

one else either with or without profit to himself will be under the obligation of asking to see a licence before he parts with his purchase and of recording the transaction in a book. It is not easy, however, to see how this duty can be enforced upon him. Nor is it easy to see why any disreputable character who has taken out a licence should not privately distribute pistols to as many of his friends and acquaintances as he chooses at a small advance upon the present low prices and make a fair profit on the transactions. His risk of detection is not likely to be great. In order to protect the community effectively against the appreciable and apparently increasing danger of the cheap pistol, such a tax should be imposed upon weapons of this class and such restrictions placed upon their ownership as would stamp out the trade altogether, and not merely injure it to a limited extent, as the present Bill would do. The tax could be remitted or returned in the case of persons requiring revolvers for the purposes of military and police service or for use abroad. The householder, should he desire to defend himself against burglars with a weapon so dangerous and uncertain in unskilled hands, should be made to pay for the privilege of doing so. If he is a man of substance the initial cost of his weapon will be a matter of small moment to him, and he will require no annual licence in order to keep it at home for defensive purposes. No honest British citizen has the smallest need to carry a pistol about with him, and it is desirable that persons of a different class should, as far as possible, be prevented from doing so. This, however, will scarcely be effected by adding to the purchase of the weapons in question conditions easy to comply with and not difficult to evade.

AN OLD CASE OF CONGENITAL HYPERTROPHY OF THE PYLORUS.

THE old adage, "There is nothing new under the sun," is often illustrated in medicine. Congenital hypertrophy of the pylorus has but recently attracted attention and only about 50 cases have been recorded. But in one of his scholarly and philosophical addresses on the Educational Value of the Medical Society, which he gave at the centennial celebration of the New Haven Medical Association and which is published in the *Boston Medical and Surgical Journal* of March 12th, Professor William Osler quoted a very ancient case which he had disinterred from the transactions of the society for 1788. Dr. Hezekiah Beardsley there reported a case of Scirrhus of the Pylorus in an Infant. Every feature of the disease as now known is noted—the constant vomiting, the leanness, and the wizened old look of the child. The diagnosis was made four months before death. The necropsy showed a dilated and hypertrophied stomach. "The pylorus was invested with a hard compact substance or schirrosity which so completely obstructed the passage into the duodenum as to admit with the greatest difficulty the finest fluid." Professor Osler points the moral that if other men had been as accurate and as careful as Dr. Beardsley and if other societies had followed the example of the New Haven Society not only would this rare disease have been long ago recognised but many other diseases would have yielded their secrets. But there is no more difficult art than the art of observation, and for some it is quite as difficult to record an observation plainly and briefly.

OVERCROWDING ON THE UNDERGROUND EAST-END TRAINS.

SOME few years ago the inhabitants of East Ham were wont to inform their friends that the village was situated in Essex and if fond of alliteration might have added England to the address. Now all is changed; the population has increased by leaps and bounds; rows and rows

of houses at very moderate rentals have sprung up almost with the rapidity of Aladdin's palace. The railway service, however, between this place and the City when the people are returning from, or going to, business is a standing disgrace to any civilised community. In the journey from Charing Cross to East Ham in a first- or second-class carriage by the new connexion of the underground with the London, Tilbury, and Southend Railway it is a common experience to find about 18 or more persons who, besides enduring great discomfort, run perilously near to being suffocated. The railway company makes little use, if any, of disinfectants for these dirty and loathsome boxes, for the dignified name of carriage is not applicable to them. In the face of all this the placards at the stations ironically inform the passengers of the "advantages of travel," while there are warnings posted for the benefit of those who disregard the laws of the company, statements such as "£10 fine and costs," "three months' hard," and "six strokes of the birch-rod" being displayed in large type in the account of some cases of conviction. Close contact, which must necessarily be the case, with those who have been engaged in honourable but dirty occupations is very annoying to clerical and professional men who are of all others compelled to keep their clothing neat and clean. Surely the Board of Trade should inquire into this serious condition of East-end railway traffic.

THE DISTRIBUTION OF PLAGUE.

