

The Health of London.

The report of Dr. S. F. Murphy, health officer to the county council for 1902, has just been issued. A most gratifying feature of the report is that, thanks to the untiring efforts of the Public Health Committee, London becomes more healthy year by year. The death rate for 1902 was only 17.2 per 1,000—the lowest on record except that for 1901, which was 17.1. The birth rate continues to steadily decrease, that for 1902 being 28.5—the lowest on record.

Correspondence.

The Duration of Life After Fatal Injuries.

SAN FRANCISCO, Feb. 20, 1904.

To the Editor:—The question as to how long a patient may live after the reception of necessarily fatal injuries is just now the subject of judicial inquiry in the noted Fair case. In this particular trial the point at issue is whether Charles Fair or his wife lived the longer after receiving the severe injuries to the head that were disclosed by the autopsy. So far as gross lesions are concerned it would appear that Mrs. Fair's injuries were the more severe, the frontal bone being crushed and brain tissue lost. On this ground one of the medical witnesses very confidently asserted that Mrs. Fair must have died first. Apart from the fact that vital resistance is an unknown quantity in any given case, and that some individuals, such as those possessed of the so-called status lymphaticus, may instantly die as the result of the most inadequate causes, it is also apparent that quality and not quantity of tissue must be the determining factor in stopping the vital functions, a very small lesion in the neighborhood of the cardiac and respiratory centers being much more serious than a most extensive laceration of the frontal lobes. Rather curiously, lesions of the medulla and fractures of the base of the skull were not looked for in the case of Charles Fair. My object, however, in writing is to record a case that occurred in my practice some thirteen years ago, and to which I have often referred in private and to my class, but which I did not deem of sufficient importance until I read the medical opinion in the Fair case, with which this experience is entirely at variance.

A child, between one and two years of age, fell out of a baby carriage and rolled under the wheels of a heavily laden two-horse omnibus. The accident occurred in front of my house and the child immediately was brought in. The entire front of the head was crushed. The left temporal and frontal bones were torn from their anterior attachments, in a line running through the center of the orbit; in this way the vault of the skull was pried off the face, leaving an immense wound, through which at least a third of the brains had escaped into the roadway. As the child was carried into the hallway it uttered low cries, which, however, immediately ceased, but the breathing continued fairly regular for some time, as was the pulse. Final stoppage of the heart and respiration did not occur until twenty minutes after the receipt of the injury. I have always attributed this remarkable persistence of life to the probability that the basic ganglia were uninjured, and that notwithstanding the extent of the injury the loss of blood was not so great.

H. D'ARCY POWER.

Significance of the Weight Wave of Menstruation.

CHICAGO, Feb. 24, 1904.

To the Editor:—As supplemental to my article on this subject in THE JOURNAL, June 13, 1903, allow me to report:

1. The increase in weight preceding the menstrual flow—which may exceed one pound per hour for several hours, the total increment being sometimes seven to nine pounds in 24 hours—is due to (a) increased absorption of oxygen, and (b) decreased excretion, notably of carbon dioxide and water. (Increased pressure of oxygen in the blood has been shown by Paul Bert, Hill and Macleod to retard metabolism and to decrease the excretion of CO₂ and water.)

2. The essential phenomena of the menstrual weight wave are therefore (1) the rapid absorption of oxygen with coin-

cident retardation of metabolism and excretion, and consequent increase in weight; and (2) rapid excretion, especially of carbon dioxide (the exhalation of which may exceed two pounds in one hour) with consequent rapid decrease in weight.

3. Many observations, to be elaborated later, warrant the deduction that a cause of this metabolic cycle is an ovarian product; and that the menstrual discharge, white as well as red, proceeds from glandular activity of the uterus and is a feature of the general excretory activity of this period.

WILLIAM T. BELFIELD, M.D.

Optional Medical Course in Liberal Arts School.

CHICAGO, Feb. 29, 1904.

To the Editor:—Knowing that THE JOURNAL is interested in anything that tends to best equip the physician for his profession, I wish, as an alumnus and member of the board of trustees of Wabash College—one of the oldest literary colleges in the middle west—to state through THE JOURNAL the following optional course of study which has recently been adopted by this institution for students who propose entering professional schools:

A four years' course of study in which three years shall be prescribed work, all electives being reserved for the fourth year. Students taking this option will be permitted, if they so desire, to pursue their fourth year in attendance at a professional school approved by the trustees of the college; retaining in the meantime their college standing and responsibility and being eligible to graduation with their class on presentation of proper credits earned in this way.

Other options, of course, are given by the college in the way of allowing the elective work to be so arranged as to make the most advantageous connection with certain professional schools should the student desire to remain the full four years. The adoption of the foregoing optional course makes it of benefit to the student as well as to the college and, further, to the medical profession, should the student choose medicine as his profession. It so governs and directs the student as to guarantee for him the best education the profession offers. It gives the medical profession a more skilled and better prepared man, and the honor to the college will be reflected by the work accomplished in a professional way by this alumnus.

GEO. W. HALL.

Actinic Rays.

NEW YORK CITY, Feb. 22, 1904.

To the Editor:—Albert E. Sterne, A.M., M.D., has used some terms in his paper "Neurasthenia and Its Treatment by Actinic Rays" which I think should be corrected. This paper has been read before the American Medical Association and has been approved for publication by the Executive Committee of the Section. In medicine we are not bound to rely on authorities, and I for my part do not approve the title of that paper. 'H_{aktis} is the ray, actinic ray would then be rayish rays, but that is nonsense according to my understanding. I have not studied the paper in question thoroughly, but at a glance I notice on page 501 some remarks on one form of hysteria characterized by what the French termed "Grandes mouvements." In Dr. Sterne's paper these two words are given with quotation marks and printed in italics, exactly as I give them here. There is no such word in the French language as movement or movements. Of course, Dr. Sterne means mouvement, but this is a masculine, the French term would therefore be "Grands mouvements." I think it is very important to correct such mistakes, because they are transmitted by those who do not know better than the originator.

A. ROSE.

Queries and Minor Notes.

ANONYMOUS COMMUNICATIONS will not be noticed. Queries for this column must be accompanied by the writer's name and address, but the request of the writer not to publish his name will be faithfully observed.

CHARGES FOR SERVICES TO PHYSICIANS AND THEIR FAMILIES.

COLORADO SPRINGS, COLO., Feb. 18, 1904.

To the Editor:—I write for information. What is the present status of the profession as regards rendering bills and accepting