THE MEDICAL PROFESSION AND THE SCOTCH REGISTRATION ACT. 

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Will you be so obliging as to give insertion in the next number of your valuable journal to the subjoined petition of the House of Commons from the members of the medical profession in this town, and to the accompanying correspondence with Mr. Baxter, M.P., to whose care it has been entrusted.

So far as I and my brethren here can learn, there exists a widespread if not universal feeling of discontent, amounting almost to rebellion, throughout the profession in Scotland at the operation of the Registration Act; and after the recent movement, and lend your powerful advocacy to conduct it to a conclusion. We believe, therefore, that valuable information should be mulcted from us as to the cause of death, not only without any compensation, but under the pains and penalties of law. It is frequently impossible to give the required information without subjecting ourselves to an amount of trouble which encroaches very seriously upon our time, and thus interferes with other duties. In every other case where medical testimony is deemed requisite for the interests whether of individuals or of society, it is an acknowledged principle that it must be paid for; and we are unable to perceive any reason why this principle should be departed from in the case of the Registration Act.

As an instance of the oppressive nature of this Act towards the medical profession, I would take the liberty respectfully to call your attention to THE LANCET of the 20th February last, pages 195-6; and I feel persuaded that after the perusal of the case of Dr. M'Donald there detailed, with the accompanying pages, you will admit that the grievance of which the medical men complain, and I will consult with friends as to the best steps which ought to be taken to remedy it. Believe me, dear Sir, sincerely yours,

W. E. Baxter, Esq., M.P. 

[Copy.] 

Montrose, March 9th, 1858.

S. LAWRENCE, M.D.

(Mr. Baxter's reply.)

Dundee, March 12th, 1858.

DEAR SIR,—Your favour of the 9th has been forwarded to me. I expect to be in London early next week, when I shall have great pleasure in presenting your petition. My attention has been before called to the serious grievance of which the medical men complain, and I will commit with friends as to the best steps which ought to be taken to remedy it.

Believe me, dear Sir, sincerely yours,

S. LAWRENCE, M.D. 

Gainsborough, March, 1858. H. B. SMALLMAN, M.R.C.S.E.

CASE OF TRANSFUSION FOLLOWED BY DROPSY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Many of your readers will probably recollect an interesting case of transfusion, which appeared in your journal on the 3rd Oct., 1857, and which ultimately came under the care of Dr. Mackinder, in conjunction with whom I am assistant. The patient, Mrs. W,—not recovering her usual state of health so quickly as desired, was anxious to place herself under the medical attendant of her family, and consequently came to visit her mother at Gainsborough for that purpose. On the 4th of February, 1858, Dr. Mackinder, in conjunction with myself, first visited her, and found her in a state of great anemia, with acutes and anasarca of the whole body. We prescribed the most nourishing and stimulating diet, under which she at first slightly rallied; but on the 17th, being threatened with suffocation from a greater distension of the abdomen, we were compelled to perform paracentesis abdominis, drawing off thirty-four pints of limpid fluid. From operation she never recovered, but sank two days after, in spite of all our endeavours to save her. The above case is interesting in a physiological point of view. It becomes questionable whether the drug was dependent upon the transfusion or was an idioopathic affection. Perhaps some of your readers will have the kindness to enlighten me upon this subject.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

H. B. SMALLMAN, M.R.C.S.E.

PERTUSSAL GLUCOSURIA. 

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your valuable number for Saturday, January 30th, under the head of "Clinical Records," a short article occurs, which speaks of the discovery by Dr. Gibb in 1855 of sugar in the urine of pertussis, and also draws attention to the wonderful rapidity and efficacy with which nitric acid removes that morbid product from the urine. Previously to reading that article, I was not aware that any writer had taken notice of this pathological state of the urine. Dr. Gibb, in his work on Hooping-Cough, published in 1854, gives not the slightest hint of sugar in his analysis of the urine, although he strongly recommended that acid as a certain cure for the complaint, and explains its modus operandi—"by its supplying nitrogen to the blood, to remove or neutralize the excess of fibrine existing in that fluid, one of the dangerous elements of the disease, and so destroy the poisonous principle combined with it, which is the primary cause of this affection." At the same time he mentions that Dr. Arnoldi used nitric acid as a remedy in pertussis, in order that it might introduce the elements of the atmosphere into the blood by the process of gastro-intestinal digestion, and so enable the lungs to outstand the stage of temporary asphyxia, which is induced by a severe paroxysm.

