turn poisons the brain, the medulla, and the heart. Sometimes, in those who smoke for the first time, these symptoms occur in a form even of danger. Such a case occurred to me many years ago, and was published in the Edinburgh Medical and Surgical Journal (in 1816). Of this case I propose to adduce a brief extract:

"Mr. J. H., aged nineteen, unaccustomed, except for a day or two before, to the effects of tobacco, smoked one and part of a second pipe. He became affected by violent syncope, and by violent retching and vomiting. He returned home, complained of pain in the head, undressed himself, and went to bed. Soon afterwards he was taken with stupor and laborious breathing. He was placed in that state by the medical attendant. The countenance was suffused with a deep livid colour; the eyes lost their brilliancy; the conjunctive were injected; the right pupil was exceedingly contracted; the left was much larger than the right, and greatly dilated; the pupils were much more affected than the retina, and the approach of light. The hands were joined, and in a state of rigid contraction; the arms bound over the chest; and the whole body was affected with spasmodic contractions; the breathing was very stertorous."

From these several symptoms we may pretty accurately judge of what is going on in the brain in solitary smokers, and in a minor degree in all smokers. The robust may support the effects of tobacco; but the feeble will assuredly pay the penalty of languor, inertia, and incapacity. I have known more than one instance of members of our profession, both in its higher and lower ranks, making shipwreck of their success and fortune by addiction to solitary and sedentary smoking.

The Lunacy Colony at Gheel.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—Allow me to call your attention to what I fear may become a source of involuntary error in the true appreciation of the number of cures obtained in lunatic asylums.

Gheel is said to average 22 per cent., and Hanwell 15 per cent., of cures per annum. In order to give a significance to this difference in favour of any system soever, it becomes first absolutely necessary to agree on the same principles applied to official and non-official statistics.

As to what concerns Gheel, I will explain the statements which Dr. Webster was so kind as to select from a book of mine, and from other authentic authorities—statements wherein the editor of the Quarterly Review has based his opinion in an excellent article. Although everybody may, a priori, suspect the cottage treatment to be more productive in good results, being more natural than any other, notwithstanding, the most correct statistics (be they unfavourable) must be given to the public to judge by.

Have Hanwell and Gheel been compared according to the same rule—that is the question, and most important. I am of opinion that, in order to appreciate the real benefits of the restraint and non-restraint systems, or of the cottage treatment, we must first establish a distinction between curable and incurable patients. This is a capital point, for our institution of Gheel is said to average 22 per cent., and Hanwell 15 per cent., of cures per annum. In order to give a significance to this difference in favour of any system soever, it becomes first absolutely necessary to agree on the same principles applied to official and non-official statistics.

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Respecting the insane coming from Brussels, and sent to Gheel in 1840, we then had 72 entries, amongst whom 28 were incurables. Deduction being made of this last number, 22 were cured, and 24 left uncured—viz., 45 per cent., or nearly one half.

Of course, I cannot compare the 58 cures obtained amongst the total number of 343 insane, nor contrast it with the 72 entries. In the first case, there would be 16 per cent., and in the second 80,—both statements being, however, quite inconsistent with the object in view.

During 1850, there were 46 entries, 25 being incurable; amongst the 21 curable cases, 5 recovered—viz., 23 per cent.

In 1851, 56 entries, 25 incurable; 5 cures out of 19 curable—viz., 26 per cent.

I must add respecting Gheel, that when I was appointed chief physician, in 1849, all entertained the sanguine hope an incurable infirmary would soon be erected, and accordingly every kind of lusus was sent to Gheel; but next and the following years, as the number of patients considered as incurable, and only this class, were consigned to the neglected colony. Then, Sir, and only then, were they sent to Gheel, where, alas! we had no adequate means of understanding the slightest somatical treatment. That is not, I believe, the case at Hanwell or Colney Hatch. I am very sorry to say, that, actually under the Government's direction, Gheel is still a kind of déni de justice, or a sort of refusal of humane assistance towards poor lunatics.

I remain, Sir, your faithful corresponde,
Brussels, September, 1857.

T. PARIGOT, D.M.

The National Association for the Promotion of Social Science.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—I, in common with many others, have received a circular announcing the formation of a new body that the "National Association for the Promotion of Social Science," and also containing the names of the committee of one of the departments—on that of Public Health.

