walked about the room "to relieve it," he experienced hiccough.

Nov. 3, I again saw the patient. Dr. Wilmot also examined him. The shoulder was *less painful*, and he did not hiccough so often when he moved it, and not with the same violence when he did so, as before. There is an evident relation between the degree and frequency of the hiccough, and the greater or less exalted sensibility of the shoulder-joint. He does not now always hiccough when the joint is moved, or even when he knows that it is examined for the purpose of producing the affection.

This case is singular, and would have been once attempted to be accounted for by the term sympathy; a word which Müller so well describes, "as explaining every thing, and yet nothing." I cannot but view it as dependant on the reflex function, illustrative of which there remain, doubtless, many interesting pathological phenomena concealed; and to this also would I attribute some symptoms in a case which Dr. A. Thomson has narrated, (*LANCET*, vol. ii., p. 1, 1838-39.)—"She found that on pressing the cicatrix of a wound, in the forepart of the left hand, which had been inflicted by the breaking of an earthen vessel, a peculiar suffocating sensation was experienced in the gullet, and a crowing sound elicited." This instance is dependant upon the same principle as that I have described, though it exemplifies its operation in a different manner.

All cases of muscular action excited by irritation, and clearly of an *involuntary kind*, that happen in parts where the "true" spinal marrow influences in health, are attributable to its agency. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

WILLIAM FREDERICK BARLOW.
Tunbridge Wells, Nov. 9, 1840.

THE COERCION SYSTEM.

INHUMAN TREATMENT OF THE INSANE IN THE
BETHLEM LUNATIC ASYLUM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In your remarks, Mr. Editor, on the statement and counter-statement made, at the last county meeting of Middlesex magistrates, by Sir Peter Laurie and myself, you very properly observe, "either Mr. Tulk or the President must be in error: and if the former, he has been grievously imposed upon; if the latter, how little must he know of the real management of that hospital." It may go some way towards determining whether my respected informant, or the worthy president of Bethlem, best deserve to be impaled on the horns of your dilemma, if I give you my notes of a visit which I have since made to the hospital, along with Mr. Sergeant Adams. When you read these notes, and they are yours to make what public use of them you may

think right, you will probably be strengthened in your opinion that the matter must not rest here; and you will be pleased to learn that the governors of the hospital think so too: for now that a charge has been publicly brought, they are beginning to bestir themselves; and there is every reason to hope that in course of time their eyes will be opened, if by no other means, most surely and effectually by a Parliamentary inquiry, to the existence of abuses within the walls of their institution, which hitherto they never dreamt of. The president will find that a patient who under provocation attempts to strike an officer, may be punished—of course with a view to his cure—by solitary confinement in utter darkness; a punishment more severe by far than any proposed separate confinement of prisoners, which I have heard him oftentimes feelingly deprecate, as calculated to drive a sane man mad. What will be his indignation when he learns that punishments of a like kind, only more grievous in their form, have been inflicted on an irresponsible lunatic in the hospital over which he presides! How the medical officers and the steward will be able to excuse this rigorous treatment of the insane to their president, except on the principles of homœopathy, it may be difficult to conjecture. He has told the public that he disapproves of the practice altogether, and that it would not be permitted in Bethlem. It is practised, though not permitted in Bethlem. They will have no other way then of healing his wounded sympathies, except by showing him, that, though when applied as a punishment it will drive a sane man mad, it has quite the contrary effect on the insane when administered as a medical remedy. I am, Sir, yours faithfully,

CHARLES AUG. TULK.

Duke-street, Westminster,
Nov. 10, 1840.

NOTES OF A VISIT TO BETHLEM HOSPITAL.

On the morning of Saturday, the 31st of October, 1840, I accompanied Mr. Sergeant Adams to Bethlem Hospital. He was asked, on entering, by an attendant, whether he wished to see the steward; but he declined seeing him, and desired to be attended only by a keeper. Our visit, as I understood from Mr. Sergeant Adams, was principally to see a patient, I. D. S., who had been for some years a prisoner in the Westminster Bridewell, and whom, on a previous visit to Bethlem, he found confined in a dark cell. The first ward we entered on the male side seemed wholly deserted; but as we walked through it, we heard the moans and cries as of a person in distress from a room on the right-hand side. We had gone forward with the keeper a few paces beyond the room, when, attracted to the spot by the increased moans and cries of fear, we turned and went

into the room. The door, if it had any, was open; and lying on the ground we saw a wretched-looking object, seemingly as if he was just recovering from a fit. Upon being lifted up by the keeper, it was painful to witness his nervous excitement; he trembled all over, and continued to moan and cry. The keeper, after placing him upon a form, and telling us that he was a poor timid creature, about to be discharged from the hospital, in consequence of his fits, left him as he had found him, with no one to take charge of him, and quiet his fears. This patient we afterwards saw in a cell lying on his bed.

