

Biggin Lodge, Norwood, Jan. 2, 1851.

SIR,—I have to acknowledge the receipt of your letter of the 28th ultimo.

I confess, after that communication, I read with some surprise yesterday, in *THE LANCET*, a letter from the secretary, dated December 20th, authorizing the insertion in that publication, as from the committee, of your circular of the 13th ult., which is appended thereto; I have therefore felt it incumbent on me to transmit a copy of my communication to you to the Editor of *THE LANCET*, for publication.

You state, in your letter to me, that "It would also, for very cogent reasons, have been impossible, pending that investigation which had been going on for some time, to lay the whole of the circumstances before the governors." Is this fair? Is it honourable and straightforward?

Is it respectful to the governors in general, that the secretary, Mr. Maskell, should be employed to ferret out grounds of complaint against an able and efficient medical officer of the hospital? That such is the fact has just come to my knowledge, and I lament the prostitution of the secretary's office.

I may be permitted to inquire whether we are to have the Inquisition established in this country in the nineteenth century, with the unkind and disingenuous view of establishing some foundation for a complaint against an ill-used officer of the institution, in respect of transactions which occurred some fifteen years ago, and which ought to be buried in oblivion, and under that disreputable pretext to deprive an able officer of his connexion with the institution?

It has just been stated to me, that a string of inquisitorial interrogations has been submitted to Mr. Chance, but which, if he possesses a grain of spirit or common sense, he will repel with indignation.

In case there is any ground of complaint, let it be stated distinctly and openly: every prisoner at the Old Bailey has a right to see the indictment against him, and it ought not to be withheld in the present case.

I do not understand that there is the slightest cause of complaint on the ground of want of medical skill, and the contrary is manifest from his position in the profession; and in reference to his willingness to perform his duty, I was personally present at the hospital many months ago, when I noticed the un courteous treatment Mr. Chance received on his offering to assist the gentleman operating upon a patient, who refused to receive a bandage out of his hands.

Really, Sir, the veil is too transparent. I assert that the sole, if not the only, cause of complaint is professional jealousy, and that only; and I venture to reiterate my confirmed conviction, that the only, if not the most effectual, mode of preventing it in future, is to appoint the present staff full surgeons of the institution, with alternate weeks of attendance.

It cannot escape the observation of any governor at all conversant with institutions of this nature, that by adopting the course hitherto pursued, the committee has, probably unintentionally, but unjustly, thrown the entire private practice into the hands of one or two of the surgeons, to the exclusion of the third.

It must be borne in mind that the wonderful cures effected by the institution has operated most materially to give publicity to it, and thereby naturally to increase the private practice of some of the surgeons; but I would ask—is it fair and just that such advantage, and which fairly appertains to every such institution, should be monopolized by one or two individuals, to the utter exclusion of a third equally able and honourable man?

I feel assured the governors in general will never sanction such a procedure, or the prolongation of that close borough system which has too long existed in many institutions, but which has happily been abolished in the party system of the kingdom.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

Charles Harris, Esq.

RALPH LINDSAY.

#### SELF-SUPPORTING DISPENSARIES AND DR. MOORE'S STATISTICS.

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—The good temper which characterizes Dr. Moore's attempt, in *THE LANCET* of the 25th ult., to defend "Self-Supporting Dispensaries," cannot be admitted as an excuse for his blunders.

1. As to his statistics. Does he suppose that the "gentleman at Somerset House," in stating that "six per cent. is the average annual sickness of one hundred men," meant that

there were only six cases in the year among that number? Certainly not. Six per cent. is the average number of males constantly sick.

Mr. Edmonds, some years ago, stated that the ratio of sickness to mortality was "two years of sick time to every death." That is to say, where the ordinary mortality of two per cent. per annum prevailed, there were four per cent. constantly sick.