Previously to reading your short notice, I had flattered myself that I was the first to notice this pathological state; but as Dr. Gibb made it known in 1855, I can now only bear my corroborative testimony to it, which I do with great pleasure. At the same time, however, I must make a few remarks to show that it is not peculiar to pertussis, nor does it deserve to be considered as the cause of it, but only an effect. During the summer of 1856, I read with great pleasure the results of the
very interesting experiments made by M. Claude Bernard, and
writing in a strictly technical style, that Mr. Syme and the
Experientielle Applique à la Médecine," in which he shows
that sugar can be produced at any time in the urine of any
animal by slight continued irritation of the medulla oblongata.
This is in fact what M. Claude Bernard mentions in his "Diction-
ary of Practical Medicine," that in the numerous post-mortem
examinations which he made in cases of pertussis, he found
irritation, if not inflammation, of the mucous membrane of the
pharynx and stomach, which was well marked in nearly every
case, were the premises from which I was led to predicate
the probable appearance of sugar in the urine of nearly every
case. These experiments, coupled with the fact mentioned by Dr.
Copland in his "Dictionary of Practical Medicine," that in
the past twelve months, but not so well as in the preceding
case, he had recently married a young lady in Jamaica, whom he
brought to England, and at the time his ship arrived home she
was probably of the urine which is in a fluent state. I found
sugar in greater or less quantities in nearly every case, the urine
in general, but not always, of a high specific gravity, and in general
accompanying a large amount of phosphates. The results show
that sugar is not present in the first stage, but makes its ap-
pearance in the second or spasmodic, and continues, but in a
less marked degree, through a third or convulsive. It is easily
shown by means of the liquor potassæ, but much more so by
the chromate of potash test.

The eldest, aged thirty-seven, occasionally regains her voice for
a few weeks; she suffers from a severe spasmodic cough when
ever she has occasion to speak to a stranger, or when any
friend meets her unexpectedly. After any attack of this kind,
she shows a large quantity of sugar than when she is per-
fectly quiet; specific gravity reaches 1034. The youngest lady,
aged nineteen, also has occasionally regained her voice during
the past twelve months, but not so well as in the preceding
case. She, however, has no spasmodic cough; the hysterical
symptoms are not so well developed as in the preceding case,
but the sugar is more abundant. I should remark that these
two ladies, though not related, are intimate friends, and the
younger became affected a short time after the elder lost her
voice.

I have hastily put these few facts together, thinking that they
might be of interest; at the same time I promise myself,
when I have more leisure, to fill up the blanks, and give the
fullest details of a number of cases of pure hysteria in which
this state of the urine is found.

I remain, Sir, yours, &c.,
Jas. Johnston, M.B. Lond.

THE INFLAMMATION AND BLOODLETTING

Controversy.

To the Editor of The Lancet.

Sir,—I am sure you will grant me a short space to enable
me to say, how much I regret to find that I misunderstood
Dr. Sanderson's words. The misconception, however, was one
into which Mr. Syme also fell, and into which all who read
the words will, I think, equally fall. Dr. Sanderson wrote, in
his journal of Feb. 27th:—"Mr. Syme uses mercury, and
directs us how to use it in his book. The Professor of Surgery
teaches us, that for syphilis there is no remedy equal to
mercury." It is only now that I gather from Dr. Sanderson's
letter of March, that Mr. Syme uses mercury, and that the
Professor of Surgery are not the same person. It is not there-
fore Mr. Syme, but Mr. Millar, who makes the assertion
about the excellence of mercury.

