

which sometimes follow the administration of opium and other medicines in cases of asthma, and which, from their rapidity, must necessarily be produced through the medium of the nervous system; and if a curative effect can be produced on the lungs by an impression made upon the gastric branches of the eighth pair of nerves by a medicinal agent, we cannot reasonably doubt that a morbid impression made on the same branches may, in like manner, occasion morbid effects in the tissues to which the pulmonary branches are distributed.

It is probable that some peculiarity of organisation obtains in the lungs of persons subject to spasmodic asthma, which may be considered the predisposing cause of the affection; but the exciting cause, or that which operates in producing a paroxysm, and which is occasional or accidental, we can perhaps discover and guard against. It is well known that attacks of this affection occur in all states of the atmosphere, whether it be dry, humid, warm, or cold; and that neither of these states render the attacks either more or less prevalent, which is, at least, a negative proof that the exciting cause of paroxysms of spasmodic asthma does not reside in the atmosphere; and unless it can be shown that the direct application to the mucous membrane of the air-passages of particles of some noxious (gaseous or other) matter, will and does produce an asthmatic paroxysm, we may fairly conclude that the exciting cause operates indirectly; and that such is the fact, I have a strong conviction resulting from the close observation of the phenomena attendant upon or constituting this affection, in those cases which have come under my notice. In the case of a gentleman who has been for many years subject to attacks of spasmodic asthma of a very severe character, and for whom I have long been in the habit of occasionally prescribing, the attack has invariably appeared to have been the result of, and occasioned by, errors in diet; if he partook freely either of veal, salted meat, pastry, or various other edibles, an embarrassment of the respiratory functions, to a greater or less degree, usually supervened about half an hour or an hour afterwards; and although many slight attacks of this description passed quickly off, yet they frequently increased in intensity, and terminated in extremely violent paroxysms of spasmodic asthma. The inference drawn from these facts is, that the paroxysms alluded to resulted from a morbid impression made on the gastric branches of the pneumo-gastric nerve, which impression was conveyed through the trunk and pulmonary branches of this nerve to the mucous membrane of the air-passages, where it produced some functional derangement, the effects of which were the phenomena constituting the malady in question. The effect of remedies ob-

served in this case would also lead to the same conclusion; sedatives of various kinds, as the lobelia inflata, morphia, &c., when given, mitigated, in some measure, the severity of the symptoms: the attack, however, rarely, if ever, passed off entirely, until the bowels had been acted upon. The most efficient remedy in this case was an aperient, of which rhubarb and magnesia were the chief ingredients; saline substances being occasionally added, in the more severe paroxysms, to increase the activity of the dose. This gentleman now generally carries in his pocket some compound rhubarb pills, of which he takes one or two in the event of a threatened attack, and often apparently with the decided effect of warding off a paroxysm. I have found aperients equally beneficial in other cases of this affection. Neither drastic purgatives, nor strong doses of saline medicines, usually prove advantageous; nor is venesection (so far as I can judge from the instances in which I have known it practised) productive of present relief or permanent benefit in these cases. As the nature and causes of asthma are confessedly not yet clearly understood, the foregoing observations may possibly possess sufficient interest to obtain a place in the pages of *THE LANCET*. I am, Sir, respectfully yours,

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67, Great Russell-street, Bloomsbury.

BANDAGE FOR FRACTURE OF THE CLAVICLE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—If the following description of a bandage which I have been for some time past in the practice of using with ease and comfort to the patient in fracture of the clavicle be new, you will oblige me by giving it a place in *THE LANCET*.

When a case of this fracture presents itself to me (we shall suppose on the right side), I apply, in the first place, a strong circular belt, five inches in width, made of strong linen stuff (ticken), and lined with some soft material, round the upper part of the thorax, embracing it closely, the ends being kept together by small buckles and straps. To this belt behind, on the left side of the vertebral column, the square of the end of a linen roller is stitched, leaving it at such an angle that it shall mount evenly over the left or sound shoulder. It is then continued in front, obliquely over the sternum, passed under the belt, and there pinned or stitched; after which it is made, by two turns from without inwards and backwards, keeping it steadily on the stretch, to take hold of the forearm, that the necessary support may be given to the in-

jured shoulder, so essential throughout the treatment, drawing the arm at the same time sufficiently far upwards and backwards. The roller next leaves the elbow behind to be attached again by pins, or stitches, to the belt, where it crosses it, in its way obliquely upwards, till, overlapping itself, it is carried over the left shoulder, and at length downwards, in front, on a parallel line with the sternum, to be stitched in the same manner as when it first left. I need scarcely add, that the necessary pad of tow, or lint, is placed in the axilla by an assistant, while the forearm is being secured.