As regards Hong-Kong a telegram from the Governor received at the Colonial Office on March 31st states that for the week ending March 28th there were 28 cases of bubonic plague and 24 deaths from the disease. For the week ending April 4th there were 66 cases of plague and 59 deaths, 1 being that of a European.

Looking Back.

FROM
THE LANCET, SATURDAY, APRIL 9, 1825.

SURGICAL LECTURES,¹

DELIVERED BY
MR. ABERNETHY.

Theatre, St. Bartholomew's Hospital.

LECTURE 26.

Gunshot Wounds.

Now I have been in the habit of mentioning a case here to show the inutility of searching for bullets, and also to show that they may be embedded in parts without much injury to the general health; I adopt this mode of impressing the case upon your memories; but if persons should be present who are taking down what I say, I do not know whether it is best to say anything about it or not. As there is no law or equity to be had in the country to prevent such practices, we can't help ourselves (a long laugh); and as it is probable that the Editors of THE LANCET have already possessed themselves of a copy of my lectures, I may, perhaps, as well mention the case now, as I consider that it shows the impossibility of always extracting balls, even if we were to try. Sir Ralph Abercrombie received a musket shot on the upper part of the thigh bone; the ball penetrated through the muscles, fascia, and so on, and lodged in the upper part of the trochanter major; the surgeons were very anxious to extract the ball, and made many attempts to do so, enlarged the wound and probed and searched for the ball; however, they did not extract it, and the General, on his passage home, died. The

¹ Only portions of the lectures have been transcribed.

surgeon of the ship, after he was dead, examined the wound, and found the ball sticking so firmly in the trochanter major, that he was absolutely obliged to remove a portion of the bone with a trephine before he could get it out. I do not mean to impute the death of this person to the attempts made to extract the ball, but I mean to say this, that the enlargement of the wound, and searching for the bullet, and so on, in an old man and in a bad climate too, were things not devoid of danger.

LECTURE 28.

Whitlow, or Paronychia.

There are sores which form about the *fingers and toes* which have a very curious character. There is a thickening of the parts around the ulcer, the ulcer eats under the nail, and the whole of the nail is detached. I have attempted to describe them by saying that there is a thickening of the parts around, with a glossy surface, attended with a lancinating pain, and the discharge of a sanies or ichor; the pain is so bad as to prevent the patient from sleeping at night. When I was quite young, Sir CHARLES BLICKE, with whom I served my apprenticeship, used to pride himself very much on his curing these sores; and he used to do this by the use of Plunket's caustic a quack preparation containing the white oxide of arsenic and flour of sulphur, with a handful of ranunculus, dog fennel, and so on; and I used to be sent to gather these "yarbs," to dry them in the sun, and powder them. (A laugh.) But he used to put it on the ulcers, mixed with basilicon, as a thick dressing, as Plunket applied it to cancers. In about three days it occasioned a slough, a new surface was produced, and very often the ulcer healed, but the process was very severe and painful.

FOREIGN DEPARTMENT.

ANALYSIS OF FOREIGN MEDICAL JOURNALS.

ANNALI UNIVERS. DI MEDICINA, DA OMODEI OCT. NOV. DEC. 1824.

A new mode of Cure for the Toothache.

Signor Fattori has been ingenious enough to propose, as a remedy for odontalgia, the division of the nerve supplying the diseased tooth, and to effect this he has invented a neat little instrument, a sort of trepan, to which *borers* of different sizes are attached, by which he perforates different parts of the painful tooth, and cuts through the nerve. The tooth is, by this operation, for ever after rendered insensible.

MEDICINE AND THE LAW.

Insanity and Criminal Responsibility.