The controvertists are every way very annoying. Dr. Sander-
son is naturally ill pleased at what I wrote, and we have both
been occupying your space in vain, and troubling your readers
with a shadow. One word, however, I would add. That
Mr. Syme uses mercury, is a fact mentioned in the book; but he
uses it as only a purgative or an alterative, exactly as he uses it
in numerous other diseases. He does not use it to produce
mercurialization. In the accepted sense of the term, therefore,
he is not a practitioner of the saprophytics or syphilists. He abhors
them on the contrary. That the practice of Mr. Syme is the general prac-
tice in Scotland, I firmly believe. This is all I said, and this
strictly correct,—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Carnegie-street, March 29, 1858.
W. O. Marham, M.D.

YELLOW FEVER AT ST. THOMAS'S.

[March 20, 1858.

(YELLOW FEVER AT ST. THOMAS'S.

DEATH OF DAVID L. FINLAY, ESQ., SURGEON.

(From a Correspondent.)

It was but at the commencement of the present year that
the attention of your readers was directed to the flagrant in-
justice exercised by the directors of the Royal Mail Steam-
packet Company towards their medical staff, and to the in-
adequate remuneration offered to those whose post is one of
great risk and responsibility. To show the risk, we need only
consider the number of those who, after a time, have been
forced to leave it on account of ruined constitution. We now
have to communicate the sacrifice of another victim to the
mammon of this rich but badly-paying company.

The Panama has just returned to this country from the
West Indies, after an absence of six weeks; but this brief
period has sufficed for the surgeon of that ship, Mr. Finlay,
to contract yellow fever, to which he has succumbed, at the early
age of twenty-seven. Mr. Finlay left Southampton with his
ship, in perfect health, Jan. 17th. He had recently married a
young lady in Jamaica, whom he brought to England, and at
the time his ship arrived home she was hourly expecting her
confinement. She heard that before he left St. Thomas's the
Plata had arrived there, by which he had received her
letter; that he appeared to be in perfect health and spirits,
and went down to dinner, towards the latter end of which
he felt a headache, of which he made light, and went to
bed. But from that bed he never rose; for unmistakable
symptoms of yellow fever speedily supervened, and in a few
days he breathed his last.

Your readers are not to suppose that yellow fever is the only
peril to which the seamen of these ships have to contend
with; for there is Panama, Chagres, and a host of other fevers
of fatal results, besides the almost continual presence of
cholera. On the perils and discomforts of the sea, on shipwreck,
fire, and mutiny, it is needless to expiate, for they will readily
suggest themselves to the minds of all.

Now, as to the responsibility; the surgeon is held account-
able for the health of the ship. Before the commencement
of each voyage, he has to be present at the signature of the arti-
cles, to see that none but healthy hands are shipped, and
he has always to exercise the utmost vigilance to prevent, as
far as possible, the invasion of disease; he has to encounter and
remedy, single-handed, the most formidable epidemics and ep-
demic, and often to drug himself, as has been frequently
said, from his own sick-bed, and, may be, death-bed, to minister to
the wants of others. It will be said that, with all this, he
most probably has a large amount of pay; that there is a good
proportion of the same devoted to his own professional expenses,
and that his widow has an ample pension. Oh, no! there are
none of these; if he be sick, or disabled, or superannuated, he
must support himself, or go to the hospital or poor-house, and
his widow is ignored and uncared-for. During his time of
active service he has eight pounds per month; that is to say,
scarcely three per cent. on the money expended on his profes-
sional education. It is easy enough to invest money, safely, at
such a rate of interest, and to realise it at any given moment;
but this is sunk and gone. This very Company pays seven
per cent. on invested capital, always realizable; so that if, in
the mean time, he would get more than double the interest for
his money, he would not only find it available on any emergency, but, in
the mean time, he would get more than double the interest for
himself; for there is Panama, Chagres, and a host of other fevers
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