

the proportion of post-mortem examinations to deaths has, during the past four years, risen from 40 to 61 per cent.

A somewhat ingenious plan of a simple and economical ward for epileptic or suicidal patients has been furnished by Mr. C. H. Howell, of Lancaster-place, which provides for the accommodation of forty-eight patients on each floor, six being accommodated in single rooms, and forty-two in a large dormitory. The rooms are so planned that all the beds can be seen from any point, so that it is assumed that one attendant can take charge of all the patients in the large as well as the small rooms. A death by violence is reported as having occurred at the Durham Asylum, in which, although twelve ribs and the sternum were broken, no evidence could be adduced implicating any of the attendants. A blind man was killed at Hanwell from falling down a staircase improperly left unprotected. Two other unexplained cases of broken ribs are also recorded as having occurred at the county and borough asylums. The statistical abstract as to these institutions shows that the total average weekly cost per head was 10s. 3d. in the county and 11s. 11½d. in the borough asylums. When we turn to the notes on hospitals we find that St. Luke's again receives unfavourable comments. The case-books are in arrear, a larger staff of attendants is required, a carriage ought to be kept for the patients, and another resident medical officer ought to be appointed. But "the removal of St. Luke's Hospital into the country has not yet been achieved," and until this radical change is accomplished few other reforms can be anticipated. Three casualties occurred at the Broadmoor Asylum, as to which establishment a special report has been made, which must be noticed specially on a future occasion. The licensed houses, metropolitan and provincial, appear to be more particularly criticised than in former reports, and several cases are cited showing great laxity and neglect on the part of the proprietors. In particulars recorded as to the insane in workhouses, the insufficiency of the dietary is again made the subject of comment, and the commissioners remark that "an opinion that the house diet for the able-bodied paupers of workhouses is sufficient for the insane inmates appears to prevail with many medical officers of these houses."

Five prosecutions were directed by the commissioners during the year on account of the illegal detention, ill-treatment, and neglect of insane persons, and two infringements of the law were discovered which requires medical practitioners to be registered under the Medical Act of 1858 before they are entitled to sign a certificate of insanity under the Lunacy Acts.

NEW SYDENHAM SOCIETY.

THE sixteenth annual meeting of the New Sydenham Society was held at Norwich, on Thursday, the 12th inst., under the presidency of Dr. Waters, of Chester, when Mr. Cæsar H. Hawkins, F.R.S., was elected president, and Mr. Jonathan Hutchinson hon. secretary for the ensuing year. The report and balance-sheet presented by the Council proved that the financial condition of the Society was highly satisfactory, there being over a thousand pounds in hand, besides a very valuable stock of works. The principal works which the Society has now in progress are its "Atlas of Skin Diseases," which it is intended to continue for some years longer; its "Retrospect of Medicine and Surgery," which appears biennially; and a new and revised edition of "Mayne's Lexicon." A fourth volume of Hebra's work on Skin Diseases will probably appear shortly, also a second part of the descriptive catalogue.

THE CORONERS FOR MIDDLESEX.—The Marquis of Salisbury has obtained a return, printed by order of the House of Lords, showing for five years, ended 30th June last, the payments out of the county rates in disbursements of each of the coroners. Dr. Diplock, respectively £1048 16s. 6d., £1118 18s. 8d., £1278, £1424 9s., and £1383 8s. 6d.; Dr. Lankester, £3847 5s. 4d., £4620 6s. 6d., £3894, £4098 4s. 6d., and £4144 8s.; Mr. Humphreys, £2816 14s. 6d., £2932, £2929 5s., £2985 9s. 4d., and £3145 16s. 1d.; Mr. Bedford, £689 16s. 6d., £728 18s., £735 2s., £795 15s. 6d., and £705 1s.; and Mr. Payne, £64 14s. 10d., £97 9s. 8d., £62, £102 6s. 6d., and £93 9s. 6d.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE "PECULIAR PEOPLE."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The recent decision of Baron Pigott in the case of Thomas Hines, one of the "Peculiar People," leads one to inquire to what extent this sect may be allowed to indulge in their refusal to receive medical advice. Some years ago I was called to a poor woman who had been in severe labour for several hours, and was in a state of considerable exhaustion. I found a very contracted, rickety pelvis, and it was evident to myself, and to a gentleman from St. Bartholomew's, who was present, that without craniotomy it would be impossible for the head to pass through it. I therefore sent for the husband and explained the circumstances to him, when, to my surprise, he emphatically forbade me to interfere, and declared that "the Lord would deliver his wife from her trouble, or she would die, according to His will." The neighbours had fetched me, and he did not approve of my presence. His views were those of the "Peculiar People." The pains were forcible, and a ruptured uterus seemed not improbable in case of delay, so, after endeavouring in vain to explain to him, as a mechanic, that it was impossible to pass a solid ball with a diameter of four inches through an aperture of a diameter of two inches without in some manner reducing the size of the former, I told him that as I considered his wife's life in urgent peril, and he was evidently totally devoid of ordinary common sense, I should proceed to act on my own responsibility. The poor woman simply cried to be delivered. I therefore ejected the man from his own room, and performed craniotomy at once, extracting the fœtus with considerable difficulty.