But the consideration of the number of these societies, I regard this one with great pleasure, for it is well fitted to call greater attention to some of the most important and prominent objects of the day; and if it should be well managed, it is likely to add much weight to the scattered efforts which are now made in each of the five departments which this society is intended to embrace. But it must not be forgotten, that whilst it has selected a sphere for its own operations different from that of any other existing institution, it will, in many respects, be regarded as a rival of that well-established and inviolable institution—the British Association for the Advancement of Science; and on this ground, as well as on that of the multiplicity of societies, it will require no ordinary effort to obtain for all the active support of that small number of distinguished working men who alone can give stability and value to it.

Having this belief, I cannot but think that sufficient care has not been exercised in reference to its objects, for, at this time, what it is that at present is so much needed, is that it should show good grounds for public confidence. As it has not had any antecedents, the only mode by which it can be at present judged is the constitution of its governing body; and I ask you, Sir, if that body fairly represents the talent of the country in reference to social science, or gives the indications that the society will be conducted on those large views which alone become a National Association. I see many names on the committee of persons who have never done the least work for social or any other science, and whose general acquirements and mental power are at the most not above mediocrity. There are also some who have obtained handles to their names, and who, therefore, may be ornamental, but as they have not been known to fame in this department of science, are not likely to be useful. It is also worthy of notice, that from one-third to a half the whole committee of forty-two members are connected with one provincial town, and that the inauguration meeting is to be held in the provinces. These are, in my judgment, so many mistakes, and to them I would add another—viz., the omission of the names of some who have attained to a prominent position by their researches in this direction. There are also some who have obtained handles to their names, and who, therefore, may be ornamental, but as they have not been known to fame in this department of science, are not likely to be useful. It is also worthy of notice, that from one-third to a half the whole committee of forty-two members are connected with one provincial town, and that the inauguration meeting is to be held in the provinces. These are, in my judgment, so many mistakes, and to them I would add another—viz., the omission of the names of some who have attained to a prominent position by their researches in this direction.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

September, 1857.

Lex.

The Adulteration of Bread as a Cause of Rickets.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—Having, like many others, been out of town, I did not see the communication of Dr. Coley respecting bakers' bread, in The Lancet of August 22nd, until to-day. As he has very much mistaken my views, I shall be obliged if you will allow me briefly to reply. Dr. Coley speaks of what I have said in my former paper of July 4th as an "hypothesis which refers the origin of rickets to decomposition of the phosphate of lime in the bones, produced by the alum contained in the bread made by the London bakers. This is entirely wrong, as I attributed the great prevalence of rickets in London and many other places to the decomposition by alum of the phosphate of 351.
time of the wheat-flour, the children being thus deprived of that material which they require for the nourishment of the bones; and I quoted Baron Liebig as my authority for this chemical dictum. Dr. Coley, however, says that I believe nutrition too much of a chemical process; but if he supposes that the phosphate of lime of the bones can be formed from the phosphate of alumina and sulphate of lime contained in bakers' bread, his opinion of nutrition is much more strongly chemical than mine.

Dr. Coley says: "Dr. Snow's theory is without foundation, otherwise every child partaking of the bread made by London bakers would necessarily have rickets." If Dr. Coley had done nothing but read my paper before replying to it, he would have found that I have expressly stated that many children derive a sufficient quantity of phosphate of lime from milk, potatoes, and other articles of food, independently of the bread, and therefore escape having rickets, although they eat bakers' bread, in which the phosphate of lime is usually destroyed. I also remarked that rickets might arise from a derangement of the digestive and urinary functions.

Besides the necessity of referring to Dr. Coley's paper on account of the mistakes into which he has fallen respecting my statements, I have another and more agreeable reason for doing so, as he has unwittingly supplied a fact which very much confirms my views. Having alluded to the great prevalence of rickets in children in Belgium, Dr. Coley writes: "This unhealthy condition of the osseous system in Belgian children is traceable to the general use of vegetable soups, their almost entire deprivation of bread and animal food, bad nursing, &c. &c. That vegetable soups deprive the children of that portion of phosphate of lime which they ought to obtain from the bread as completely as if, eating the bread, the phosphate of lime were destroyed by alum is extremely improbable that vegetable soups contain enough of this salt for the supply of the growing bones. I do not wish to beg the question, or I might say that the prevalence of rickets proves that the soup of the vegetable food contains phosphate of lime.