Mr. Neison has since shown, from unrivalled observations, that the sickness among "males" (of all ages from ten to a hundred) is at the rate of 157 weeks, or three years to each death. With a mortality of two per cent. this would give six per cent. constantly ill, which is doubtless what the "gentleman at Somerset House" meant.

But then six per cent. ill for a whole year, is equivalent to at least seventy-two per cent. of sick cases in the year—i.e.  $6 \times 12$ , for the average duration of cases does not exceed a month.

So that Dr. Moore's magnificent allowance of £2 per case to the doctors, at once dwindles down to 40—12, 3s. 4d. per case; and granting, as he himself does, the great additional illness among women and children, he will find the statements from Derby and Burton quite as favourable as can be reasonably expected.

Let me refer Dr. Moore to a table in the appendix (p. 101) of a pamphlet entitled "The Health and Sickness of Town Populations," Parker, 1846, where he will see the pecuniary results of the "Self Supporting" delusion, ascertained by an extensive inquiry.

For 18,626 cases treated in these institutions, at Atherstone, Burton, Chesham, Coventry, and Derby, during several years, the total medical remuneration was £2074 11s., or under 2s. 3d. per case!

If medical men choose to run the risk of insolvency by offering a month's attendance for 2s. 3d., or as now at Burton for 1s. 8d. (little more than a halfpenny per diem), there is no sumptuary law to restrain their extravagant folly. *Quem Deus, &c.*

2. As to Dr. Moore's political economy, he sees a "path to pauperism closed" by the Southam scheme. Has he ever asked how or why the "path" was opened? If not, he may learn that the evil arose from committing the provision of public medical attendance to the poor-law authorities; a course taken by England alone of all civilized nations.

Would it not, then, be better to "close the path," by severing the ruinous connexion between medical relief and the poor laws, rather than by begging and degrading the medical profession. Let Dr. Moore be assured that the real method of curing the evils he points out, is for the State to fulfil its duty, and to provide and pay adequately a sufficient number of qualified medical men to attend to the sickness, and more especially to preserve the health, of the suffering masses of our population.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Gloucester, Feb. 1, 1851.

A STATIST.

#### ON THE CASE OF COMPOUND DISLOCATION OF THE KNEE.

[REPORTED IN "THE MIRROR" FOR DEC. 23, 1850.]

To the Editor of *THE LANCET*.

SIR,—On perusing the case of compound dislocation of the knee, reported in your number for the 25th ult., it occurred to me whether section of resisting tendons might not have been successful.

Section of the bone, as proposed by M. Broke Gallwey, Esq., would, I presume, have been a more severe proceeding, and would have caused some degree of deformity.

Allow me to be, Sir, yours respectfully,

Maryport, Jan. 30, 1851.

FRED. CURTIS.

#### Medical News.

EPIDEMIOLOGICAL SOCIETY.—The third ordinary meeting of this Society was held on Monday, the 3rd of February, in the rooms of the Royal Medical and Chirurgical Society. Dr. Babington, the president, in the chair. Seven members, nine corresponding, and one honorary member, were admitted; and seven new candidates for membership were proposed.

A paper by Dr. Hoskins, "On the Origin and Progress of Cholera and Small Pox in Germany," was read by Dr. Gull.

The facts recorded by Dr. Hoskins were highly interesting for the most part adverse to the doctrine of contagion.

Mr. GRAINGER said that if a widely extended view were taken of the history of cholera, he thought that the diffusion of the disease appeared to be effected rather by places than by persons, and that the proof of its communicability from one person to another would be found insufficient.

Mr. HUNT admitted that at certain times, and in certain places, the disease did not appear to be contagious, but he believed that on other occasions it was clearly to be traced from person to person. He therefore was inclined to think that, like erysipelas, puerperal fever, and other diseases, it varied in its type, being sometimes contagious, at other times not so.

