certain, no doubt, a contrary opinion, and he is with them, consequently, not the favourite clinical lecturer and physician. His practice is certainly distinguished from that of his coadjutors in the clinical wards by some peculiarities, but they arise out of his pursuits, and are directed by the soundest judgment. It is but natural, indeed, that the practice of a physician who has devoted so much of his time to the investigation of the medicinal properties of drugs, and whose duty it is to do so, should take an experimental turn. Dr. Duncan, therefore, omits no opportunity of testing the properties of new medicines in the cure of disease, and of trying the old in cases in which they had not been hitherto employed. While such experimental practice is conducted with safety to the patient, we conceive, that instead of being discreditable to the physician, it is his duty to pursue it. There is, for example, a class of diseases for which we have no specifics, and another for which it is a matter of perfect indifference what medicines are prescribed, for they usually terminate favourably under the most opposite plans of treatment. Such cases, we conceive, are fair subjects for experiment; for while the lot of the patient remains the same, some discovery may be made, by deviating from the ordinary methods of treating his disease. There is no cant, indeed, more disgusting, even in medical cant, than that of your "practical man's" opposition to this principle of practice, by which most discoveries have been made. The animal usually denominated a "man of practice" is, in nine cases out of ten, an "egregious ass." Having so often failed on the old road, he cannot conceive that others should succeed by pursuing a different course. If his patients die, he cannot help it; he treated them according to Cooper and Thomas, and that was quite enough; the good man's conscience is safe, and he is content with his fee. He is, in short, a sceptic in the power of medicines, not because he has arrived at this conclusion through an experimental investigation of their properties, but because infidelity in their merits consorts better with his ignorance and love of ease. Let not, therefore, the "man of practice," who has no other object in view, beyond registering in his memory a few hacknied prescriptions for every day use, follow Dr. Duncan through the clinical wards, for his time will be lost; nor the pupil who has no other design than that of making the lecture a sort of mechanical contrivance for fixing in his mind the contents of Thomson's *Conspectus* for a paltry examination, enter the theatre of pharmacy; but let the student who desires to see practice conducted on scientific principles, and the subject of pharmacy taught

in a proper manner, attend Dr. Duncan, and he cannot fail of profiting by instructions which are worthy of, and should be heard only by, an audience of philosophers.

SCOTUS.

THE SECALE CORNUTUM IN MENORRHAGIA RUBRA.

(*Mrs. C.'s Case, continued from page 58.*)

By R. LANYON, Jun. Esq. M.R.C.S.

SINCE the details of this case were published,* the discharge has been capricious, recurring at irregular periods and in uncertain quantities, but never to excess. Up to the morning of the 18th of May, however, it was continuous, but not profuse, for which two ounces of the infusion were taken. At night, the discharge had been arrested, notwithstanding Mrs. C. had not maintained the horizontal position. Two ounces of the infusion to be repeated at bed-time. 19th. A.M. The discharge has re-appeared, is of a florid colour, not disposed to coagulate. Two ounces of the infusion to be taken every four hours. P.M. Better; the discharge has been arrested. 20th. A.M. Slept well last night. The complaint again returned to a slight degree, merely tinging the urine. *Pergat.* The bowels are kept in a proper state by the occasional use of a laxative pill. Appetite and spirits good. P.M. Spirits depressed, and the complaint much aggravated. Antiphlogistic regimen strictly enjoined, and horizontal confinement. *Pergat.* 21st. Ordered an infusion of ergot in the proportion of ʒij. to ʒviij. of boiling water; a quarter part to be taken every four hours. Pulse 80, and depressed. Thermometer in the shade, at noon, 70° . Hips, thighs, and abdomen to be sponged frequently with cold water. 22nd. Has taken two doses of the strong infusion, and is considerably better. Two ounces to be taken every five hours. 24th. A coagulum, as large as a walnut, was discharged with the urine. The first disposition towards sanguineous concentration was observed yesterday. 25th. This morning, for the first time since the accession, there has been no discharge, nor during the night. Two ounces of the infusion, morning and evening. Pulse 80, and more expanded. Thermometer 62° . Disease suspended.

