other societies would adopt the same plan, they might send a few copies to each other. For example, the Manchester Medical Society consists of about 70 members; so that, if it purchases 150 copies of a paper, it will have nearly thirty copies to spare, after it has sent a copy to each of the 70 members, and has given the writer of the paper 50 copies. These copies might be sent to the other provincial societies for the use of their members. I think also that the scheme would have some tendency to induce other practitioners to join the societies, and that thus the expenditure upon the publication of papers would be soon more than repaid.

The paper "On Hæmorrhage and Exfoliation after Amputation," by John Jesse, Esq., F.R.S., is the first paper published by a member of the Manchester Medical Society on the new system. If any other provincial societies wish to have further particulars, I shall have great pleasure in giving them on being applied to.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

SAMUEL CROMPTON,

Surgeon in Ordinary to Henshaw's Blind Asylum.

71, Grosvenor-street, Manchester, Jan. 19, 1844.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONDUCT OF CORONERS.

By JAMES LANE, Esq.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—I believe there cannot be found two persons in the kingdom, besides the coroner and his "eminent friend," who would feel inclined to call in question the mode of treatment adopted by Dr. Shearman in his very interesting case of asphyxia. For my part, I perfectly agree with him in thinking that if he has anything to regret, it is in not having abstracted more blood when violent convulsions came on.

My object, however, in now addressing you, is not to attempt the vindication of Dr. Shearman, who must have stood completely exonerated with every respectable member of the profession, even before the able aid of Mr. Bree and Mr. Toogood; but the communications of the latter gentlemen having, very justly, revived the charges which have so repeatedly been made as to the manner in which the duties of coroner are too often performed, affords me a seasonable opportunity of supporting such charges, by a statement of the way in which the farce of holding two inquests has lately been gone through in this neighbourhood, and the more especially as it so completely confirms the assertion of Mr. Bree as to its being merely a judicial farce, got up for the benefit of the coroner, and also that of Mr. Toogood, "that most absurd and improper verdicts are frequently returned, in direct contradiction to the facts which an examination would have developed."

A young man, a shoemaker by trade, twenty-three years of age, arrived at the house of his former employer, having walked from his own home, a distance of sixteen miles; he was apparently in perfect health, and, after partaking of a frugal supper, retired at the

usual hour to bed, accompanied by a lad who slept with him. On rising the following morning at seven o'clock, the boy conversed with him; he was then quite well, and said he should remain in bed a little longer. The lad had not left the room more than ten or fifteen minutes when some extraordinary noise was heard by some of the inmates, who hastened up stairs, and found the man in a state of insensibility, frothing at the mouth, speechless, and, on elevating him in the bed, he died instantly. The next day the coroner held an inquisition, assisted by a jury of the very lowest description, so hastily brought together that, in order to complete the requisite number, the stable-boy from the neighbouring inn was obliged to be summoned; and I am informed that the coroner, on entering the room to view the body, at once pronounced it to be clearly a case of apoplexy, which was certainly not a very discreet way of commencing the solemn and responsible duties of a judge. No medical evidence was called for, although the case was one of so suspicious a character; and as soon as the *regular* verdict, of "Died by the visitation of God," was returned, the coroner proceeded a little distance farther, to make the same sort of inquiry touching the death of an illegitimate infant, who had died very suddenly in the arms of its mother, or, at least, under her care, *several weeks* before, and to view the body of which a jury had been summoned the day subsequent to its decease. On the unexpected arrival of the coroner, after the lapse of so much time, some of the said jurymen were not to be found, and a messenger was dispatched for me, under the delusive hope that as I was the only medical man near, I must have seen the child; but, alas! no such thing. Fortunately, however, after some further delay, a person was found to rescue him from so awkward a dilemma, and the business was got over by a verdict similar to the former.

Both these cases ought undoubtedly to have been submitted to a most minute post-mortem examination, as I stated in a letter to the coroner, which he thought proper to take no notice of, probably fancying that I had no right to dictate to so consequential an officer. The impression on my mind was that the man died from taking prussic acid, but that, of course, could only be *known* by examination; and the circumstance of the child dying as this one did would not only fully warrant, but absolutely called for, an examination of the body.

In addition to the reasons stated by Mr. Bree, why coroners so commonly dispense with medical evidence, may, I think, be mentioned another, namely, that at quarter sessions their accounts are often subjected to the most illiberal scrutiny—a circumstance which tends as much as anything to render the office useless. If coroners decline to avail themselves of medical evidence simply because they will be out of pocket until quarter-day, surely it is desirable that the power should be given to them of drawing upon the county treasurer.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

JAMES LANE.

Grosmont, Jan. 16, 1844.