Dr. Coley alludes to the frequent occurrence of scrofula and rickets as a proof of what he calls the constitutional origin of rickets; but admitting the applicability of this phrase in several cases, I should be more likely to inquire the cause of a deficiency of one of the most important constituents of the body. Moreover, if the new views of Dr. Churchill be correct, and scrofula and consumption are caused by a deficiency of phosphorus in the body, the adulation of bread may tend seriously to promote the prevalence of these maladies.

The observations I have been able to make on the presence or absence of rickets, in a late excursion into the provinces, entirely confirm me in the views stated above; but I regret not yet having time or opportunity to collect evidence in that numerical form which would leave no room for doubt or cavil on the subject.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Sackville-street, Sept. 21st, 1857.
JOHN SNOW, M.D.

NAVAL MEDICAL APPOINTMENTS.

The following letter will be read with interest:

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As a farewell letter on the above subject, I wish just to give your various correspondents my reasons for writing my first letter. I saw in the LANCET a letter respecting the "Indian Medical Appointments," recommending young men to enter the Company's service in preference to the Queen's. Now those who wished to serve their country a little might as well enter the Queen's as the Company's service: that was the view of the Times.

Your correspondent at Sheerness says the average sick is 5 per cent. Sir, I think I ought to know a little about the interior masters. The assistant-surgeon has to obey all his executive rank, but the ensign of a day old is his superior officer. At a time of peace, a medical officer is truly that. He enters as lieutenant by the medico-military one. It is not unlikely this recruiting arrangement of the digestive and urinary functions.

Sir,—I am not in the least surprised to observe an advertisement for assistant-surgeons for that hermaphrodite department, the medical-military one. It is not unlikely the recruiting officers might entrap a few poor devils to serve. Perhaps it may return to times when, to use a nautical expression of old, they would return to sea, and perhaps to the rich reward of the Navy. I am, Sir, with the greatest respect, your obedient servant,

J. J. C.

SIR,—In THE LANCET of the 12th ultimo, there is a letter from an "Assistant-surgeon R.N.," in which the following paragraph occurs:—"There is a slight mistake in Mr. Keele's letter. All time as assistant-surgeon counts towards surgeon's pay and retirement instead of only three years, as Mr. Keele says." I should consider this a very great mistake, as I had laid particular stress on the three years. If I was wrong: but if your correspondent will be good enough to turn to page 203 of the Navy List, he will find that surgeons are divided into two classes as regards the medical-military one. Those who entered on the 1st of July, 1840, who got 18s. per diem, after twenty years' full-pay service, including service as assistant-surgeon. Second, those unemployed, or who entered the service since the 1st of July, 1840, who will receive 10s. per diem, after twenty years' full-pay service, including three years' service only as assistant-surgeon.

As I was endeavouring to show the prospects of an assistant-surgeon in the navy, I only mentioned the latter class. That is the most unjust phrase "I did not say how long he (the surgeon) had been in the navy, but when I said "I did not say how long he had been in the navy," I meant that the newly appointed assistant-surgeons, that I wish to see resided. Surely an increase of pay, at the rate of 6d. per diem for every three years' service, is inadequate remuneration for the whole time and services of medical gentlemen.

Your correspondent is not the only assistant-surgeon who was ignorant of the order of July, 1840, as it is but too common for surgeons to enter the Naval Medical Service, believing the pay to be good, from their commencing at 8s. a day, but quite unignored as to the slow rate at which that pay would be increased. There is a great stir being made at the present time about the increase of pay for army surgeons, and I think with very great justice. I should like, however, the propriety of increasing the pay of naval surgeons to be considered at the same time.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
GEORGE THOMAS KEELE,
Late Assistant-Surgeon R.N.

MEDICAL MILITARY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am not in the least surprised to observe an advertisement for assistant-surgeons for that hermaphrodite department, the medical-military one. It is not unlikely the recruiting officers might entrap a few poor devils to serve. Perhaps it may return to times when, to use a nautical expression of old, they would return to sea, and perhaps to the rich reward of the Navy. I am, Sir, with the greatest respect, your obedient servant,

GEORGE THOMAS KEELE,
Late Assistant-Surgeon R.N.