There is little doubt that to this day the husband considers me in the light of a murderer. Had I gone away at his command, and the poor woman had died, as most assuredly she would, how should I have stood before a jury, and would it have been decided in the case of the husband that "he had exercised his judgment, though a perverted one, to the best of his ability, and therefore it did not amount to criminal neglect"?

Cases requiring craniotomy may occur again among the "Peculiar People," and the patient may die undelivered, "by the will of God," no medical attendant having even seen her.

If this be an honest mistake, "the result of ignorance and superstition," and therefore not amenable to punishment, the sooner the Legislature takes steps to alter or amend the law relating to it, the better.

I am, Sir, faithfully yours,

CLEMENT GODSON, M.D.

Upper Brook-street, W., August 20th, 1874.

THE USE OF SARRACENIA PURPUREA IN SMALL-POX.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I hold it to be the duty of a medical man to make known to the profession his experience of any particular remedy when it has seemed to him to have been of any use in the treatment of a particular disorder. If you will allow me the use of your columns as a means of thus communicating to the profession a few remarks on the use of the above-named drug, I shall feel obliged; especially, too, as small-pox is now engaging the attention of the Newmarket medical men, my remarks may not be out of place.

I first tried this drug some eight or ten years ago (having obtained some from Messrs. Savory and Moore) during an epidemic of semi-confluent small-pox amongst the adults and infants of a small village in the country belonging to a Poor-law district I then had, and I found that it relieved to a wonderful extent, in some cases, the general malaise and fever that accompany this complaint. I used first to commence by giving simple aperient medicines for a few days, and on the fifth or sixth day of the eruption this medicine was given by itself every three or four hours, and

the good effects soon became apparent in the altered looks and feelings of the patients, especially relieving his pains and feverishness.

I cannot pretend to give an opinion as to the way in which the drug acts. I should like very much to know its *modus operandi*. I only know that it seemed to me to do the good I have just stated. I tried it again about three years ago on some half dozen cases I had in a London suburb, with the same good results; and I well remember in one case, that of a man about thirty years of age, on discontinuing the drug for two days whilst he had aperients, his beseeching me, almost with tears in his eyes, to give him some more of this medicine, as it relieved him, "more than he could tell, of his headaches and pains that almost drove him mad."

Another remedy I used always to apply to the eruption, especially to the face, was one that I found recommended by Dr. John Hughes Bennett in his admirable work on Clinical Medicine; and I can only say that when it was applied thoroughly and allowed to remain on undisturbed, and renewed occasionally when required, it acted most successfully in allaying irritation, and prevented pitting almost entirely. I have read of many other plans recommended to fulfil these conditions, but have never tried them, so satisfied am I with this mode of treatment. His formula is—Carbonate of zinc, three parts; oxide of zinc, one part: rubbed in a mortar with olive oil to the consistence of thick cream.

One word on vaccination. The second case I had to treat was that of a woman who had been confined only one month. The first thing I did after seeing her was to vaccinate her infant. The arm came to perfection on the eighth day; and on the eleventh day the infant broke out with the small-pox, but in a modified form. This happened in three cases under exactly the same conditions. All the patients got perfectly well; but had the children not been vaccinated they would in all probability have died.

If these few but imperfect remarks lead to the further trial of this drug, and the results, good or bad, be made known, I shall feel that this note has been of some benefit.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Harling, Petersfield, Hants,
August, 1874.

A. L. GRIFFITH, M.D.

THE DISPERSION OF TUMOURS BY PUNCTURE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In Deputy Inspector-General Cameron's most interesting and instructive article "on the dispersion of tumours by puncture," in last week's LANCET, he says (page 268), "I felt certain he had a deep abscess somewhere in his liver, and made two deep unsuccessful explorations for it with an ordinary trocar. Fancying I had not gone deep enough, I took a long rectum trocar, and with that hit the spot, and evacuated about two ounces of thick matter."

