of any kind. Yet the patient being persuaded to take a good meal the headache leaves him. Here, then, the state of the secretions producing headache by sympathy is removed, say by a solvent if you like; certainly the morbid condition is removed. Here, then, is a proof of what I have often spoken of and written about, that every meal is as much a dose of medicine, as a diet for all fresh ingesta are alkaloid masses; and when the system is plus of vital elements, which are always of an acid character, they are beautifully reduced, and when this does not take place, it speaks very plainly to the physician that probably a slight addition of a little more alkali would relieve the excess which the meal was not sufficient of itself to do. Here, again, is the solvent principle beautifully illustrated, and here, also, it shows that a certain state of the secretions, altered in some occult way from the healthy standard, is corrected, and so regain their own integrity. It also shows, what I have also spoken and written about, that disease in fact is a myth, and that if we could attain to a more perfect knowledge of the state of the secretions, and correct on the one hand those which are in excess of the healthy standard, or add such other elements of which the system is deficient, disease, whatever it may be, either functional or organic, we should have a greater control over it; for I do hold that all diet, of whatever kind, is a solvent to morbid elements *in transitu*, and that all medicines, of whatever kind, have distinct actions on the secretions first, and then upon the functions of organs, or on the organs themselves. Now all this is shown by certain morbid conditions of the secretions producing growths and tumours and certain concretions in the body—the fatty and other tumours, the enlargement of the bones in rheumatism, the chalk-stones in gout, the gall-stones in the liver, and the calculi of various kinds in the kidneys or bladder. All our medication is directed, however imperfectly, to the solvent principle internally, as we use iodine painting for glandular swellings externally.

To the general state of the secretions in their harmony we owe our healthy standard, and the placing them, when in a morbid state, producing disease, into their true balance of chemico-vital health, is the true process of medication. How often change of air, scene, and circumstances restore these when all medication has failed. This is the *vis medicatrix nature*.

What has led me to premise this subject is calculus of the bladder. I believe that every one in a lifetime has urinary deposits of the bladder at some time or another, either in the form of gravel or stone, but that Nature is always manufacturing her solvents, and cures them without our knowing anything about what is really going on. Gravel is constantly seen in urinary utensils, and no notice taken of it except by the stupid who will make a case of it and fly to the doctor. Yet it is well known that if such is the case, the next urine made into the vessel upon the obnoxious quantity will often dissolve it all freely. Even small calculi may be passed and be equally dissolved, or if retained in the bladder, may be dissolved in that viscus itself by the next urine formed. If this occurs so frequently—and I am convinced it does to a great majority of the people in what we can so readily see and see so often—how much more must a thousand things be taking place in the body that we cannot see and cannot possibly know anything about. Thus to the action caused by new ingesta forming fresh solvents by their combination, and consequently remedial processes, all making up the *vis medicatrix nature*, we owe a condition of health over which we have no more control than we have over the same things in their altered and morbid states producing disease. With respect to catarrhus vesicæ, a highly congestive state, the alkalies with pareira brava I have found highly relievable. As to calculus in the bladder, which takes some time to form, and, as I have said, in its incipient stages is relieved by natural solvents, great benefit may be acquired by very simple remedies. Some years since I made a solution of the first flat seed-leaves of the common radish (*Raphanus sativus*) for a drink, and which, being a powerful alkaloid, I administered with great benefit in the urinary deposits of young people. I then procured a pint or two of them, and put them into a wide-mouthed bottle, and filled it up with some mild sweetened gin, making a tincture, and after letting it stand for a week, poured it off clearly, and gave it to a patient who had a small calculus. He took a wine-

glassful night and morning, and after a few days he told me he passed some curious mucus, and wishing to micturate at that time, I witnessed the ceremony, and found a piece of mucus at the external meatus, and pulled it out with my finger and thumb. It was the full length of the urethra, and seemed to be obstructing the passage, but when removed, the urine came more forcibly than for a long time before; and I merely said, "That is the stone dissolved." I confess to this day it was a shrewd guess only; but this I know, I discontinued the radish tincture and sounded him next day and there was no calculus or stone whatever.

A few years since I had a patient who was subject to gall-stones, and had had them for twenty years, and, being rich, he had all the aid from the faculty his money could buy. I gave him the mineral tonics twice a day, and the alkalies—principally soda—twice a day alternately, and I told him to cultivate the radish plant in his garden, and have the first seed-leaves brought in night and morning, and eat a plateful of them with a little salt. When I first knew him, he could produce a teacupful of gall-stones varying in size from a small horse-bean to a canary-seed every week or fortnight. In a few months these concretions diminished, and ultimately no more were formed, and for some years he has only passed one now and then. We are now looking out for solvents for calcareous deposits, whether in the gall-bladder or the urinary bladder.

If what I have written can be made available in practice, it can be easily tried, and the spiritus *Raphani sativi* may form a valuable pharmaceutical agent as a solvent, and aid the *vis medicatrix nature*.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

BENJAMIN RIDGE, M.D., F.R.C.S.

Bruton-street, Bond-street, W., Feb. 1873.

THE CASE OF MR. CROFT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In THE LANCET of the 8th inst. I notice that reference is made by you to the case of Mr. Croft of Snitterfield, implying that the proceedings taken against that gentleman were at the instance of the Prudential Assurance Company. I have to inform you that neither directly nor indirectly was this company concerned in the prosecution.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

HENRY HARBEN, Secretary.

Prudential Assurance Company, Ludgate-hill,
March 11th, 1873.

BIRMINGHAM.

(From our own Correspondent.)

THE health of this town has been affected by the recent cold and changeable weather, and the mortality has gone up to 30·4, a point greatly above the normal average. Lung complaints chiefly swell the list of deaths to this extent, epidemic diseases not at the present time existing to any great degree. No fresh cases of typhoid have been reported in the Balsall Heath district, and as there has been no death from that disease during the last month, the epidemic appears to have died out. Dr. Hill, the newly elected medical officer of health for Birmingham, has issued a special report as to the sanitary condition of one of the wards of the town. He finds that many of the streets are not sewered, or properly kerbed and guttered; that in some cases the privies are very dirty and dilapidated; and that the water-supply, when derived from wells, is very impure. The recommendation of Dr. Hill as to the best means of overcoming these sanitary defects will at once be carried into effect by the Public Works and Sanitary Committees. It is gratifying to find that Dr. Hill's suggestions have been so early appreciated and acted upon.

Aston, one of the most populous suburbs of the town, is about to appoint a medical officer of health at a salary of £100 per annum, but the Local Board insist that the officer so appointed shall act, in addition, as an analyst, although they have been distinctly informed by the Local Government Board that they have no power to appoint a