There are two practical considerations deducible from the foregoing relation; first, that the secale cornutum obeys the general

* LANCET, vol. ii. p. 56.

therapeutical law; that when medicines have been continued in the same quantities for some considerable time, they gradually become inert, therefore their doses require to be augmented. I believe that may be said of the ergot which cannot be advanced in favour of any other agent, viz., that it has a specific insular power referrible to the uterus alone, and that it does not usually prove injurious or salutary to any other organ. Mr. Michell informs us, that he swallowed eighteen drachms, in fourteen days, without inconvenience; it is, however, sometimes attended with nausea and laxity of the bowels, but does not commonly generate disease. Where it induces sickness, it may fairly be attributed to idiosyncrasy, and I think we may as fairly conclude, that the parturient state is inimical to nausea or rejection from its use, for my notes do not furnish me with one instance of the kind. The second deduction is, I conceive, equally important, that the sponging the hips and thighs, with cold water, had nothing to do with the successful issue. If the reader will be kind enough to refer to the previous history of the case, he will find that the frequent injection of cold water by the rectum, when the weather was exceedingly inclement, had no effect whatever; it is not, therefore, reasonable to suppose, that merely sponging with water, just drawn from the well, whilst the thermometer ranged from 60 to 70 degrees, could be of benefit under equally inauspicious circumstances. There is an observation, frequently reiterated by Mrs. C., which it is important to notice in this place, that if, during the exhibition of the secale cornutum, the discharge is suddenly arrested, the ergot, if continued, will renew and invariably augment it; but if, on the contrary, the hæmorrhage gradually recedes, it will be judicious, and of the utmost consequence, to continue the infusion, to prevent a relapse.

Mrs. C. has again had a return, but the ergot has again been successful. To prevent a recurrence, my patient uses daily the hip bath, with cold spring water, and her spirits and muscular power are daily improving. As I may not again have occasion to obtrude myself on the pages of THE LANCET, on this subject, I may, perhaps, be allowed to make a few observations on the poisonous principle of the spurred rye. I am, with Mr. Michell, "at a loss to imagine why it should be ranked among the poisons. It is said to be a slow poison, producing gangrene by its continued use; but is not this the case with all vegetated grain? By keeping up a constant action of the bowels, would not malt and its produce, wort and yeast, produce the same disease? It is well known that yeast, &c., if given in

the early stages of typhus, will produce a good effect, by the excitement of the intestinal canal, but if continued, the very same excitement will cause typhus to run the sooner into gangrene, which it is always so prone to. Until, then, wort, malt, and yeast be placed among the poisons, I see no reason why the ergot should be so ranked." My friend Mr. Jewel, of Tregony, in this county, put into my hands, some time since, the inaugural dissertation of our joint friend, Dr. Philp,* in which it is demonstrated, that considerable quantities may be swallowed without prejudice to the constitution. As far as my recollection serves me, the general consequences of his experiments were temporary derangement of the stomach, irritation and relaxation of the intestines; the patients returning to a state of health in a few hours, as if nothing had occurred. But, probably, I may be told, that it only generates disease, or becomes actually poisonous from protracted use. The lady, whose case heads this article, took a large quantity in a few months, without being poisoned! Indeed, on strict inquiry, I am informed, that the only inconvenience she felt from its use was occasional nausea, and she is now gaining strength rapidly, without the intervention of those pernicious consequences attributed to it by high authority. Dr. Mason Good, in his admirable work on medicine, treats so unfavourably of its use in different quantities, that no man of prudence, relying on his description, would venture to give it even a trial.—"When taken in such a quantity," says the doctor, "as to be poisonous, it first excites a sense of tingling or formication, and fiery heat in the extremities, where the action of the system is weakest; to this succeed cardialgia, and griping pains in the bowels, and then vertigo, an alternation of clonic and entonic spasms in different parts of the body, and mania or loss of intellect. If the quantity be something smaller than this, it excites that pestilential fever which the French denominate *mal des ardens*, and in the present work is described under the name of *pestis erythematica*; (Vol. iii. Cl. 3. Ord. 3, Gen. 4. Spec. 1.) while in a quantity still smaller, and long continued, it seems to spend itself almost entirely on the extremities, as being the weakest part of the body, and to produce that species of gangræna which is here denominated *ustilaginea*, or mildew mortification." (Vol. iii. Cl. 3. Ord. 4. Gen. 12. Spec. 2.)† The author, however, in another part of his work, after enlarging on the pernicious idiosyncrasies of certain species of fish and