Dr. JAMES BIRD said he had seen much of the disease in India, that, in a certain sense, it was never contagious, and never thought to be contagious, in that country; but that where the diseased were congregated together, a degree of infection was generated; and that when it broke out among troops, many sleeping in the same apartments, its spread was soon arrested by the men being ordered into separate tents.

Dr. GULL said, that if the disease were generated by the diffusion of putrid gases, he did not see how it could ever become contagious. On the other hand, if the germs of the disease were transmitted in a solid form, from person to person, a condition in some sense necessary to contagion, it was difficult to conceive that atmospheric influence alone should promote the disease.

The paper announced to be read at the next meeting in March, is "On the Yellow Fever which has lately appeared in the Brazils."

The president announced that the treasurer had received a cheque for five guineas, from David Fullerton, of Kidbrooke Park, Forest-row, Kent, Esq., as a contribution toward the funds of the Society; and expressed a hope that so good an example would be followed by many others.

MEETINGS OF THE MEDICAL SOCIETIES IN LONDON DURING THE ENSUING WEEK.

NOTE.—When the date of the month is not specified, no meetings take place in the current week.

Societies.	—	Days of Meeting.
Epidemiological .....	Mon. 8½ P.M.	
Chemical, 142, Strand.....	Mon. 8 P.M.	
Medico-Botanical, 32, Sackville-st.	Tuesday.	
Medico-Chirurgical, 53, Berners-st.	Tues. 8½ P.M.	Feb. 11.
Pathological, 33A, George-street, } Hanover-square .....	Tues. 8 P.M.	
Hunterian, 4, Bloomfield-street, } Finsbury .....	Wed. 8 P.M.	
Pharmaceutical, 17, Bloomsbury-sq.	Wed. 9 P.M.	" 12.
Harveian, 21, Edwards-street, } Portman-square .....	Thurs. 8 P.M.	" 13.
South London Medical, Borough.....	Thurs. 8 P.M.	" 13.
Western Medical and Surgical.....	Fri. 8 P.M.	" 13.
Medical Society of London, 33A, } George-street, Hanover-square }	Sat. 8 P.M.	" 15.

PORTRAITS AND BIOGRAPHIES

OF

Members of the Medical & Surgical Profession.

The subject of the next Portrait and Biography will be

**ROBERT LEE, M.D., F.R.S.,**

PHYSICIAN TO THE BRITISH LYING-IN HOSPITAL,  
AND LECTURER ON MIDWIFERY AT ST. GEORGE'S HOSPITAL.

TO CORRESPONDENTS.

*Bolca.*—We are glad to learn that Bolca and his friends are alive to the evils of adulteration, and that they are willing to aid in the endeavour to effect their suppression.

*A Chemist, (Leeds).*—Assuredly the sub-title of our commission shows clearly enough that it is our intention to extend the inquiries to drugs and chemical preparations.

*A Surgeon, (Paversham), Chemist, and others.*—Silic exists in the human bones. We have no evidence to show that it enters into the healthy tissue of arteries or veins.

*Cambria.*—The vote of censure in such a case forms no part of the verdict, nor is it necessary that twelve persons should be unanimous in recording such a vote, as it would be for recording their verdict. The expression of their opinion separate from the verdict has no force in law, whatever moral force it may possess.

*A Subscriber* may address a communication to the Vaccine Institution in Russell-place, Fitzroy-square, London.

THE RATE OF MORTALITY IN THE VARIOUS HOSPITALS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your last week's number mention was again made respecting the rate of mortality in the different hospitals, proving it to be nearly twice as great in the small as in the large charities of this class. I am surprised that some one has not endeavoured to give an explanation of this fact, being as it is a very important one. May I suggest the following.

