might be afforded of curing men on board of their own ships, the hospitals on that station being at that time too small, ill arranged, and extremely expensive; the men by going ashore being also exposed to the epidemic and endemic of the climate, and to the most pernicious temptations, from the facility of procuring the means of intoxication. 6thly. The want of a gratuitous supply of medicines, as well as necessaries to the surgeons, in order to enable them to cure as many as possible without sending them to hospitals. 7th. As hospitals are, to a certain degree, indispensable at the principal stations, especially for the relief of ships in which contagious diseases prevail, new regulations of them in point of space, separation, ventilation, and cleanliness, were also recommended.

"Though all the recommendations here specified were not at first complied with in their full extent, enough was done to evince their expediency, and to lead to great future improvements. I had the immediate and high gratification of succeeding in the recommendation of wine, and of being an eye-witness of its almost incredible benefit in the new reinforcement which accompanied the admiral on his return."

The author of the tract, it is said, deemed it expedient to make the commanding officers of the navy acquainted with the most effectual means of maintaining the health and vigour of the men, of preventing the invasion of disease, and of doing justice to the sick. On this subject he observes,

"I felt it therefore as a matter of imperative duty to explain myself fully on this subject to the commanding officers of the fleet: this I did in a printed tract, 1780, which was distributed among the flag officers and captains. In this I endeavoured to set forth how much the health of the men, particularly with regard to the prevention of disease, depended on the good judgment and exertion of officers, who alone could establish and enforce the regulations respecting ventilation, cleanliness, and discipline. This was extremely well received;* and it is not for me to say what share it may have had in the great alteration in the conduct of the officers of the navy regarding these duties, and how far it may have contributed to the revolution which has taken place in

* "The author has in proof of this, not only the innumerable testimonies of personal regard which he has experienced during the after part of his life from these distinguished persons, but their interposition on his behalf on the conclusion of the war, when they unanimously made application, through the Admiralty, for a reward to him in peace, no half-pay being then established for physicians to fleets. In compliance with this, his Majesty was pleased to grant him a pension for his services."

later times in the whole system of the medical management of the navy. There can indeed be no situation in which there is more room for genuine virtue, praiseworthy conduct and address;—none to which there attaches more grave and solemn responsibility;—none on which there is a more imperious claim on the conscientious discharge of duty, than that of a naval commander. The men are cast on his humanity and discerning judgment under various aspects. A ship in the middle of the ocean is a little world in itself, at the arbitrary disposal of an individual—seamen and marines are subjected by martial law to a more despotic exercise of power than the constitution of the state authorizes in civil life, or even in the army—naval officers can, at their single arbitrary discretion, inflict such a summary and severe punishment as cannot be inflicted in the army without the solemnity of a court martial. Englishmen surrendering, from considerations of public expediency, what they hold most dear, and that of which they are most jealous—their liberty, becoming thereby the greater objects of grave decision and considerate feelings. All seafaring people, especially those employed in war, are exposed to peculiar and unavoidable privations, hardships, and dangers, which ought to be mitigated, as far as is practicable, by those at whose absolute will they place their lives and limbs; it is in their character to be unthinking and careless of their own welfare and interest, requiring to be tended like children, and, like children, are entitled to a parental tenderness from the country they protect and the officers they obey."

ON THE USE OF THE EXTRACT OF BELLADONNA IN SPASMODIC STRICTURE OF THE URETHRA.

By EDWIN LONG, Esq.

THE first case in which I employed the extract of belladonna in spasmodic strictures of the urethra, was in 1820; the leading particulars I relate from memory. The subject was a man aged fifty; his occupation that of a waterman. I was sent for in the evening, and found him in very great pain, from an inability to void his urine; he told me that he had been frequently under the care of respectable surgeons, some of whom he named, "for a constitutional gravelly complaint;" but that all of them failed in giving him more than temporary relief, the disease always returning upon exposure to cold, or too much exercise used in walking. He could, at that time, only pass his water by drops, and had only voided about a teacupful during the last twenty-four hours. I prescribed what I considered the most suitable medicines, and saw him again the