Feeling the greatest interest in this subject, I hope the Deputy Surgeon-General will kindly tell us how many inches he passed the first trocar, and how many the second, into the substance of the liver, and oblige

Your obedient servant,

Paris, August 23rd, 1874.

J. MARION SIMS.

SKETCHES OF CONTINENTAL HOSPITALS.

(By our Special Correspondent.)

III.—LEIPSIG.

"A GERMAN Professor has nothing to do but to think" is the pithy and wise dictum of a celebrated Professor of Physiology in one of its chief universities. The advantage of the State endowing professorships, which are of sufficient value to induce men to devote their lives to patient thought and to scientific investigations, rather than to practice, is fully seen in this city. Leipzig, the only university of Saxony, has a whole suburb full of new palatial buildings where science in its various departments is cultivated. The Weissenhaus Strasse contains in succession an Anatomical

Institute presided over by Professor His; a Physiological Laboratory in which Ludwig and his pupils have during the last eight or nine years made some of the greatest advances in that science; the Chemical Laboratory of Professor Kolbe; a large hospital containing from five to six hundred beds, and a Pathological Institution, with a well-filled and valuable museum, in which Professors Wagner and Thierfelder find ample occupation; and in the same building Professor Hoffman also carries on the departments of pathological chemistry and hygiene. These, with a fine handsome building devoted to physical science, and a gynaecological institute and an eye hospital at some little distance, under the care of Professors Crede and Coccus respectively, afford to the student of medicine rare opportunities for both the theoretical and practical study of his profession. Seldom are English students found availing themselves of this school, the larger and more attractive, but not more valuable, universities of Vienna and Berlin being generally patronised by them; but Americans, Russians, and representatives of most of the other European nations are to be found here in considerable numbers.

The hospital is composed of two parts, a two-storeyed building some twenty years old, well adapted for its purpose, and fourteen new barracks erected within the last three years in a style and with conveniences that would have delighted the heart of Sir James Simpson. Seven of the barracks are devoted to medicine, and seven to surgery. One corridor connects the various surgical, and another most of the medical, wards, and each pavilion has twenty-four beds. There is, however, one large detached medical ward, capable of containing forty beds, in which fevers, small-pox, &c., are treated. Separate blocks opening on to the main corridor are provided for the purpose of a bath-house and for the operating theatre, which is commodious and well lighted, and has two rooms adjoining for Professor Thiersch and his principal assistant. A description of the mode of construction of these barracks will be given in the article on Dresden, as the same system prevails there.

The drainage of Leipzig is detestable, but the authorities who govern the hospital have provided an admirable system of drainage, and of inodorous water-closets, which might, with great advantage, be adopted in all the German hospitals, and thereby one of the greatest blots in their construction and management might be removed. A brick structure standing in the hospital garden contains the various apparatus necessary for the mixing of the disinfecting material which is supplied to the wards, and for the subsequent filtration and deposit of the excreta, which are daily removed from them. The material consists of 100 parts of lime well mixed with 240 of water, to which are added 27 parts of chloride of magnesium, first dissolved in 500 parts of water, and, lastly, 12 parts of coal tar. When the ingredients are thoroughly combined, it is the duty of one man to fill a zinc reservoir in each water-closet with a quantity equivalent to 1 lb. weight for each patient in the ward, and also to remove daily the galvanised iron reservoir of each closet, and to convey its contents to the depositing tanks. In this way all disagreeable odours both in the wards and closets adjacent are avoided, and little if any smell is noticeable even in the disinfecting room. The effluent water, which is certainly free from putridity, passes into the main drain. The cost of this system was £112 last year, including material and labour, a cost which, considering the perfectness of the result and the simplicity of the system, is really very insignificant. The only drawback to this plan of drainage is, that the solid deposit is not found to be of much value as an artificial manure. Probably this system might be useful in some of our provincial hospitals, where there is no adequate means for the removal and disinfection of the sewage arising from them.

Prof. Wunderlich lectures on Clinical Medicine in a theatre in the older part of the hospital. It is a long, low room, badly ventilated, with double windows, and ill adapted for hearing. His researches on Therapeutics in Disease are still continued. He has about 300 beds.

Prof. Thiersch has an equal number of surgical patients, and his clinical lectures are given daily in the operating theatre, a student being called down by the assistant to examine each case as it presents itself. The treatment of wounds by salicylic acid is at present engaging much of Prof. Thiersch's attention. It may be used according to Lister's plan, in place of carbolic acid, than which it is much