The end of a piece of roller is lastly slipped twice round the arm, midway between the shoulder and elbow-joints, and drawn out so as to leave two ends of sufficient length to go round in a parallel line with the belt, to which, at an opposite point, it is secured, several inches along.

The use of this bandage, when carefully applied, in keeping the arm and shoulder completely under control, and thereby expediting the union, must be obvious: while it never, like the other apparatus and bandages I have tried, or seen used, causes fatiguing restraint, or inconvenience, by cutting or abrading the cuticle. The patient can also be allowed much greater liberties in exercise.

If the application of a piece of soap plaster, with or without lint, be required over the fracture, with the view of keeping the ends of the bone in still better apposition, then those can be kept well in their places by a strip or strips of bandage passed over the shoulder, and pinned to the belt before and behind.

Should the principal or oblique bandage slacken during the treatment, this can be at once remedied (and without disturbing the callus), by dividing the roller at some point, and steadily overlapping its ends, while an assistant stands by ready to stitch them to the extent required.

A common sling, such as is used after venesection, may be let fall for the support of the wrist; or if this, from circumstances, be found objectionable, a loop could also be attached in front to the belt for that purpose. I am your obedient servant,

A. W. MURRAY, Assistant-Surgeon
96th Regiment.

Chatham, July 31, 1841.

ORIGIN OF THE RACES OF MAN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Having read in your Number for July 31, 1841, a letter signed "Alexander Blyth, Jun.," in which the writer tries to make it appear that mankind have originated from other races besides Adam and Eve as mentioned in Scripture, I have taken the

liberty of submitting this for your insertion, if you may deem it worthy.

The most prevalent opinion of the present day, says your correspondent, being in favour of the derivation of mankind from at least three different pairs: he at first attempts to prove it by pronouncing a difference between the skin of the negro and that of the white man; this you have already corrected as being unfounded. I am not a professor of medicine, but can, nevertheless, see that the different colours of the skin are but the effects of living in different climates: it is seen in various portions of the globe that a change of climate produces a change of colour in persons that have emigrated to distant places; and this change of colour is further developed in their children who arrive at maturity still more altered; and in this manner successive generations will effect the greatest contrast as to colour in the same race of people. The Jews are a proof of this, who partake of various degrees of colour, according to the place they inhabit; and upon the coast of Malabar are jet black.

Your correspondent, sir, professes a regard for the Scriptural account, and attempts to make it correspond with his own theory. The Bible, however, is in direct opposition to it: in the first place, the creation of man is an event of such magnitude, that it never would have been passed over unnoticed. Cain's complaining that every one that finds him would slay him is easily accounted for, as before the deluge the life of man was continued for hundreds of years; and Cain seeing no signs of death approaching for a long lapse of years, would foresee that a population would be increasing, while he was an outcast and a vagabond from society, without meaning that such was the case at the time of his complaint, there is no reason to warrant the idea of a population at that time existing. Although the next thing we read of, after his sojourning to the land of Nod, is his having a wife, we do not read the time when he was first united; it may have been a great number of years after the curse was inflicted upon him, when his sisters were arrived at maturity, that we read were born some time afterwards (Gen. chap. 5, verse 4), or there might have been females of age born before Abel, for the birth of females was not recorded like males; but certainly it was a sister. But let us remember that important events are mentioned in Genesis commonly, that must successively have occupied a vast period of time, without any attempt to notice events that have transpired in the interval. Neither can we charge Cain with crime in being united to his sister. As we now exist, born and bred in the midst of myriads, there is a peculiarity that distinguishes our family from all others: nor do we stand in the same position towards them as towards