

ACUTE CONGESTION OF THE LUNGS (?).

To the Editors of THE LANCET

SIRS,—Dr. Squire, in his interesting and instructive paper on "Some Clinical Remarks on Pneumonia," published in THE LANCET of April 4th, says, "It is an interesting point whether there are cases which justify a diagnosis of acute congestion of the lung." A case which has quite recently come under my notice seems explicable only on the assumption that such a pathological condition as active pulmonary congestion does exist. A girl aged eighteen years, who had been suffering from obscure pains in the limbs for some days previously, was suddenly attacked with dyspnoea, shivering, and cough. When seen there was loss of resonance over the lower third of the right lung, and over this same area crepitations, fine consonating râles, and tubular breathing were well marked. Vocal fremitus was not increased, nor could bronchophony be heard. The temperature was 101.9° F. Respirations were increased in frequency and the cough was very troublesome. Next day the patient expressed herself as feeling much better. The area of dulness was diminished, and by the end of forty-eight hours the right lung was quite resonant and the breath sounds had assumed the normal vesicular tone. The cough still continued and the expectoration was profuse. The morning and evening temperatures were normal, and the patient has made an uninterrupted recovery.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. H. MARSH,

April 7th, 1896. Senior House Surgeon, The Infirmary, Macclesfield.

"THE QUESTION OF MEDICAL DEFENCE."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Now that there seems to be a general desire that we may make the Medical Defence Union a strong corporation to defend the individual rights of its members, I think many medical men would join if an undertaking was given that they would not interfere in disputes affecting personal matters between medical men. I know of a case where one medical man, a member of the Union, slandered a medical man who was not a member simply because he started a practice for himself without purchasing it, and on the writ being served it was immediately taken up by the Union. Is this fair play?

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

March 24th, 1896.

PERPLEXED.

DEATH CERTIFICATES FOR TONTINES.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—A man whose child dies comes to Dr. A— for a certificate of death, which is given on the usual form for the registrar. The father being in a tontine society is entitled to £1 on the death of his child, and he therefore asks for other certificates so as to obtain this money. Dr. A— writes out (on note-paper) a certificate as required. The registrar on being informed of this states that the payment of the money on such a certificate is illegal. Would you kindly inform me whether this is correct?

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

April 7th, 1896.

A. M.

* * Section 14, Sub-section 2, Friendly Societies Act, 1875, says: "No registered society shall pay any money on the death of a person of any age without the production of a certificate of the death issued by the registrar or other person who has the care of the register book in which the death is registered." It will therefore be seen that the registrar is legally right, but we do not admire the by-law that places the medical man in this position.—ED. L.

THE LANCASHIRE ASYLUMS BOARD'S PENSION SCHEME.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Few will be found to congratulate the Lancashire Asylums Board on their recently formulated pension scheme. It is to be hoped that the scheme is but a tentative one, as in its present form it is in most respects extremely imperfect. Possibilities there are, truly, but certainties none.

The earnest, faithful asylum official has been led to expect, after a period of from twenty to thirty years of difficult, often dangerous, and comparatively ill-paid service, a definite pension according to his service and record. It is well known that the promise of this pension was taken into account when the various salaries and values of the emoluments were fixed. Now, forsooth, he may obtain, irrespectively of his record of good and long service, between fifty-five and sixty years of age, a pension of at least one-third of his actual salary or at most of two-thirds of his salary and emoluments, but the actual amount of which depends upon the caprice or temper of the awarding body which may then be in office. Several instances have lately occurred where the amount of an attendant's pension proposed by the committee of visitors of the asylum to which he belonged has been cut down to one-half by the Asylums Board at the general meeting by a majority of members who, knowing nothing of the merits of the case, yet so voted either out of jealousy, a feeling of economy, or a rooted aversion to any pension scheme whatsoever. Even apart from these wide limits the scheme is too elastic, every provision being so arranged as to be possibly set aside or to be modified indefinitely. The minimum age at which a pension may be ordinarily granted is fixed by the Lunacy Act of 1890 at fifty years, yet this is over-ridden and other five years added in this scheme, making the minimum age fifty-five years. The age for compulsory retirement proposed in this scheme is sixty years. Few attendants on the insane are fit for active duty after fifty-five years, as long service in an asylum has without doubt a markedly deteriorating effect both mentally and physically.

One could name several counties, some of far less extent and importance than Lancashire, where definite and equitable pension schemes have been adopted and which have given general satisfaction. I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

April 4th, 1896.

LANCASTRIAN.

A MEDICAL OFFICER OF HEALTH AND THE LONDON COUNTY COUNCIL.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I should be obliged if you would give me an opinion on the following case. The solicitors of the London County Council have entered into correspondence with me and have got me to call and see them in their office at Spring-gardens. The letters and interview relate to a scheme of the Council relative to an insanitary area (Falcon-court, Borough, Southwark) under Part II. of the Housing of the Working Classes Act, 1890, a portion of the expenses in the carrying out of which the vestry of St. George's, Southwark, have agreed to pay. I am asked by the Council to (a) draw up death-rates, births, &c., for the past four years and make up a full report of evidence; and (b) to give evidence before a public inquiry, which is shortly to be made by the Local Government Board to support Dr. Hamer's evidence. The area in question is in St. George's, Southwark, for which I am "wholetime (?) " medical officer of health, and I have received the consent of my authority to give the evidence. I wish to know whether I would be justified in charging the London County Council a fee for the evidence and for the report of evidence, &c., drawn up in the evenings after office hours, or must I give my services gratuitously? Nothing so far has been said about any payment by solicitors or self. Some time ago I was similarly interviewed by the London County Council solicitors and asked to give evidence on (a) Water Bills of the London County Council, and (b) the amount of water necessary to flush w.c.'s. The first thing I did on calling upon the London County Council solicitors was to ask them on what terms I was to give evidence. They said *gratuitously*, and I accordingly refused the honour.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

March 28th, 1896.

M.O.H.

* * * Our correspondent does not tell us whether in connexion with (a) the Water Bills of the London County Council and (b) the amount of water necessary to flush w.c.'s, he was asked by the Council or his own vestry to give evidence, but if the former this is the first instance of which we have heard in which the Council has refused to pay its medical witnesses. In reference to his question as to whether he would be justified in charging a fee for evidence, &c., in connexion with the