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MEDICAL SCIENCE, NEWS, AND POLITICS

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## TO CORRESPONDENTS.

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The principle of conjoint examinations has received additional sanction by an Act of Parliament just passed, which empowers the University of London to coöperate with other examining bodies in conducting examinations, and to refuse its degrees to those who have not passed such conjoint examinations.

The returns of the mortality at sea in the British mercantile marine are somewhat startling. According to the report of the Registrar-General, "the dangers of the sea are now in the navy four times, and in the merchant service fifteen times as great as the dangers on land." This telling comparison is sufficient to justify the demand that laws shall be framed to improve the condition of seamen in the merchant service, and to lessen, if possible, the dangers to which seamen are exposed.

A demand has been made for the suppression by law of "wakes," so common among the lower classes in Ireland. The demand has started from an incident reported by a District Registrar in Ireland, as follows:—"An old woman died suddenly of what was supposed to be paralysis. A wake of course followed, and within the ensuing three weeks fifteen persons who had been either in contact with or attended the wake of the old woman were stricken down by typhus fever." The risk of infection, thus exemplified, is the main argument; but the social improvement that would attend the suppression of these occasions for whisky drinking and orgies of drunken excitement, is one that will be equally appreciated with the manifest danger to public health which such a risk of infection involves.

The precautionary cholera orders issued by the Local Government Boards in the three kingdoms have been put forth not a moment too soon. The introduction of cholera cases from abroad into the metropolis itself shows how beset with such dangers the United Kingdom is, and how necessary it becomes at such a time to exert the utmost vigilance. Fortunately all the machinery of quarantine and prevention is now at work, and the officials are ready to carry out the efficient measures directed by authority. It is the commercial activity of Great Britain which has thus exposed her. Emigrants from the north of Europe passing through to the colony of New Zealand brought the infection. It was in the same way introduced this year into the valley of the

Mississippi. It may be the turn of the valley of the St. Lawrence next. The vast immigrant travel passing up the St. Lawrence river is a great source of danger, and one to which the attention of the Canadian authorities ought at once to be directed.

The Rev. Dr. Haughton, of Dublin, exhibited a profound insight into human nature, when, in a recently delivered lecture on cholera, he declared that he "had come to look upon the epidemic as one of the greatest blessings that visited a city, for people would not give their money to hospitals until they were well frightened. One visit of cholera or small-pox was worth more than all the charity sermons ever preached. He had preached many a charitable sermon, and had obtained a good deal of money, but he assured them he had got far more by writing an anonymous sensational article in the papers." The reverend and learned physician might have added another blessing to that of charitable disposition effected by an alarming epidemic. It is only under the impulse of such alarms that people can be induced to pay anything like adequate attention to the simplest rules of hygiene.

## THE DIET OF INFANTS.

Medical men too often pay insufficient attention to the diet to be supplied to infants and children, both in sickness and in health. They too often are satisfied with giving some general direction, and leave the details at the option of the nurse or mother, who if happening to be ignorant or inexperienced, will go wide of the intended rule. Explicit directions should always be given as to time, kind and quantity of food, especially to the sick child.

It is a common thing observed in midwifery practice in this country, for the nurse, directly after the new-born has been washed and dressed, to commence with stuffing some unsuitable aliment into the infant's stomach. The duty of the doctor is to interdict this and to explain, that nature never intended the helpless creature to starve while the mother's milk was in abeyance, and so had provided sufficient nourishment in the alimentary canal, to abundantly sustain it, till milk should be secreted. So no aperient or anything else should be administered, which would have the effect of frustrating kind nature's intention. Many a poor infant's stomach has been damaged by stuffing unsuitable matters into it, and thus commencing a train of protracted evils. Let every substance whatever be strictly forbidden to be given the infant. If, as rarely happens, the mother's milk is too long a-coming, a little whey with a teaspoonful of cream added to it, may be fed, but as a rule, nothing whatever is required or should be permitted.

An important question arises when by some accident the new born child is altogether deprived of its mother's milk, as to what is the best substitute? Cow's milk undoubtedly must be substituted. But cow's milk contains more casein and relatively less cream and less sugar, and, it may be added, less potash than mother's milk. So, to make the most perfect imitation of a

mother's milk—no part of new milk must be taken with as much cream as would rise on one part of milk, one part of hot water, a teaspoonful of loaf sugar, or better still, if obtainable, sugar of milk—to a pint—and to make the imitation perfect, one grain of bicarbonate of potash in the 24 hours' supply. From three to four ounces of this succedaneum should be given every two or three hours with a sucking bottle, always kept perfectly clean and sweet, from 5 a.m. till 11 p.m. The child will accustom itself to sleep at night. If a child then be deprived of the breast milk, this is the best and should be the sole substitute. Nature did not intend a child without teeth to take solid food. She intended it to live on suction. But when the child has cut some teeth, it may then have some solids—bread, rask, &c., may be given to a strong one, but the best addition to the afore-mentioned milk diet is the following:—Tie a pound of unbolted flour in a pudding bag, place this in boiling water and boil for ten hours, then open and remove the tough glutinous shell and you have a solid ball. This must be grated and a teaspoonful makes a meal. It is first mixed smooth with cold milk and then boiled; but it should not be given more than twice a day. If a child has curdy motions or vomits a coagulum, one-third part of lime-water should be added to the milk.

These are facts known to doctors generally, but many are not alive to their importance in maintaining the health of young children, and many others are remiss in not giving specific directions to mothers and nurses.

In discussing a recent trial at the Wicklow Assizes, in which a widow sought to recover damages from two Dublin surgeons for the death of her husband under chloroform, administered to facilitate an amputation of the toes, the *Lancet* makes an important commentary relative to the alleged claims of ether as being superior to chloroform as an anæsthetic. The *Lancet* says:—"As public opinion runs at present, any medical man who may be placed in a position similar to that of the defendants in this trial runs the risk of having witnesses arrayed against him who might state 'that the employment of chloroform is unwarrantable, and that ether, as being less dangerous, is the only anæsthetic which, with our present knowledge, one has a right to employ.' Medical opinion has become unsettled on this point, and it is of paramount importance that some definite decision should be arrived at." The *Lancet* thereupon makes a suggestion of the propriety of registering—at all events in public hospitals—every case in which anæsthesia is resorted to. If this were done, we might in a very short time be in a position to judge of the relative merits of rival anæsthetics, and the responsibility of selection—a responsibility which threatens to be serious—would be done away with, or at least diminished.

This is a suggestion of general application—of interest in the cause of medical progress all the world over—no less than as instituting a safeguard against annoying prosecutions like the one in question. We should therefore like to see