It must be evident to any one, upon walking through the spacious, lofty, and well-ventilated wards of St. Bartholomew's, St. Thomas's, and St. George's Hospitals, that the patients placed there have an immense advantage over those in the confined atmosphere of small buildings like King's College, University College, and other hospitals. But nevertheless, I believe it is a fact, that at these small buildings they, as a general rule, take in only those cases which are really worth taking in, and exclude all those which can be treated as out-patients; whereas the contrary is the case at the large hospitals, upon going through the wards of which, at every second or third bed, you meet with a case perfectly devoid of interest, such as a small ulcer of the leg, or one of some fifteen or twenty years' standing; also such cases as fracture of the clavicle, of the radius, or ulna, and numerous others, which could be treated out of doors. Such cases as these necessarily swell the number of admissions and cures during the year, and make a somewhat unfair statement when compared to that of the small hospitals. The following is the manner in which these cases get into the large hospitals:—On the taking-in day the surgeon has a list of the empty beds given to him. Supposing these amount to forty, he perhaps only finds twenty cases which ought really to be admitted; but he nevertheless fills the other twenty beds with cases which he can discharge again at the end of three weeks, or when his taking-in comes round again, in order that, in the interval between his taking-in, his beds may not be filled by cases sent in by the other surgeons, or from the steward's office, as it is a rule that all beds be filled except those left for accidents.

In the above I have alluded only to the surgeons' wards, but it is the same in the physicians' wards, only I think in a less degree.

I think this will, in some measure, account for the mortality being so small in the great hospitals.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant.

AN OBSERVER.

*A. O. Z.*—The period between conception and parturition may vary as to length; but Dr. Tyler Smith has, we think clearly enough, shown, that when pregnancy proceeds to its full term, parturition will take place at ten lunar months from the last appearance of the menses, and generally at what would have been a monthly epoch of the latter. But though the period of parturition is thus marked, that of conception may have occurred at any period between the last appearance of the periodic discharge and the next monthly period; consequently the actual duration of pregnancy, or the time from conception to parturition, may vary within this limit.

INVALID BOARDING-HOUSES.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Slander is always bad; anonymous slander is despicable and cowardly; and I should have taken no notice of a letter in last week's LANCET, in which a private communication of mine is very freely dealt with, had I not seen in the same periodical, a fortnight ago, that such a letter had been sent from Brighton, and was to be published. This notice, therefore, proving your correspondent's locality, I confess to some curiosity to know the writer of it; and when he comes forward with his proper name and address, the profession in this town will be the best judges as to which of us might the most fairly claim your correspondent's signature of "No Humbug." I shall then (if he pleases) be very willing to enter into the subject of "establishments for invalid children," either as a further advertisement in the columns of THE LANCET, or in any manner most agreeable to himself. At present I shall merely say, that having the happiness to be personally known to almost every medical gentleman in this town, I consulted the majority of them before I made my project publicly known. All so consulted thought such an institution a very desirable one, and all whom I asked to be allowed to make use of their names did so without the least reserve. I therefore feel perfectly justified in the step I have taken; and in order that its benefits may be fairly tested, my object is to make it as public as possible. I have to thank "No Humbug" for assisting me to do so.

I trust to your wonted impartiality for giving early insertion to this note, and perhaps you will kindly say that I shall take no further notice of anonymous correspondence.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Cannon-place, Brighton, Feb. 3, 1851.

GEO. LOWDELL.

*J. D.* (Pimlico).—The first two questions proposed appear to us trivial. To the third question we may reply, that the effect is produced by temporary pressure on the Eustachian tube, which forms a medium of communication between the throat and the ear.

*C. B.*—An assistant to a general practitioner will find no difficulty in being admitted to examination under the circumstances which he has described.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Will you be kind enough to inform me how a German or Italian M.D. diploma is to be obtained in London, and their cost.

Your very obedient servant,

ANXIOUS.

\*.\* A modest request truly! While we are constantly endeavouring, by the efforts of our pen, to uphold the respectability and dignity of our profession, our efforts are thwarted by those who, like this correspondent seek to act so as to degrade it. We have before now pilloried the system of procuring foreign degrees without examination, and our hostility to it is unabated.