writers never seems to suggest to them the utility of the more soothing and mild appliances, the judicious selection of which invariably characterises the practice of the truly scientific physician. The two doctors are evidently bitten with the Hamilton mania, and cry out with pertinacity to purge! purge! purge! It might have been expected that the *reductio-ad-absurdum* demonstration respecting the universal employment of calomel, which the late Dr. James Currie afforded, would have deterred his successors from mounting the same velocipede; but the air of our hospitals is thoroughly antiseptic in its influence over error and prejudice.

We still wait the appearance of a well-constructed introduction to the practice of medicine, brought down to the present time.

LOBELIA INFLATA. MR. WHITLAW, SEN.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—You will, I hope, pardon me for thus troubling you; but, my character and reputation having been publicly attacked in THE LANCET of the 3d instant, by my nephew, Charles Whitlaw, jun. of Finsbury Square, whom I brought up, educated, and placed in the station which he now holds in society, I have to perform the very painful task of defending *my own* character at the expense of *his*. Being fast approaching seventy years of age, it is too late to be ambitious of further fame; but in the paper which has given rise to this discussion, I did not, as imputed to me, take the credit of having been the *first and only* observer of the poisonous effects of the lobelia on the cattle; for I there acknowledged the Indians to have been fully acquainted with them, and that they had used the plant as a medicine “for centuries.” From them, in the year 1816, I received my information respecting it; and, up to that time, no correct knowledge of it could be gained, but from that tribe. In 1817, I communicated the result of my inquiries to Dr. Mitchell, of New York, and it was introduced into the United States Pharmacopœia, in the form of tincture, in 1820. On my return to England, in 1819, I brought some of the herb with me. In 1823, I received two barrels of it from my agent in America. In 1825, more than 50 lbs., and several times since large quantities have arrived to my account, as can be proved by the bills in my possession, which are open to public inspection. During these years I was making experiments on the lobelia inflata in various forms, and became thoroughly convinced of its extraordinary antispasmodic powers. Yet my nephew openly and “confidently” asserts “that until the latter end of the year 1832, I never used the

lobelia inflata as a medicine,” although his own handwriting, in my books, testifies to the contrary. Instead of “the properties of the plant becoming vaguely known at that time” (1832), I can prove that they were as well understood then as at the present day; for in the “Gazette of Health,” for March, 1825, I find a letter from Dr. Jones, of New York, to the editors, on the subject; in which he expresses himself as glad that they had given publicity to a remedy which had been “for some years” administered by his professional brethren in the United States, with singularly beneficial effects in spasmodic asthma, viz. “the saturated tincture of the lobelia inflata.” Dr. Reece published a treatise “on the anti asthmatic properties of the bladder-podded lobelia,” in 1828, “with directions for the exhibition of the preparations of it.” There the case of Dr. Cutler is mentioned; who, in 1827, had been subject to paroxysms of asthma for nearly ten years; and, after fruitlessly trying “stramonium, ether, and the celebrated anti-asthmatic remedies of the day, determined to give the saturated ethereal tincture of the lobelia inflata a trial, the first dose of which succeeded in allaying the paroxysms.”

Thus we learn that an ethereal tincture was made use of *five* years before my nephew modestly asserts that, “there being no formula for such a preparation, I ventured on the following, &c.” There was certainly great risk, when he had at his command my library, containing the “United States Pharmacopœia” and “Reece’s Treatise.” On my last visit to America, in 1833, I was, as he must admit, if he would tax his veracity on the subject, perfectly acquainted “with the ingredients composing the tincture,” which he would wish the public to believe originated with himself; and I deny most strenuously that the mode of preparing it was written out for me by him. From the specious manner in which his letter is written, many may imagine that there had been a partnership existing between us; whereas, after having given him a professional education, I employed him at a regular salary, to dispense my medicines. All the herb, “since the introduction of the medicine,” has been imported by me, and not one particle of it by him, as he equivocally states; and whatever portion he may now have in his possession, was part of my stock. I have now referred to the various charges brought against me by a grateful nephew; and let any unprejudiced mind compare my communication in THE LANCET of the 20th ult. with the unmerited and malicious attack made on me in that of the 3rd inst., calculated to injure me in the estimation of the public. I, however, leave him to his own reflections.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES WHITLAW, SEN.

30, Argyll Street, Regent Street,

June 11, 1837.