LONDON MEDICAL SOCIETY.

ALLEGED ANEURISM OF THE RENAL ARTERY.

(Letter from DR. BLICKE).

SIR,—Is the fiat of the present surgeons of Guy's, and one or two M.D.'s, Messrs. B. Cooper, Key, and Callaway, and Drs. Addison and Hodgkin, without argument, and, Sir, without examination being granted to any one else (for looking at a preparation put up in spirit, surely cannot be considered a competent examination), is to be the dictum to which we are to bow or not? To proceed, then, Sir, the preparation was again brought to the society closely incased in its crystal walls, and with this extraordinary assurance from Mr. Gosset, that it had been again dissected (implying that it had not been properly done before, though executed by one of these now well-known surgeons); that probes had been passed this way and that, in order to find the sac and prove it aneurism; that the whole "staff" of Guy's (mind the expression, Sir) had declared it aneurism, and that there was no atheromatous structure; that he took all the merit due to a person having first elicited renal aneurism, and proceeded to read a letter from Dr. Hodgkin to the president, in which, no doubt, you have already anticipated was a confirmation of what the president said (vide LANCET, page 441, respecting Dr. Hodgkin's opinion); but no, Sir, you are disappointed, it was a complete confirmation of what I had said, viz. that he had supposed it so; but as he had not put up the preparation, he did not speak from his own knowledge; this, Sir, I pledge myself was the pith of the letter read; but having applied to the registrar for reference to it, was informed that it was not in his possession. This is in direct violation of the laws of the Society. Mr. Gosset then proceeded to comment on my letter to you, stating that I had given a gratuitous description of aneurism, and had then turned round, "unintentionally, no doubt," (recollect the words, Sir,) and given that description as his (Mr. Gosset's) own, in a letter to THE LANCET: "he could perceive the cause of Dr. Blicke's error; it was, that he had been studying the ancient authors, and overlooked Scarpa, the best modern authority." It is now necessary for me to state that I here find that which Mr. Gosset asserted at the discussion, that which contradicts his accusation against me, of putting my words into his mouth; for Scarpa contains what I charge him with saying, that which I have accused him of at the discussions, that which I have repeated in my letter, that which I have denied,

and still deny to be truth; and that which he evidently does not at this moment understand, or he could not flounder about as he does: viz. "that the sac of aneurism, as it is commonly met with, is formed by condensed cellular substance, without the dilatation of the coats of the artery." My reply, as you may suppose, Sir, was disclaiming the dictum of the very renowned surgeons of Guy's, that the preparation ought to have been brought as it was, without any fresh dissection or putting up, and turned out of the spirit; and I also pledge myself, that if the preparation were taken out, the tuberosities of the artery would be seen, that the artery was pulled down out of its place, so that they were partially hid, but that I could still perceive them; that it was impossible to form an opinion of the preparation whilst in the bottle; that I had given no description of aneurism, that I had merely referred to the case (brought forward by Dr. Copland, translated by Mr. Gosset for our benefit possibly), but at all events in order to confute Dr. Copland, which he had attempted, by asking if the case could be renal aneurism, when it was described as large as a child's head three years' old, and giving it as his, Mr. Gosset's, opinion, that it must have been aneurism of the aorta, to show that Mr. Gosset implied it was a case of true aneurism, and not spurious; that if Mr. Gosset had been misunderstood by me, it was his duty to have explained when I acquiesced in the definition of aneurism, as given by the President, in opposition to that of Mr. Gosset. Now, Sir, it is necessary for me to call your attention to several points, in order to show not only how far Mr. Gosset has improved his case, but also what credit is due to the fiat of the renowned surgeons.

1st. His assertion, that I gave a "gratuitous description of aneurism," might be settled by reference to the parties present; but as that is not only inconvenient from my distance, but at all times uncomfortable to parties to be dragged into controversy, and having it in my power to prove the contrary without the former mode, I prefer requesting you to refer to No. 332 of THE LANCET, folio 504, where I say, "I perfectly agree with you, Mr. President, on your description of true aneurism in opposition to that of Mr. Gosset, &c." Now, Sir, this on the face of it, shows Mr. Gosset had been giving a description, not a "reply," to me, or I could not have used that phraseology; and Mr. Callaway admitted I made this appeal to him on coming out of the room that evening. As a point of fact, Sir, Mr. Callaway was compelled to give a description to rescue his reputation as to his knowledge of what the aneurism was; had I said any thing contrary to Mr. Callaway, he would not have given a

