

scope of the work which it is proposed to do. They will, in particular, require to be informed: (i.) what precautions the Local Education Authority will take to secure that only those children shall be treated in a School Clinic for whose treatment adequate provision cannot otherwise be made, whether by the parents or by voluntary associations or institutions, such as hospitals, or through the agency of the Poor Law; (ii.) what precise diseases and defects will be treated; (iii.) by whom and on what terms and conditions the treatment will be carried out and what will be its extent; (iv.) what is the estimated cost of the clinic in respect of buildings and equipment, maintenance and administration, and treatment, and how it is proposed to meet this cost, out of the rates or otherwise."

## Looking Back.

FROM

THE LANCET, SATURDAY, Sept. 18th, 1830.

SEDATIVE QUALITIES OF THE WEB OF THE BLACK SPIDER.—The web of the black spider has received commendation from many respectable sources, as a sedative agent, capable of calming with peculiar ease and certainty, morbid excitability of the cerebral and nervous systems. On the credit of those qualities it has been employed in the various forms of temulence (exhaustion from intoxication), and not without a share of reputed success, sufficient to entitle it to consideration in that state of constitutional irritation. In the summer of 1827 we tried this article in many cases, and in full doses. To test its qualities, it was given, where the state of the patient admitted, uncombined with opiates. When thus used, its effects were generally partial or doubtful, and its powers inadequate to the production of tranquillity or sleep. In one case only have I found this substance to exert great or decided sedative attributes. This was the case of an intelligent young man, (in private practice,) who, after consuming, by his own report, three quarts of brandy, in thirty-six hours, fell into a state of temulent excitation so excessive, that he was incapable of keeping a recumbent, or even a sitting posture, for more than a moment, but paced his chamber with a ceaseless step for two days and nights. He was not delirious, on the contrary his conversation was rational, though hurried and vehement. But he was so far under the influence of spectral hallucination, that if he closed his eyes for a moment, day or night, he was instantly visited by a host of phantoms of frightful aspect; hence chiefly his aversion to lie down, or make any voluntary effort to sleep. This patient took opium, opium with camphor, and black drop at short intervals, and in full doses, until the quantum of opiate approached the utmost limit of probable safe administration, without even partial relief of constitutional irritation, or any apparent proneness to sleep. The temulent excitement kept unabated for twenty-four hours, the second night passed in constant vigilance, locomotion, and mental excitement; and it seemed probable that excitation so intense, protracted, and unremitting, must soon lapse into delirium or convulsions. At this time, the morning of the third day, (the second of my attendance,) he began the use of the fresh web in pills of five grains every hour. Its effect was prompt and unequivocal. He calmed, even sensibly to himself, with every dose, and watched with desire for the time of repeating the pills. The first effect of the web was to abate his restless movements about the room, he became disposed to sit down, and kept his chair, with short intervals of walking, for some hours. In the evening he consented to go to bed, got up once or twice, but returned to bed without difficulty, took an opiate at night, the first for eighteen hours, and slept continuously for eight hours. The cure was completed without difficulty, by repeating the web less frequently next day, with quiet, suitable nourishment, and another opiate at night. The patient spoke emphatically, both the first and second days, of the soothing influence produced by the pills.<sup>1</sup> He was not at the time informed of their composition.—*Dr. Wright, Amer. Journ.*

<sup>1</sup> An article on Spider Pills was published in THE LANCET of June 25th, 1904, p. 1815.

## Public Health.

REPORTS OF MEDICAL OFFICERS OF HEALTH.

*County Borough of Swansea.*—Mr. Ebenezer Davies, the medical officer of health of Swansea, must be almost if not quite the father of the public health service, and in his current annual report he furnishes a "retrospect" of sanitary work in Swansea which carries us back far into the last century, to what is in effect, from the standpoint of time, the dawn of sanitation in this country. According to a report made in 1849 to the then General Board of Health by Mr. G. T. Clark, the superintending inspector, the deaths from consumption in the Swansea district, which included the Gower Peninsula, amounted to 1 in 4·8 of the total deaths; from "typhus," which probably included enteric fever and continued fever, 1 in 11; from "epidemics, including typhus," 1 in 3·5. The report referred to stated that "nothing deserving the name of a system of drainage can be said to exist," and the bulk of the population were dependent upon pumps and open watercourses for their water-supply. But at that time there was this redeeming feature that "single-family occupancy of houses was the rule," and Mr. Davies wishes that the same observation could be made now. Gradually a sort of public health conscience evolved and the desirability of carrying out the provision of the Public Health Act, 1848, was recognised. In September, 1853, Mr. M. H. Michael, an active member of the council, was appointed medical officer of health for 12 months at a salary of £150. Mr. Michael did some hard hitting and later the cholera arrived to emphasise his arguments. But the expense of carrying out Mr. Michael's recommendations was very great, violent opposition was encountered, and before the end of the year it was resolved that the appointment should not be renewed. Attempts to make another appointment were made but unsuccessfully, and it was not until 1865, when the historical outbreak of yellow fever occurred at Swansea, that, after a report by Dr. (afterwards Sir George) Buchanan, Mr. Davies was appointed medical officer of health in October, 1865, at £100 per annum. This appointment was therefore made before the Sanitary Act of 1866 rendered certain public health measures compulsory on sanitary authorities. It is of interest, having regard to the remarkable discoveries which have since been made, to recall the Swansea outbreak of yellow fever, since it is, we believe, the only occasion in which this disease has actually spread in England. The *Hecla*, the barque which was instrumental in introducing the disease, arrived off Swansea on Sept. 8th, 1865, there having been cases of illness on board the precise nature of which was not disclosed. Between Sept. 15th and Oct. 13th there were 22 cases, which were in all probability yellow fever, and seven others in which a strong suspicion of yellow fever attached to the illness. Of the 22 cases no fewer than 15 died. Of the 22 cases, 21 occurred in persons living or working in proximity to the infected ship or of that portion of the cargo which had been discharged, and there was no sufficient evidence to attribute the cases to personal infection. As Mr. Davies observes "persons lay sick of yellow fever in various parts of the town and no extension occurred from any of their centres, at least 12 in number." In the light of our present knowledge it would appear, therefore, that both the ship and the cargo retained living and infected *stegomyia fasciata* and that these insects did not wander far from ship or cargo, a view which receives support from recent researches as to the habits of *stegomyia fasciata*. In concluding his interesting retrospect in his fortieth annual report Mr. Davies compares the figures for the ten years 1866-75 with the ten years 1898-1907. In this interval the general death-rate was reduced from 23·6 to 17·7, the zymotic death-rate from 4·49 to 2·06, the "fever" death-rate from 0·75 to 0·09, and the phthisis death-rate from 2·18 to 1·45 per 1000 in each instance.

*City of Newcastle.*—Dr. Henry E. Armstrong's report contains a reference to nine cows which were found clinically affected with tuberculosis, four of them suffering from tuberculosis of the udder. Whilst these cows were in the cowsheds they were being milked twice daily and they were consequently "pouring tubercle bacilli into the milk pail." It would be interesting if Dr. Armstrong could watch the