

**CORRESPONDENTS** are particularly requested by the Editor to observe that communications relating to advertisements, changes of address, and other business matters, should be addressed to the Manager, at the Journal Office, 161A, Strand, London, and not to the Editor.

#### CARRIER PIGEONS.

**SIR**.—Having used carrier pigeons for many years in country practice, and being now overstocked, if there are any of my medical brethren who would like to keep birds of this description for the purpose of medical work, I shall be happy to give away some very good young birds, if they will communicate with me, and state how they are to be sent. They are all from the eggs of hardy, long-distance parents; and, with teaching and keeping, I am persuaded that many practitioners in country parts would be pleased with the experiment, if they would exercise a little patience at first.—Your obedient servant,

GEORGE H. R. DABBS, M.D.

Highfields, Shanklin, Isle of Wight, June 20th, 1882.

**VARIOLA**.—Dr. Tinsley, an English practitioner in Cuba, alleges that vaccine virus, after passing through a negro's system, is valueless for the white race.

#### ABUSE OF HOSPITALS.

**SIR**.—The great yearly contribution to hospitals has now been made. It is, therefore, just and proper, alike to donors and recipients of charity, that a slight protest should be raised against any indiscriminate use of the large sums of money collected.

For some years, it has been obvious to those familiar with hospital management that many thousands of fairly well-to-do people regularly avail themselves of the benefits of these institutions; thereby supplanting the necessitous poor, for whom the hospitals were originally intended. In the appeal made to the public on June 7th by the Lord Mayor, his lordship estimated that half the population of London would, if sick or injured, have a claim on charity. This may or may not be correct; it can, however, scarcely be reconciled with his lordship's designation of London as a "rich and vast metropolis".

It is impossible to deny that nearly all medical charities are grossly abused by persons well able to pay a small fee to the general practitioners, without ever availing themselves of charity. I regret to say that this is entirely overlooked by the heads of our profession, who do not scruple to treat those who are virtually other men's patients.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

EQUITY.

Formerly attached to four charitable institutions.

**DR. CAMPBELL**.—You will find a curious account of the treatment of a parturient female two hundred years ago, in the *BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL* of December 17th, 1864, p. 682.

#### HOME FOR DELICATE CHILDREN.

**SIR**.—In the interests of delicate children whose parents are not able to take them from London, may I point out the advantages of the St. Christopher's Home at Haywards Heath? Miss Jamieson, who was attached to the staff at our hospital in Great Ormond Street, may be trusted to take every care of children sent there; and it seems to me that the home only requires to be known to make itself appreciated.—Yours faithfully,

ROBERT LEE.

6, Savile Row, June 9th, 1882.

A MEMBER OF THE SOUTH MIDLAND BRANCH is thanked for his communication, which has been forwarded to the manager.

#### THE TITLE OF DOCTOR.

**SIR**.—In the discussion that often arises in medical journals respecting the degree of M.D., and also the assumption by non-graduates of the title of Doctor, the fact seems to be lost sight of, on the part of those who desire to be so styled without graduation, that the value of the same is simply that all medical practitioners are not M.D. If it were granted that any and every examination, from the L.F.P.&S. Glasgow, upwards, entitled the practitioner to the style of M.D. or Doctor, the sole worth would at once be destroyed. Surgeons, etc., would be in no way benefited, while those who have had to work at their hospitals or elsewhere considerably longer would be losers.—I am, sir, your obedient servant,

A COUNTRY PRACTITIONER.

#### CORONERS AND MEDICAL WITNESSES.

**SIR**.—I think I can give your correspondent "J. W." some idea of the vagaries of coroners in their dealings with medical witnesses. During three and a half years, I held the position of house-surgeon to a provincial hospital in a large town in the north of England, and, during the whole of that period, I was never once called to give evidence before a coroner, although numerous cases of accident that were either brought in dead, or else died in the hospital, occurred. The practice of the coroner (a medical man) in these cases was to call the nurse of the ward in which the patient died, or, if dead before admission, to give the jury the benefit of his medical knowledge, and call no surgeon. One case made a deep impression on me at the time, and was a fair sample of the manner in which the "Crown's Quest" was often conducted. A young man, apparently in good health, on his way to the hospital one morning (where he was engaged at work), suddenly fell down insensible, and was at once conveyed to the hospital, when it was found that life was extinct. The coroner held an inquest in due course, and called no medical evidence, but told the jury that "he had often seen similar cases, and he had no doubt that death was due to apoplexy." Verdict accordingly. In another case, that of a man who had been brought to the hospital insensible, at a time when the whole staff happened to be present, and who died shortly afterwards, without the surgeons having arrived at a definite diagnosis, the jury returned a verdict of death from sunstroke, without calling any medical evidence! This state of things will, I think, show "J. W." to what lengths coroners will go in order to save expense; *à propos* of which, will you allow me to correct a statement of yours on "J. W.'s" letter, in which you say, "You do not understand the motive for not doing so (refusing to call medical evidence), as no fee is payable." It is perfectly correct that no fee is paid to a house-surgeon when he gives evidence at an inquest touching the death of a person dying in the hospital, but the usual fee of a guinea is allowed when the death took place before admission.—I am, sir, yours truly,

F. REKAB.

**P.B.**—The late Dr. Billing prescribed half-drachm doses of bismuth to allay irritable stomach; and even two scruples. See also Pereira's *Materia Medica*.