* Dissertatio Medica Inauguralis de Ciaro Se alis.

† Study of Medicine, vol. v. p. 54.

mushrooms, which by many individuals are harmlessly used, adds a few notes on the *secale cornutum* and the *ruta graveolus*, and in conclusion says, "But I have never seen any such mischievous consequences, and have reason to think that they have been much overrated."* In the year 1709, one-fourth part of all the rye raised in the province of Salonia, in France, was horned, and the surgeon to the hospital of Orleans had no less than five hundred patients under his care that were disordered by eating it. They were called *ergots*, from *ergot*, the French name for horned rye, and consisted chiefly of men and boys, the number of women and girls being very small.† This sexual idiosyncrasy, if I may so call it, has not, I believe, been noticed by recent authors, and may, therefore, serve to show why it has been given very freely in this country without producing those direful consequences which have been commonly ascribed to it, viz., because females have been, for the most part, subjected to its influence; whereas males—those of the human species, who are more particularly prone to *mal des ardens* and *ustilaginea* from its adoption—have seldom, but for the sake of experiment, had recourse to it. According to the present state of our knowledge, it will rank, in the *materia medica*, as the only agent of benefit to the female alone; and in the male, more especially, as disposed to induce diseases of a decidedly malignant character.

Lostwithiel, July 15, 1829.

EXTRACTION OF CATARACT.

PROF. F. JAEGER, of Vienna, who has already distinguished himself by many improvements in ophthalmic surgery, has lately invented a new instrument, which appears to be well calculated to steady the eye during the operation for cataract; it is called by him double knife, and consists of the following pieces:—

1. Beer's knife, $13\frac{1}{2}$ lines in length, and $4\frac{1}{2}$ lines in its greatest breadth, with a flat handle of $3\frac{1}{2}$ inches in length. In the handle there is a groove, two inches in length, closed above and below, the open portion being $10\frac{1}{2}$ lines in length.

2. Another knife, of exactly the same form

and breadth, but only $12\frac{1}{4}$ lines in length, closely applied to the first, and with a small cylindrical handle adapted to the above-mentioned groove, in which it is moved by means of a small knob projecting at the side.

In those cases of extraction where the globe is steady, the instrument is used as a single knife; but where the eye is forcibly turned inwards and upwards, and the operator, after having penetrated into the anterior chamber, cannot proceed without danger of wounding the upper eyelid and the surrounding parts, the operation is terminated by fixing the handle, so as to place the cornea in its usual position, and by sliding the smaller blade forwards upon the larger.

A peculiarity in the instrument is, that in some respects the operation is easier when made with the left, than with the right hand, because the knob is with less difficulty pushed on with the middle finger than with the thumb; this slight difficulty may, however, be obviated, by having an instrument made for each hand.—*Journ. für Chir. und Augenheilk.* Bd. ix., Hft. 4.

OUTLINE OF A PLAN, BY MR. DERMOTT, FOR PROCURING SUBJECTS FOR DISSECTION.

THE great object of attainment in any plan for procuring anatomical subjects is, to do away with the abhorrence incident to the subject, and this will be best accomplished by making the disposal of the human body a *voluntary act*. The prejudice does not exist in the higher classes of society, nor amongst professional men. I therefore propose,

That a capital be raised, the interest of which shall be appropriated as a fund for the purchase of subjects; first, by an application to government for a donation; secondly, by a sum appropriated from the funds of the College of Surgeons in London; thirdly, by voluntary contributions from the nobility and gentry.

