

science,—a certificate involving, though it does, the personal liberty of a fellow-subject,—the practitioner ought not to incur more risk than when he signs a prescription, on the issues of which attend not only the well-being and the life of the patient, but the maintenance of a family, its happiness, and that of circles of indefinite extent. The public have a sufficient security that such certificates will be carefully considered, in the disgrace that is the inevitable portion of those who have signed them in bad faith, or even without proper caution. Unless the law is altered, I think that the members of our profession would be justified in binding themselves by an engagement to one another, to refuse to sign all such certificates. The legislature could not compel us to sign them. Let it provide officers for that onerous and dangerous duty. But although by our passive resistance we could prevail, I trust that no such unseemly contention may be forced upon us.—*British Medical Journal*, Sept. 2nd, 1865.

*Dr. Lalor on Puerperal Insanity.*

“THE general proposition, then, as to the absence of danger to life, and the almost absolute certainty of recovery of reason in cases of acute puerperal insanity, attended by little disturbance of the circulation, as laid down by Gooch, agrees with my own experience. Further, abstracting these cases with serious complications from the entire nineteen cases under consideration, we have remaining sixteen cases of acute uncomplicated puerperal mania; and of these fifteen recovered and one died, being at the rate of  $93\frac{2}{3}$ ths per cent. of recoveries, and  $6\frac{1}{3}$ ths per cent. of deaths. I believe that at the present day there is no such prevalent belief amongst medical men as was held in Dr. Gooch’s recollection (and indicated by the saying of Dr. Baillie which I have quoted), viz. :—‘That disorders of the mind in lying-in women are never fatal.’ If any one retains such a belief, the results just stated are amply sufficient to disprove it, and my paper will not be entirely useless if it should remove a very serious error of opinion from the mind of a single practitioner of medicine, at the same time, if my later amended analysis, confined to cases of uncomplicated puerperal mania, offers a more legitimate deduction from fitting facts than that presented by my first statement, of the gross results in all cases, whether simple or complicated, a more hopeful view may be taken of the disease in that form which I believe was alluded to by Drs. Hunter and Gooch, in the propositions which I have brought under the notice of the society, than was put forward by those eminent authorities in these propositions. Nevertheless, acute puerperal insanity, occurring within

the month after childbirth, even when uncomplicated and brought under treatment within a month after its commencement, should not be considered otherwise than as a very serious disease; and I consider the results I have just stated in sixteen cases as, on the whole, satisfactory. That they were so satisfactory is, I think, attributable to the discriminative administration of nutritious food and stimulants, and to a like avoidance of lowering and depleting measures. This was the plan of treatment recommended by Dr. Gooch himself, and generally followed at the present day, and in the advocacy of which I do not assume to be at all peculiar, or to have any other merit than that of following the track which the general experience of the profession has pointed out as the best and safest."—*Practical Remarks on Puerperal Insanity.*

#### *The Study of Mental Diseases.*

At the annual meeting of the Convocation of the University of London, held at Burlington House on the 9th of May, a recommendation was brought up from the Annual Committee by Dr. Maudsley and Dr. Anstie, that Convocation should propose to the Senate the adoption of regulations by which candidates for the first M.B. examination would be required to produce evidence of having attended a course of clinical instruction in mental diseases. The proposition was warmly supported by Dr. Sibson and Dr. Graily Hewitt, and was unanimously adopted by Convocation. We have already published a full statement on this subject, and have expressed the reasons which prevail in urging the adoption of this measure. It is one of much importance. The clinical study of the physical and psychological aspects of insanity is one of the most important requirements in the training of the physician, who can never pass through a career of practice without being called upon to minister to the mind diseased by the affections of the brain, its physical organ. In requiring clinical study of mental disease as a part of the preliminary education for the M.B. degree, the University of London will give additional evidence of their desire to render that diploma thoroughly indicative of a careful training to medicine and of a satisfactory knowledge of its most important departments.—*The Lancet*, May 13.