of sthenic, and the other, of asthenic type; one class of idiopathic fever being regarded as of animal origin, and resulting from contagion; the other, of vegetable origin; hence, the former would be assigned to the motor, or alkaline system, and the latter to the sentient or acidulous system.

April, 1849.

ON THE CASES OCCASIONED BY POISONED FLOUR AT STOURBRIDGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to inclose you the accompanying report of cases treated by Mr. Freer and myself. It would have been sent last week, but we were anxious to know the result of most of the cases before submitting it to the profession.

I have the honour to be, Sir, faithfully yours,

Stourbridge, Worcestershire, April, 1849.

THOMAS BANCKS.

As only some slight notice has appeared in the public prints, relative to the late unfortunate cases of lead poisoning in this town and neighbourhood, and from the number of persons attacked, and the serious character of their symptoms, great interest has been necessarily excited, we deem it of sufficient importance to lay before the profession a few remarks on the subject,—more particularly as we find no opportunity has ever before occurred to the eminent authors on medical jurisprudence or toxicology of recording the progress and treatment of so many cases at the same time.

It appears that from the mistake of a servant employed by a miller in the neighbourhood, from twenty-five to thirty pounds of acetate of lead became mixed with about eighty sacks of flour, and was distributed to the various shops. The persons who partook of the flour, after a few days, complained of a sense of constriction about the epigastrium and throat, with violent crampy pains round the umbilicus, and much rigidity of the abdominal muscles; a dragging pain in the lumbar region, (this latter was an invariable symptom,) and the lower extremities either cramped or partially paralyzed. There was obstinate constipation, and the secretion of the kidneys scanty, and of a deep-red colour. The pulse generally was slow and feeble, the countenance anxious and sunken, frequently of a peculiar livid hue; tongue flabby; the gums with the characteristic deep-blue line; and where carious teeth existed, the interior of the mouth and fauces blackened by the action of sulphuret of lead. The secretion of the skin was in most cases checked, and there was little development of animal heat over the surface of the body. Sickness was by no means an invariable or continued symptom, being described by the patients as having existed at first, but in many instances had subsided before medical aid was obtained. The function of the sensorium remained undisturbed. In the more aggravated cases there were great prostration and collapse, with livid countenance and universal cramps and numbness; and other symptoms, sufficiently alarming to call for the exhibition of the most powerful stimulants.

Treatment.—In most of the cases, from the length of time the poison had been in the system, much benefit could not be expected from the use of the stomach-pump or emetics. We found the continued use of the sulphates of soda or magnesia, largely diluted, most useful; the regular administration of enemata of gruel, with castor oil and turpentine, and where violent pain or cramps existed in combination with opiates. Enemata, also, containing the sulphates and common salt, and the greater the quantity the bowels were able to retain, the more speedy the relief. The external application of turpentine with flannels, and where sickness existed, (which was not frequent,) a mixture, containing hydrocyanic acid, hyoscyamus, and camphor, was used with marked good effect; but we cannot too strongly dwell on the benefit derived from the continued exhibition of purgative medicines; the bowels being locked up for a single day, was sufficient to produce a return of all the symptoms. Milk as an article of diet was decidedly beneficial in all the cases which came under our observation.

Some of the slighter cases appeared to vary little from day to day, and to improve very slowly under treatment, the poisonous effects of the lead exerting its influence in keeping down the heart's action, depressing the nervous system, and partially arresting all the secretions. This state was more marked where previous disease of heart or pulmonary vessels existed.

In very many instances, after apparent convalescence for several days, all the symptoms returned in the same aggravated form, without any obvious cause, and up to the present time most of the persons who partook of the flour present a pecu-

liarily pale, unhealthy appearance; but in no instance that came under our observation did inflammatory action ensue; and what is more strange, considering the number attacked in this town and neighbourhood, (upwards of 500,) and the violence of the symptoms in so many, did a fatal case occur. It is impossible to conjecture the quantity taken by each person, it being very unequally mixed, and several samples of flour and bread brought for analysis presented no trace of lead, whilst others were strongly impregnated with it.

The secondary symptoms—viz., paralysis, &c., from which, no doubt, many will suffer for a considerable period of time, shall be laid before the profession in due course, together with the treatment which may be found most beneficial.

THOMAS BANCKS.

R. L. FREER.

Stourbridge, Worcestershire, April, 1849.

A CASE OF STRANGULATED INGUINAL HERNIA, AND OPERATION. RECOVERY IN A WOMAN AGED UPWARDS OF A CENTURY.

By JOHN MORRIS, Esq., Surgeon, Hereford.

(REPORTED BY MR. KIDLEY.)

E. C—, unmarried, aged 109, a thin, erect woman, of bilious temperament; has lived in this city and neighbourhood for the last twenty years, and for the previous fifty years as a domestic servant in London. About twenty years ago, in suddenly reaching over head, she felt something give way in the right groin, and at intervals ever since has suffered slight inconvenience from rupture, but she never wore a truss. On the 26th of March last she experienced severe abdominal pains, shooting towards the spine, and on the following day the symptoms became more alarming—violent retchings, vomiting of offensive matter, &c. When seen by her medical attendant, Mr. Morris, on the 30th, there was a foul tongue, sunken pulse, constipated bowels, and all the usual symptoms of strangulation. Every means for reduction, as far as her very advanced age would warrant, were resorted to, without success, and to all appearance the case was hopeless. Willing to give this remarkable old woman the only chance remaining for prolonged life, Mr. Morris, submitted the case to consultation, when an operation was determined upon, and at ten o'clock the same night he performed it in the presence of Messrs. Cam, Wandby, and Kidley.

The sac being carefully opened, with as little exposure as possible, some little difficulty, and consequent delay, arose at this stage of the operation, owing to the extreme tightness of the stricture, which being overcome, the protruding portion of the bowel was carefully returned into the abdominal cavity. She passed a restless night.

March 31st.—Free from pain, but the castor-oil and injections had failed to relieve the bowels, and there was some sickness. She passed another disturbed night.

April 1st.—The woman apparently sinking; bowels still obstinate. The use of the enema abandoned in consequence of the pain it induced, and the case altogether unpromising.

2nd.—Ten grains of compound colocynth pill administered this morning; failing to relieve, two scruples of jalap were given, and at four P.M. the bowels acted copiously. She passed a tranquil night.

3rd.—Tongue clean, and, with the exception of sinking, the effects of considerable diarrhoea, altogether better; the wound healing by first intention, and abdomen natural.

4th.—Diarrhoea checked; passed a refreshing night; able to take her usual nourishment; tongue clean and moist; altogether convalescent.

The most prominent features of this truly remarkable case is the wonderful vigour of the *vis medicatrix naturæ*, so to speak, at such extreme advanced life, so as to rally from the shock of the operation, and from the sinking effects of the subsequent diarrhoea. The detail is highly instructive, as showing the importance of operating, even when a case is almost hopeless.

From all the statements we can obtain, the woman was born on the 24th of June, 1740, at Carby-Hooker, in Yorkshire, but as the copy of the registry was burnt at a fire, in London, some seventy years ago, we would invite the medical practitioner or clergyman of that parish, from the interesting nature of the fact, to assist in ascertaining the truthfulness of such record.

April 6th.—The case still progresses favourably.

Hereford, April, 1849.

OBITUARY.—April 19th, at his residence, Silverstone, Northamptonshire, JOHN DUKE, M.D., M.R.C.S., aged twenty-eight years, sincerely and deeply regretted.