1859.

HARRY WM. LOBB, M.R.C.S.

THE LONDON UNIVERSITY AND THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Observing in your journal of the 5th instant that the Council of the College of Surgeons has now determined upon recognising the matriculation examination at the London University, in lieu of the preliminary classical and mathematical examination for the fellowship of the College, why, may I ask, has not the preliminary examination at the Apothecaries' Hall shared the same privilege? True it is that were we to compare the several examinations, we should certainly find the London University one take the precedence, and in the same ratio does the examination at the Hall take precedence of that at the College, as in the latter it is only a superficial knowledge of the subjects that is required, whereas in the former the examiners go carefully into the minutiae of their subjects, and so thoroughly test the knowledge of their candidates. I, therefore, cannot help thinking that, if this subject was only properly brought before the authorities of the College, they would not allow it to pass unnoticed, as it is reasonable to suppose that they would prefer seeing their members obtain the fellowship by examination than wait any prescribed time, and then make it a mere matter of merchandise. I with many others passed the preliminary examination at the Hall some six or seven years ago, and now, that I am professionally engaged in life, have neither the time nor opportunity of beginning my school-boy days afresh, which must of necessity be the case in order to obtain the object in pursuit; but should the preliminary Hall examination (for which a certificate is granted to every successful candidate) be yet deemed sufficient, I should then readily present myself as a candidate for the professional part, and so hope to become a fellow by examination, and doubtless many others would gladly do the same; so that, although the funds of the College might slightly suffer in one way, they unquestionably would reap the benefit in the other.

Knowing, Sir, your readiness to advocate a good cause, and at the same time wishing this letter to come under the notice of my professional brethren who are similarly situated as myself, may I ask the favour of your giving it publicity in your journal, and in doing so you will greatly oblige,

Your obedient servant,

New Romney, Kent, Feb. 1859.

M.R.C.S.E.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The tardy recognition of the matriculation examination at the University of London, as an equivalent to the preliminary examination for the fellowship of the College, will be