

strangled at midnight; they regard it as an absurdity to suppose that a head or leg could be crushed by the wheel of a cart before ten o'clock in the morning; or that it is even necessary that a physician or surgeon should pass an hour within their establishments, except at such moments as may suit their domestic convenience and private interests. On no other supposition can we explain the strange neglect evinced by the governors of our hospitals, in not providing the constant attendance of efficient medical men, at every hour of the day and night in those institutions.

The funds of some hospitals are, perhaps, too limited to admit of any considerable sum being set apart for a resident surgeon; but what shall we say of the improvidence of those who leave such hospitals as *St. Bartholomew's*, *St. Thomas's*, and *Guy's*, destitute of resident surgeons, the income of these three establishments exceeding, as it does, one hundred and twenty thousand pounds per annum? It is quite clear that no practical or really useful answer can be given to this question, except by the Legislature. England is certainly the only country in the world in which such a vast fund of wealth, designed for the purpose of medical charity, is so grossly abused and misapplied.

The sick-poor who are admitted into our hospitals are entitled, not only upon principles of humanity, but of justice, to receive efficient medical attendance, and nothing can be more barbarous or more unjust than to leave them, as is now the practice, to the tender mercies of a few inexperienced youths, denominated dressers.

The principle of a right, on the part of the poor, to efficient attendance, is universally admitted; but why is not the right adopted in practice? Unfortunately, there is a system of patronage and of nepotism which renders the recognition equally inconvenient and unprofitable to certain authorities.

The catastrophes arising out of this abuse of power, involving, to a great extent, the

sacrifice of human life, have grown to such a magnitude that the subject must speedily be forced upon the attention of Parliament, where alone a competent remedy can be provided.

Since the foregoing remarks were written and just as we were going to press, we received the following letter from Mr. TAYLOR. We have only time to ask one question in relation to the first paragraph. If the slaughtered man had been a nobleman, or an opulent tradesman, would Mr. COOPER have thought it unnecessary to see the patient until the following morning? Suppose the messenger had even stated that the patient had been seen by Mr. WATTS, a general practitioner of great experience and skill in his profession, would Mr. COOPER have said, in reply, "Oh! then, it is unnecessary that I should see the patient until tomorrow"? No; but he would have added, "Very well, I will be there instantly."

We take this opportunity of assuring Mr. TAYLOR that we had no intention whatever of charging him with misrepresenting the facts of the case.

LETTER FROM MR. TAYLOR ON THE UNIVERSITY COLLEGE HOSPITAL CASE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In the last number of your Journal, you accuse the senior and junior surgeons of University College Hospital of neglecting a patient who lately died there of a wound of the abdomen; yet one of these surgeons, Mr. Quain, had nothing whatsoever to do with the case, the patient being entirely under the care of Mr. Cooper. The following are some other facts, which will show that your information as to the neglect of the man, and the cause of his death is altogether incorrect.

First. Mr. Cooper received early notice of the man's arrival at the hospital, but was not desired to see him immediately, nor did Mr. Cooper consider it necessary, the treatment adopted in the first instance, by Mr. Watts, one of the house-surgeons, appearing to Mr. C. all that could be done while the patient was in a state of collapse.

Secondly. The man had been seized with a cadaverous paleness of countenance, vomiting, coldness of the skin, sinking of the pulse, and other bad symptoms, directly after the stab, which happened two hours

before his arrival at the hospital, and in this state he still remained.

Thirdly. From the continuance of these symptoms it was manifest that some important organ had been wounded, and that, in all probability, there was internal hæmorrhage.

Fourthly. The man never rallied from the first to the last.

Fifthly. Mr. Cooper, on first seeing the man the next morning, gave it as his opinion that there was a wound of the bowel, and copious extravasation, either of blood or intestinal matter in the peritoneum. The state of the pulse, however, seemed to him to indicate that the effusion was blood, and this in considerable quantity.

Sixthly. The event proved the correctness of this prognosis. In addition to the extravasation of three or four pints of coagulated blood and coloured serosity in the cavity of the abdomen, a piece of small intestine, entangled in the deeper part of the wound, had been transfixed with the bayonet, which had afterwards passed obliquely downwards to the left side of the pelvis, and wounded one of the branches of the internal iliac vein, and also the rectum.

Seventhly. The injury of some important organ was certain; but the insinuation of a small fold of bowel into the wound was a questionable point during the short time the man lived, for reasons fully explained by Mr. Cooper in his clinical lecture.

Eighthly. The man died principally and inevitably from the copious extravasation of three or four pints of blood in the abdomen, and the peritonitis thereby excited. This fact was proved by the trivial change in the condition of the knuckle of intestine entangled in the wound, and the violent inflammation of the peritoneum, more especially in those situations where the blood had accumulated.

Ninthly. As Mr. Cooper caused the body to be opened in the hospital theatre, in the presence of Mr. Quain, Professor Carswell, and about 200 individuals, your statement that the man died of strangulated hernia, and that only a little blood was found in the abdomen, is at all events known by these numerous witnesses to be incorrect.

Tenthly. The last fact deserving notice is this:—Even when the integuments had been removed from the wound in the muscles, and the abdomen opened, the perforation of the intestine was not apparent externally or internally, because the transfixed portion of it lay in the deeper part of the stab. Hence if the skin had been divided, and the bowel pushed back, the latter part would certainly have been reduced wounded into the abdomen, and the dangers of intestinal effusion would have been added to that of great effusion of blood.

For myself, I wish to say that I, on oath, in a court of justice, gave it as my opinion

that the death of James Chaplin was caused by internal hæmorrhage and inflammation of the peritoneum. In this evidence I stated that which was, and is, my conscientious conviction; and I have no fear that any one who fairly examines the facts, will believe me to have committed that grave crime which the version of the case furnished to you would impute to me. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

EDWARD TAYLOR,
House-surgeon.

University College Hospital.

IN announcing last week the presence of the Asiatic cholera in London, we simply declared a fact, of the existence of which we were well assured, without any desire to create unnecessary alarm. The documents which we publish this week, and which have been furnished by the surgeons of the Stepney Union, demonstrate the true nature of the disease which prevails, we are happy to say, in a very moderate degree, in the Limehouse district. We trust that the temporary measures which have been taken to render prompt assistance, and ameliorate, as far as possible, the condition of the poorer classes, will have the desired effect, and that the epidemic will pass over us, like the noise of a thunder storm, having produced no serious mischief. The events of the last week or two have, however, taught a lesson which should not be easily forgotten; they have shown us that if some people are accused of being, on all occasions, ready to propagate disagreeable news, there is another class, and a numerous one, composed of influential, but cold-hearted and money-seeking men, who regard the poorer class of the community as dust, when compared with the interests of commerce, and who would consent to any sacrifice of human life, provided their own selfish ends were thereby forwarded. These men talk frequently of "humbug;" they fill the public prints with "letters;" they cloak themselves with charity and philanthropy, but the gist of all their noise and affected tenderness is readily perceived, and the good sense of the public soon allays the excitement which they endeavour to produce.