#### CHEAP EDITIONS OF MEDICAL WORKS.

**SIR**.—In your extremely interesting remarks on cheap publishing, you say, referring to one of the American editions of the *Index of Surgery*, that, "of course, all that is looked for in this competition of rival American publishers is, a shade of profit to the trader, the author being left out of the question." In the case in question, not even a shade of profit appears to be looked for by the firm who sell the *Index of Surgery* at half-a-dollar. Their advertisement amusingly says: "It is hardly necessary to say that the price at which this book is now sold, namely, fifty cents, is fixed, for certain reasons, without any regard to cost." These "certain reasons" are explained in the following extract from the American *Annals of Anatomy and Surgery*. "The good old days—when a mutual understanding among our enterprising literary buccaneers caused them all to work in harmony, and mutually to let alone whatever prize had been marked out for his own by another—seem to have passed away, and the spectacle is now presented of these adventurous spirits quarrelling among themselves over their prey, and striving to cut each other's literary throats."

Your reflection that cheapening medical books might pay by extending the circle of buyers, has suggested to me an idea, concerning which I should like to hear the opinions of other members of our Association. A society should be organised for the purpose of inducing publishers and living English authors to follow the example of Sir Henry Thompson. This would not be a publishing society, like the Sydenham, but an association ready to bargain, on behalf of its members, with living English authors and publishers. The particular books suitable for such negotiations could be selected by the votes of the subscribers. Such a society might at once become a means of encouraging English authors, and of supplying medical men (of whom the vast majority are out of the reach of good medical libraries) with a collection of the newest and most practical works.—I remain, sir, yours obediently,

C. B. KEETLEY.

A FELLOW.—Unfortunately, it is your own fault. There will not be another meeting of the Council until after the annual election; you can take part in the festival afterwards.

#### COMMUNICATIONS, LETTERS, etc., have been received from:—

Mr. J. D. Williams, Portsmouth; Our Glasgow Correspondent; Mr. C. A. Hankey, London; Mr. E. W. Hope, Liverpool; Dr. J. Braxton Hicks, London; Dr. T. S. Reed, Pool, Cornwall; Mr. E. Prideaux, Wellington; Our Dublin Correspondent; Mr. Alfred Teevan, London; Mr. T. H. Elliott, London; Mr. T. M. Stone, London; Dr. A. H. Hassall, London; Dr. A. W. Edis, London; Mr. W. W. Morris, East Bridgeford; Dr. Thomas Alexander, London; Mr. G. F. Craoke, Leeds; Dr. Addison, London; Mr. J. S. Wood, London; Mr. J. Answorth, London; Mr. T. M. Dolan, Halifax; Messrs. Chas. Griffin and Co., London; Mr. Robert Barker, Hatcham; Mr. Charles Palmer, Great Yarmouth; Mr. Shirley T. Murphy, London; Dr. A. Paterson, Bridge of Allan; Mr. T. J. Webster, Merthyr Tydfil; Dr. Geo. Thomson, Oldham; Dr. R. Liveing, London; Dr. C. Swaby Smith, Seaford; Dr. Holman, Reigate; Dr. Alfred Hall, West Brighton; Mr. Jas. Greenwood, London; Dr. J. G. Swayne, Clifton; Dr. Bampton, Plymouth; Dr. Wm. A. Guy, London; Mr. Watson Cheyne, London; Dr. Mahomed, London; Dr. John Cavafy, London; Dr. J. S. Scriven, Duffield, Derby; Mr. Lawson Tait, Birmingham; Dr. J. F. Goodhart, London; Mr. Vincent Jackson, Wolverhampton; Dr. Herman, London; Dr. Herbert Davies, London; Dr. J. A. Irwin, Liverpool; Dr. Lionel A. Weatherley, Portishead; Mr. J. L. Milton, London; Mr. T. L. Walford, Reading; Dr. George H. R. Dabbs, Shanklin; Dr. J. W. Moore, Dublin; Mr. F. J. Lloyd, London; Dr. Chas. E. Beevor, Vienna; Mr. Geo. Brown, London; Mr. Burrows, Witheridge; Mr. A. Allbutt, Leeds; Dr. Thin, London; Dr. Morley Rooke, Cheltenham; Dr. T. G. Ainsley, Hartlepool; Mr. John Fisher, Devonport; Dr. R. Bruce, Edinburgh; Dr. H. J. Benham, Ipswich; Mr. J. W. Olpherts, Lurgan; etc.

#### BOOKS, ETC., RECEIVED.

Spasmodic Asthma: a Thesis for the M.B. Degree of the University of Cambridge By W. E. Stevenson, M.B., M.R.C.S. London: G. Bell and Sons. 1882.  
A Handbook on Diseases of the Skin; with especial reference to Diagnosis and Treatment. By Robert Liveing, A.M., M.D., F.R.C.P. Third edition, revised. London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1882.  
Manual of Diseases of the Skin, with an Analysis of Eight Thousand Consecutive Cases, and a Formulary. By L. Duncan Bulkley, A.M., M.D. London: J. and A. Churchill. 1882.

#### SCALE OF CHARGES FOR ADVERTISEMENTS IN THE "BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL".

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