

## BRIBES TO NURSES.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I fear, from the letter of "A General Practitioner," at p. 51, (July 14,) that some members of our profession disgrace themselves and tend to injure their brethren, by resuming the objectionable and disgraceful practice of giving bribes to nurses, in the hope of being by them recommended to midwifery practice.

It is several years since I began to attend patients in midwifery, and many a weary attendance I had for a guinea, creeping on to a guinea and a half, and two guineas; at last I got an extensive and profitable practice; but I never gave money to the nurse, nor did I ever meet with a medical man in London who acknowledged that he was in the habit of doing so.

Drs. Denman, Savage, Squire, Dennison, Thynne, Merriman, and, generally, the midwifery practitioners during the last twenty years of the eighteenth century, were very urgent with their professional brethren to discard this custom, and I thought that it was altogether done away with, till I saw, with regret, your correspondent's notice.

I can easily understand that nurses may make a great parade of their opportunities of recommending doctors, but my belief is, that their means to this effect are very trifling, even with guinea patients. It is by the recommendation of one patient to another that a character for skill, judgment, attention, patience, and courteousness, is acquired; and whoever obtains such a recommendation as this, needs not, and will not, be benefitted by the always doubtful praises of a venal nurse.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

July, 1849.

T. D. P.

## THE CHOLERA.—PROPOSAL FOR A MEDICAL CONGRESS, TO DETERMINE ON ITS TREATMENT.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In No. 19, vol. i. 1848, of your journal, will be found a letter, headed by yourself "Asiatic Cholera—How to be Treated?" and signed "Pater." At the time you did me the honour to consider that letter worthy a place in your columns, the dreaded malady had not made its appearance in this country. It has now appeared, and I beg most earnestly to call the attention of your medical readers and the profession at large to the few observations in my letter on the subject, as also to that which may follow from my pen. To save your readers the trouble of referring to the letter alluded to, I will copy that portion which will answer the present purpose. Thus:—

"May I be allowed, through your valuable journal, to propose that meetings should be held in different localities, that the remedies already tried and those proposed be fairly discussed, and that some mode of treatment, which may be decided upon by the majority, be laid before the Board of Health, or at a general meeting of medical men, and adopted, if so approved. That a resolution amongst themselves be passed, that every medical man shall forward to a certain body, appointed for that purpose, his success or non-success in the treatment of every case which may fall under his care, with the remedies adopted, whatever they may be. A statistical account of deaths and recoveries being kept, and reported in the medical journals, with mode of treatment, &c., would enable the profession to draw their conclusions, &c."

Sixteen months have elapsed since the above was written. The eyes of the public are on the movements of the profession, and duly ought they to appreciate any exertions which are made by medical men to benefit mankind. Those who are aware how badly rewarded in a pecuniary point of view are the hardworking general practitioners will do so. I am told that most, if not all, of the medical societies have closed their meetings, and that they do not recommence till October. If this be the case, the profession ought to adopt some such steps as I have proposed, for they have now no means of assembling together to discuss this all-important topic.

All that can now be effected is through the medical journals and newspapers, or from one medical man to another. A meets B, and asks, "Have you had any cases of Asiatic cholera?" B replies, "I have had several, and treated them all with —, and with decided success; I lost only one out of four," &c. A only hears this statement, and days may pass away before he meets with C and D, to narrate B's successful mode of treatment.

In *The Times* of Saturday last, olive oil is recommended as

a certain remedy. In the same paper, the hydropathic mode of treatment is lauded, enveloping the patient in a wet sheet, covered plentifully with blankets, altogether about five. How are the poor to obtain these—those, too, who have often but one; would neighbours lend for such a purpose; would they be wise in so doing?

If either of these or other remedies prove most useful, how are they to be properly made known. A may try them, but may not meet B, C, or D, for many days after; it is true he may write to the medical journals and state his success, but will the rest of the alphabet feel inclined to adopt the same? will they credit the testimony of A alone? No.

Since writing the above, and only an hour since, I met a medical man, (for I am thrown much amongst them;) on shaking hands with him, I asked, "Have you had a case of cholera yet under your care?" Pointing to a house, the door of which I saw him close, "In that house," said he, "a poor woman has just died of the disease. She was attacked at six this morning." It was about five when we met, so that her illness was not of twelve hours' duration.

"Did you read the *Times* of yesterday?" I inquired. "About the olive oil?" said he. "Yes," I replied; "and the wet sheet." "Stuff!" cried he, and went away laughing. Had this gentleman been present at a medical meeting, and had heard the merits and demerits of the proposed remedies fairly discussed, he might have felt disposed to have given one or both a fair trial, especially as his own mode of treatment had proved unavailing.

It is evident that this dreadful malady baffles the skill of most medical men, and that some remedy (if remedy there be any) has yet to be discovered. If medical men would unite, say only a few, hold meetings twice or thrice a week, narrate their successful or unsuccessful cases, with mode of treatment; agree to try those remedies most approved of by the majority, and report thereon, the proposed remedies would soon have a fair trial, and could at once be made known through the medical journals. A lady informs me that she heard a medical man a few hours ago laud the wet sheet, or hydropathic treatment: he had not tried it, but intended so to do. What say the homœopaths? Have they the power, with their infinitesimal doses, or, *similia similibus*, to save the lives of their cholera patients; if so, let them, as men and Christians, prove it,—let them send one of their disciples to the bedside of a selected cholera patient, and in the presence of one or more of the proposed societies' members, test their capabilities, who may report thereon. "Palmarum qui meruit ferat."

I hope, Sir, that the few observations I have made will prove to your readers the necessity of their at once uniting, heart and hand, and that many days will not elapse before a few will assemble together to carry this object out.

With your permission I will cause the first meeting to be held. Thus: let those who may feel inclined to join in the cause, address letters to "Pater," at Mr. Taylor's, Post-office, 49, Newman-street, and through a medical friend, notice shall be sent of the time and place appointed for the first meeting, which, for the present, would be most convenient in the parish of St. Marylebone.—I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

London, July, 1849.

PATER.

## THE KIDNEY IN ITS RELATION TO SCARLATINA.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In *THE LANCET* for July 7th, the following paragraph appears from the pen of Dr. Miller, in his paper on "The kidney in its relation to scarlatina." "The question now almost forces itself upon us, whether is this affection [scarlatinal dropsy] the result of suppressed cutaneous action taking place during the desquamation-process, in the milder cases especially, as is usually ascribed, and those in which the patient is most liable to an early exposure to cold, and giving rise, in consequence, to congestion of the kidneys; or is it the result of the specific operation of the scarlatinal poison at some period of the disorder not exactly ascertained, producing, by its direct action on the kidneys, a symmetrical hyperæmia of the organs themselves? Many facts derived from the recent epidemic, explicable solely by the laws of the action of morbid poisons in the animal economy, favour the latter supposition."

Dr. Miller then proceeds to state that scarlatinal dropsy has hitherto been invariably termed a sequela of scarlet fever, and infers, (or at least I understand him so) that the disease (dropsy) has not as yet been considered to depend on the primary action of the scarlatinal poison.

Now as I have, in an essay publishing in another journal,