A CONSIDERABLE amount of comment appears to have been aroused by the result of a trial for murder in the State of New York, U.S.A., owing to the course taken by the learned judge and the reasons given for it by him. The case was one in which there was evidence that the accused was, in the words of the judge, "mentally unbalanced and that he had delusions"; but, on the other hand, it was not shown that he could not have distinguished between right and wrong. In these circumstances Mr. Justice Herrick advised the defending counsel to tender a plea of guilty of murder in the second degree and recommended the prosecuting counsel to be satisfied with it. This plea, which is of course not known to the English criminal law, enabled the judge to pass a sentence of imprisonment, instead of one of death, which he accordingly did. It is not surprising that such a conclusion to a trial for murder should excite unfavourable criticism. Looked at from a British point of view, and, we think, in the light of common sense, it is not desirable that a man should be charged with a terrible crime and allowed to confess a lesser one in order to evade the difficulty which arises where inconclusive evidence of mental derangement is given. Nor is it desirable that a person of unsound mind should be sent to prison as sane. Where a jury of laymen has to arrive at a definite finding upon a matter as to which experts may legitimately differ there must, we fear, always be difficulty, while in directing juries as to the law and as to the conclusions to be drawn

from the evidence before them some judges appear to feel more acutely than others the great responsibility resting upon them where the life of the prisoner depends upon the verdict to be returned. The practice, however, adopted in England is, on the whole, a just and a merciful one. The Treasury officials who are responsible for the prosecution in any case where there is ground for believing that the defence of insanity will be raised instruct physicians of high standing and of special knowledge in lunacy to examine the prisoner and to report upon his condition. These experts are present at the trial, to be called either by the prosecution or the defence, both sides being aware before the trial of the views which they have expressed. The evidence of medical men of high standing, occupying an almost judicial position in the determination of such an issue, or at least a position of absolute impartiality, naturally has considerable weight, and rightly so, in guiding both judge and jury. Two criminal trials which a few years ago attracted attention illustrate this. In the one case Amelia Dyer, the baby farmer, was convicted and hanged in spite of evidence which included the fact that she had at one time been a certified lunatic; and in the other Richard Arthur Prince, who stabbed Mr. Terriss, the popular actor, was found to be guilty but insane, although before his terrible act no one had thought him much more than a starving and disappointed man. In both cases, it will be found, witnesses who at the instance of the Treasury examined the prisoner were called, in the case of Dyer for the prosecution and in the case of Prince by the defence, and in both cases the summing-up and verdict indorsed their opinions. In either case a verdict not justified by the facts of the case—such as, for example, one of manslaughter—would have been regarded as inconsistent with the law and therefore undesirable, just as the plea of guilty of murder in the second degree accepted by Mr. Justice Herrick has been regarded in the American state in which the incident took place. The *Medico-Legal Journal of New York* has commented on the subject of "medical and legal insanity" at some length with reference to this trial and the learned judge has in its columns made an interesting statement of the reasons which influenced him in taking the course that has been criticised.

THE PREVENTION OF CONSUMPTION AND OTHER FORMS OF TUBERCULOSIS.

ANNUAL MEETING OF THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION.

THE fourth annual general meeting of the National Association for the Prevention of Consumption and Other Forms of Tuberculosis was held on March 17th, the Earl of DERBY being in the chair. In moving the adoption of the report Lord DERBY referred to the interest which foreign nations were now taking in the subject, as shown by the holding of the International Conference on Tuberculosis which met in Berlin last October¹ for the purpose of forming an international bureau for the prevention of consumption. The constitution of this bureau provided that delegates should be elected by the national associations of different countries as representatives on its inner council, the British representatives being Sir James Blyth, Bart., Mr. Malcolm A. Morris, Mr. Charles Rube, Dr. Nathan Raw, and Dr. Alfred P. Hillier. Dr. Raw and Dr. Hillier proceeded to Berlin and represented the association at the conference. Dr. C. Theodore Williams also attended the conference at the desire of King Edward. The council had voted £100 to the international fund for the maintenance of the bureau. The report went on to state that according to recently published statistics the tuberculosis death-rate in Prussia had dropped from 31 per 10,000 in 1886 to 21 per 10,000 in 1900. During that same period the English tuberculosis death-rate had fallen only from 24 to 19 per 10,000. In the opinion of the council of the association the causes of the fall in the Prussian tuberculosis death-rate were (1) the wide-spread knowledge as to the infectious character of tuberculosis, which has led to precautions being taken amongst the working classes; (2) the provision of a large number of sanatoriums for the working classes; and (3) the early and systematic resort to sanatoriums which the Workmen's State Insurance Department in Germany

¹ THE LANCET, Nov. 1st (p. 1216) and 8th (p. 1276), 1902.