That a committee or trustees, for managing the fund, be appointed by government, consisting of opulent and respectable men, not more than one-third of whom shall be of the medical profession.

That the committee shall be authorised to pay to such person or persons as are willing to contract for the sale of their bodies for dissection, a sum not exceeding (say) seven pounds.

That the name of the party making the contract shall be duly registered, together with his or her age, station, place of residence, &c., in a book kept under the direction of the committee.

* Study of Medicine, vol. i. page 221.

† Edin. Med. and Surg. Dict. vol. ii. art. "Secale."

That the party so disposing of his or her body, or his or her friends, shall possess the privilege of redeeming the said body, by repaying the sum advanced, with legal interest, at any time prior to the death of the party.

That every practitioner or proprietor of a medical school, have a subject transmitted to him to any part of the kingdom on application to the committee, at such a fixed price as the committee may deem proper.

That the price so paid to the committee for such a body, be added to the general income.

That the deaths in all parishes shall be registered by proper authorities in that parish; and that the names of all parties dying, whose bodies are claimable for dissection, within six hours after the death of each individual, be sent to the committee in London, proper knowledge being obtained that the death of such party was not of an irregular nature. The funeral service to be read over each body, under the superintendence of the parish authorities, previous to the transmission of the body to the committee.

I am persuaded that the project which I now propose would furnish an ample supply of bodies, which would be well known to have died by natural means, that it would do away with the temptation to murder for the corpse, (by the regular registry of every death in every parish,) and prevent the violation of the tomb.

I know many medical men who are willing to give their bodies over for dissection, to promote the interest of science; I, for one, would be willing to set the example.

With this conviction, I suggest that the profession, *en masse*, (for the purpose of giving a primary impulse to the proposed plan,) voluntarily make over their bodies for dissection to the committee, upon the condition that they are reclaimable, by paying to the funds of the committee the standard value of a subject.

Lastly, I propose that the whole of the profession do take into immediate consideration the best means of obtaining a proper supply of subjects; and that, after due notice, a public meeting be convened, a temporary committee be appointed by it, and the necessary measures had recourse to, for the purpose of duly deliberating upon, and representing to Parliament, as early as possible during its next session, the best means of ensuring a proper supply.

Medico-Chirurgical Transactions, published by the Medical and Chirurgical Society of London. Vol. XV. London. Longman. 1829. 8vo. pp. 264.

WE remember to have read of a Dutchman, who, contending for the literary reputation of one of his countrymen, triumphantly exclaimed, by way of putting the question of pre-eminence beyond all dispute, that the author had written a book "as large and as thick as a cheese." In the estimation of Mynheer, Mr. Arnott would be regarded as the most meritorious of those who have contributed to form the present volume of the *Medico-Chirurgical Transactions*, nearly one half of the work being occupied by a dissertation from his pen, entitled,—*A Pathological Inquiry into the Secondary Effects of Inflammation of the Veins*.

The paper is divided into two parts; in the first the writer endeavours to ascertain the cause and nature of the severe constitutional affection attendant upon phlebitis; in the second, he enters into an inquiry respecting the origin of abscesses in remote situations, arising from injuries.

After citing the opinions of Hunter and others, and detailing seventeen fatal cases of phlebitis collated from various sources, the author thus states his own conclusions, as to the manner in which this disease influences the constitution;—

"That death, in cases of phlebitis, does not take place from the inflammation extending to the heart; whilst the history and character of the symptoms which precede this event, the very small portion of vein which is sometimes found to have been inflamed, and the general presence of pus in its cavity, all tend to establish, that the entrance of this fluid into the circulation is the principal cause of the alarming and fatal consequences of phlebitis, a similar influence being perhaps also possessed by any inflammatory secretion from the vein."—p. 61.