following morning, but was sorry to find there was no alleviation of his sufferings; I therefore attempted to introduce the catheter, when I found a completely strictured urethra, the instrument not passing farther than about two inches along the canal. I then procured a series of bougies, and at length succeeded in passing a very small wax one as far as the membranous portion of the urethra, but beyond this it would not pass; suffice it to say, that for three days after I saw him, every means were used which I had either seen recommended by others, or my own ingenuity could suggest, without effect, such as bleeding to syncope, hot-bath, an attempt at introduction whilst in the bath, &c., but all to no avail. The patient's state now became alarming; the bladder was distended to an enormous size, and I dreaded every moment lest it should give way; I therefore determined, as a dernier resort, to puncture it through the rectum. This I was almost upon the point of doing, when it struck me that, perhaps, the belladonna, from its peculiar relaxing powers, might exert a beneficial influence: with, therefore, the least possible delay, some extract was sent for, and, after reducing a portion of it with water, it was well rubbed along the whole course of the urethra, and particularly in the perineum. I then took a small bougie, and made a groove along it, as recommended by Mr. Carpué, smeared the extremity, and to the extent of an inch, well with the undiluted extract,* and, without much difficulty, passed it as far as the membranous portion of the urethra; when, after remaining a few seconds, I could distinctly feel something give way, and it slipped into the bladder. The water escaped gradually along the groove made in the bougie, to the extent of many pints; I will not, as I took no notes, at this distance of time undertake to mention the precise quantity. I remember perfectly that it was some days before I could introduce the smallest-sized catheter, and never that, so violent was the spasm, without the use of the belladonna. The cure occupied the space of a twelve-month. I preferred the use, for a considerable time, of the silver catheter to the bougie, because I found the former instrument answer two purposes, it both dilated the urethra and also allowed the urine to escape; for several times when, for experiment sake, I used the bougie at the time when the patient could not readily evacuate the contents of the bladder, a spasm immediately came on, which prevented the flow of water. The latter part of the cure, for some months, was completed by means of the metallic bou-

gies, always previously immersing them in warm water, to render them, as near as possible, of the temperature of the part. I was somewhat surprised, from the free use of the belladonna in that case, that it did not occasion a temporary incontinence of urine, from its probable effect upon the sphincter muscle of the bladder; such, however, was not the case, nor have I ever seen any bad effects result from its application; suffice it to say, however, that I never have, nor should I think of using it, except in extreme cases.—*Med. Jour., April.*

MEDICAL GOVERNMENT AND EDUCATION IN IRELAND.

ARGUMENTS AGAINST APPRENTICESHIPS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—There are times and circumstances in which events, apparently trifling, acquire an importance which they seem not otherwise to possess. When we see around us the crumbling of antiquated systems, and a powerful spirit of reform forcing its way into our highest institutions, it is with a natural anxiety that we watch its progress in those minor ones connected with our immediate interests. To a professional man, while the rapid advances of medical science will afford him delight, a corresponding improvement in those institutions established for medical education will become an object of intense interest, and he will feel a deeper indignation at attempts made to uphold, or disguise, abuses existing therein, in proportion as they so vitally affect his favourite pursuit.

Such feelings have induced me to offer some observations on a subject which has excited considerable discussion, and has called forth two very animated papers in Nos. 386 and 392 of your Journal, in defence of the system of apprenticeship adopted by the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland. I believe no one will doubt, who is at all acquainted with the immense sums which have been acquired by apprenticeships, and the trifling remuneration it was thought necessary to make in return, how powerfully self-interest operates to maintain this system; and there are few connected with the profession who would not, by its abolition, have to make some sacrifice to public principle. To this, however, the author of the papers alluded to is a happy exception; he sets out by stating, that—"He would be materially served by its total abolition," and on this ground claims credit for impartiality in the discussion of this question. It would have been desir-

* Mr. Tyrrell, who has used the belladonna with success in several cases, scoops a piece out of the end of the bougie, and in the cup which is thus formed inserts a lump of the extract.