simple description but a reply, controverting what I said. Again, Sir, the perfect chaos he, Mr. Gosset, is in about aneurism is evidenced, 1st, By accusing me of maintaining the opinion he holds, and then giving the most positive evidence I cannot hold that common, in consequence of not having consulted Scarpa. But, Sir, some allowance must still be made for him, for though his temper is somewhat softened down, as evidenced by his substituting the words "unintentional, no doubt," in lieu of "wilful perversion," the recollection of his ire and the unbecoming language of my letter, as he is pleased to term it, are still, perhaps, ample causes for his density. Hodgson, in his prize essay, particularly remarks on the error of Scarpa; and, as I stated before, has traced by maceration the lamellated coats of the artery throughout, in the largest aneurisms; but mark the dilemma this has led him into. It is now admitted, if I understand Dr. Hodgkin's letter right, there is no membrane adherent to the artery, and consequently if it be aneurism it is true aneurism, which is what, in justice to Mr. Calaway, I have always understood him to mean, and what he has certainly some trifling ground for supposing, namely, that there is an atheromatous structure which renders the artery tortuous, thus giving it the appearance of enlargement, and perhaps, as the result of the effort previous to the rupture, the calibre may be somewhat enlarged.

With regard to the opinion of the "staff" of Guy's, I would remark, 1st. Why were they to examine it at all, till it was brought to the Society? 2d. Why alter the position of the parts from what they were? 3d. Why not have stated what the tuberosities or elevations on the coats of the artery were, if not atheromatous? 4th. Why are we not told that the clot is lamellated, or the reason why it is not, or why it was so easily separated? 5th. Why a probe passed down the artery proved it aneurism? It may be well to do this, to ascertain if it be the artery, but cannot possibly decide the question whether it be rupture or aneurism; and, lastly, Why are my inferences, given page 440 of *THE LANCET*, not attempted to be proved erroneous? I must now state, Sir, for Mr. Gosset's information, the present opinion on this subject. Aneurism was considered, for the most part, by the ancient authors, as an enlargement or dilatation of a portion of its circle; but Scarpa thought differently, and considered the sac was always formed by condensed cellular substance. The Monros, of Edinburgh, have always denied Scarpa's opinion; and Hodgson, Sir, has shown by experiment and dissection, how the aneurism is produced, viz. by rupture of the inner coat, &c., from any cause, and dilatation of the outer, and

this, Sir, in the largest aneurism, he has also shown, that dilatation of the whole circle, including all the coats, is a very rare disease, though it does exist, and that then there is no lamellated coagulum. In conclusion, I have now only first to repeat, this was not the original question which remains unanswered by my opponents; and, secondly, to remark that even had it been my fate to have been vanquished, Mr. Gosset must admit it would not have been on "trifling grounds," as the whole "staff" of Guy's have been called out to refute me. It is true, Sir, the journalist alluded to by Mr. Gosset does not mention the words, "opinions of professional men of high reputation," which appear to have been so caustic to him, quoted in my letter from the report in *THE LANCET*; but no one can read the journal, without perceiving that that is the gist of his expression; and I ask, will he have the temerity to deny that he made use of them? I assert he did, in the most "unqualified manner."

I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

W. F. BLICKE.

Walthamstow, Jan. 11, 1830.

ACTIVE EFFECTS OF THE COLCHICUM AUTUMNALE.

By Dr. T. WOODFORDE, *Taunton*.

THE extreme activity of the various preparations of the colchicum autumnale, together with the uncertainty in their effects (in common with all the articles of the *Materia Medica* derived from the vegetable kingdom), are well known, but I do not recollect to have heard at any time, that so small a quantity as half a drachm of the vinum semin. colchici, was capable of producing the alarming symptoms witnessed in the following case; such effects, if ever so rare, are calculated to make us hesitate in the exhibition of this medicine, valuable as it most certainly is in acute rheumatism: a particular idiosyncrasy is most probably to be looked for in this instance; but as this is not to be ascertained by any previous inquiry, we are left as much in the dark as before, with regard to the safety of using it. The wine here was prepared in the usual way, two ounces of the dried seeds infused for ten days in one pint of white wine, and the dose, as ordered in the *Pharmacopœia*, varied from one to three drachms; it was recently made, and was taken from a full bottle in which no deposit had occurred.

December 3d.—A female, labouring under acute rheumatism affecting the shoulders, knees, and ankles, was ordered ʒss. of the vinum seminum colchici three times