In pursuing the inquiry, as to the cause of purulent matter being sometimes deposited in parts of the body remote from one in a state of suppuration, Mr. Arnott, after observing that the fact has long been well known, and quoting the various opinions of surgical writers, says—

"The only view of the subject supported either by evidence, or argument, is that

which considers the origin of abscesses and inflammations in remote situations after injuries, as connected with the absorption into the circulation of purulent matter from a wound. That they do depend on the entrance of such fluid into the blood, the consequences which have been observed to follow phlebitis simply, sufficiently testify, and it becomes a question, whether the occurrence of phlebitis, and the passage of pus from an inflamed vein into the circulation, is not of itself sufficient to account for the secondary affections of wounds, without its being necessary to resort to an absorption of the same fluid from their suppurating surfaces.

"The secondary affections succeeding to wounds, are effusions of pus and sero-purulent fluid into the cavity of the chest, and inflammation of the pleura; similar affections of the cellular substance; effusion of pus into, and inflammation of the synovial membranes; depositions of pus and tuberculous abscesses in different organs of the body, viz. in the brain, lungs, heart, liver, spleen, and kidney."—p. 67.

Now, as all these consequences have been observed to ensue from the puncture, division, and ligature of a vein, as shown by the numerous cases related, the author wishes to establish this inference—that where similar affections have succeeded to more extensive wounds, they may have originated from the same cause, namely, inflammation of a vein or veins. On this point he remarks:—

"If such view of the subject is correct, we ought, on the one hand, in cases where the consequences already mentioned have succeeded to wounds and injuries, whether of the extremities or head, to find evidences of inflammation of the veins of the part which had been primarily or mechanically injured, and, on the other, to meet with similar secondary affections in cases where inflammation of the veins is known to be of common occurrence, as after parturition."—p. 69.

Four instances are given of secondary affections of the viscera, after injuries of the extremities; and, in these cases, there were clear evidences of inflammation of the veins having existed. In thirty-three cases, however, which are related of abscesses and inflammations occurring in the thoracic or abdominal viscera, phlebitis was only observed in two subjects, with whom there were well-marked signs of inflammation having existed, in the superior longitudinal sinus. The evidence, therefore, at this part

must be regarded as incomplete; for the cases, with the exception of the two alluded to, prove no more than that depositions of pus and lymph do frequently take place after injuries of the head; and they by no means justify the inference, that the cause consists in the introduction of pus into the circulation from inflammation of the veins.

With respect to phlebitis, after parturition, Mr. Arnott remarks:—

"Inflammation of the veins of the uterus may be regarded as by no means of unfrequent occurrence; and although some of those who have treated of the subject have had chiefly in view the primary local affection and morbid appearances, yet there is sufficient evidence to show that inflammation and suppuration of these veins, also, are followed by various secondary affections."

These secondary affections are, internal abscesses, a severe affection of the joints, and a destructive inflammation of the eye. That the first are dependent upon phlebitis, is attempted to be shown, by the relation of cases in which the uterine veins were found to be inflamed, and there were, at the same time, hepatic and pulmonary abscesses. The severe affection of the joints taking place in the puerperal state, is noticed on the authority of Mr. Cheston, and confirmed by the experience of Dr. Merriman; and Mr. Arnott endeavours to establish a connexion between this complaint and inflammation of the veins, by referring to cases in which a similar kind of disease occurred from wounds of veins.

The ophthalmic disease alluded to, which is well described by Dr. M. Hall and Mr. Higginbottom in the thirteenth volume of the Society's Transactions, Mr. Arnott believes, in like manner, to depend upon the existence of phlebitis; and he attempts to substantiate this opinion, by alluding to a case of excision of the vena saphena, in which destructive disease of the eye occurred, and also to a case where the jugular vein was wounded, and in which disorganization of the eye ensued.

Such are the principal facts and inferences contained in Mr. Arnott's paper, which is made to spread over 130 pages;—a few grains of corn, which we have selected from a bushel of chaff. We pass on to the consideration of the next paper, which is entitled,