From this we passed into the male criminal wing, where Mr. Sergeant Adams, who was going forward to point out to me the dark cell in which I. D. S. was, as he supposed, then confined, was stopt by the keeper, and told that he was in another cell, which we were passing. He came out, and expressed his joy at seeing us: he spoke of the cruelty with which he had been treated; of his having been mocked with the promise of such a dinner as he wished to have, and then laughed at when the promise was broken; of his having been furnished by the steward with, I think, three weeks' solitary confinement in a dark cell, because, being exasperated by such conduct, he had attempted to strike him. We went into the cell, and had the door shut upon us, and I could not perceive the faintest glimmering of light. It was not a darkened cell in which the light is softened, not excluded, but truly a dark cell, in which I could perceive no crevice, even around the door, by which the light could enter; while a window shutter, near the top of the cell, closed and locked, so as effectually to shut it out on the side opposite the door. Here I. D. S. had been confined. We learnt from the keeper, as well as from I. D. S., that at one time on his refusal to take food, the stomach-pump had been used. We asked to see the strait-waistcoat and the coercion chair which had been employed on the occasion. We were shown into a small room looking out upon one of the airing grounds: there we found the coercion chair, and there the waistcoat, which with his own consent was put on I. D. S., to show us in what way he had been fastened, hand and foot, while food was being administered to him. While this was going on, and we were talking with I. D. S., and the two keepers were then with us, the criminal patients in the airing ground flocked, many of them, around the window, and the sergeant made several inquiries about two patients whom we saw among them in restraint; the keeper, who had the care of them, was very unwilling to give us any information about them; he shuffled, and gave such evasive answers that at last his fellow-keeper reproved him for it, and the information was only wrung from him by the ser-

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geant, as a governor, insisting upon a direct reply; we then found that their hands were kept fastened both by night and day to the iron belts that went round their bodies.

We were afterwards taken, at the desire of Mr. Sergeant Adams, to the cell of a patient of, I think, the name of Fransome. Upon opening the door the stench was loathsome in the extreme; I could scarcely enter it, for it was as bad as the filthiest dog-kennel. This patient was in a maniacal state, but with occasional, though rare, glimpses of coherency. He seemed aware that we were speaking in terms of commiseration of his wretched condition, for he frequently said that he was shamefully used; and he offered some pieces of woollen, which he had torn off his dress, for us to smell, in proof of his dirty condition. The only thing that seemed clean about him was the straw on which he was lying, and which we were told had been changed that morning. His whole appearance was truly pitiable: his hands were manacled, and he was chained to the bed. He could not leave his bed, and, as it appeared to me, could only partly raise himself up by twisting his body. We were informed by the keeper that he was never taken out, but lay in his filth until his straw was changed. As well as could be made out from a hasty examination of the books in the house-surgeon's room, this patient had been subjected to the restraint for, I believe, *sixteen* weeks; but of this I will not speak positively.

We found from the keeper that patients in Bethlem Hospital not unfrequently devoured their own excrement, and that no ways were resorted to in order to prevent it, except the very insufficient one of taking them to the water-closet just before bedtime. The obvious remedy had not suggested itself of placing some food by the bedside.

Before we left the hospital, we went into the house-surgeon's room along with the steward; there the conversation turned on the case of I. D. S. and his punishment in the dark cell. It is right to mention that the steward denied its being intended as a punishment for the attempt at an assault, assuring us that it was a part of the necessary medical treatment, and that he was not put into the cell immediately on making the attack, but only the same day. How soon after we did not learn.

The surgeon admitted that I. D. S.'s complaint about the dinner, which had roused his anger, was well-founded; that after the promise made to him, that he should have mutton chops and oysters, the latter were refused him; and the reason the surgeon gave us for the broken promise was that, after having eaten two mutton chops, there was not the least necessity for his having the oysters.