ON THE TREATMENT OF

VASCULAR NÆVUS.

By MARSHALL HALL, M.D., F.R.S., &c.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the *Medical Gazette* of March 22, 1834, there are some observations upon a plan which I had proposed for the treatment of nævus, in a paper read before the *Medico-Chirurgical Society*, made by some of the members present. I thought those observations injurious to the interests of science, and I therefore addressed a few lines in reply to the editor of the journal in which they appeared, requesting that if my communication were not inserted, it might be returned to me immediately. That gentleman did not think proper either to insert or return my letter! I will ask any man of honourable mind in our profession—Is this conduct either fair or courteous? The editor of the *Gazette* observes, that I ought to have been present at the reading of my paper. Mighty dictator!—*Risum teneatis amici!*

I will now briefly state, as I may remember, the contents of my letter. To the observation of Mr. Stanley, that I ought to have pointed out the different kinds of nævus, I replied that my paper was short, and that it merely proposed to offer “conjectures” for the *treatment* of this disease; yet, that it did enumerate and describe *six* varieties, viz.—1. The *arterial*; 2. The *capillary*; 3. The *venous* or *varicose*; 4. The *subcutaneous*; 5. The *complicated*; 6. The *crescent*; and I asked what other kinds of nævus there were. To Dr. Locock’s remarks—first, that I condemned all other kinds of treatment except my own,—I replied that I did,—that I thought excision a bloody operation, and the ligature, caustic, &c., barbarous; secondly, that some nævi disappeared spontaneously. I replied that, however this might be, the observation did not apply to my cases, for that in them might be traced, as white lines, the course of the needle point. I entirely forget what I said about Mr. Lloyd’s remarks; they did not appear to me to call for a particular reply.

But, Sir, the chief object of this note is, to lay before your readers the *real* plan for the treatment of nævus which I do propose, and to correct the mis-statement in the *Gazette*. I propose to take a needle, appropriate, in size, to the magnitude of the nævus; to insert it at *one* point of the circumference of the nævus, and to carry it through the substance of the disease from

that point to *various other* points, a certain number of times, proportionate to the object we have in view. Each of these movements of the needle induces an incision, which, being treated as adhesive inflammation, *substitutes cicatrix* for the morbid *vascular tissue*, and so cures the disease, in a certain degree. This curative process goes on slowly, and when complete, is only partial in reference to the entire nævus. *The operation is, therefore, to be repeated at regular and proper intervals, until the whole nævus is obliterated.* This is the point to be pressed upon the mind of the surgeon. The operation itself is as trifling as a venesection, or an inoculation; the external puncture alone is painful; if done skilfully, it may be performed in one minute!

And now let me ask what parent would subject his child to the scalpel, the ligature, or the caustic, when a mere puncture, duly performed and duly repeated, will accomplish a cure? And what can the surgeon do in the case of a large nævus of the cheek, the tongue, the lip, the eyelid? The loss of blood, the pain, the ugly scar, attendant on the various plans of cure hitherto proposed, are sufficient, one would think, to deter any person from repeating operations attended by such effects.

Let me warn my readers, that the first effect of a trial of my plan will be disappointment; the curative process is so slow, that he will be apt to think the mode of treatment ineffective. But let him wait some weeks, or months, if necessary; and if it should be necessary to repeat the practice every month, for a whole year even, I should still assert that this plan is the best, because the mildest, and the most generally applicable, which has been proposed.

Finally, let the reader compare what I have here written with the garbled statements of the *Medical Gazette*, and judge whether the editor of that journal has represented my proposition honourably and fairly! I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

MARSHALL HALL.

14, Manchester Square, March 26, 1834.

ELECTRICITY IN VARICOSE VEINS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On reading in your valuable publication, THE LANCET, of the 15th instant, the case of Mrs. H. Walker, I felt very much hurt at her sufferings.

We read of the ancients placing their sick and afflicted in "the high-ways and public places," that some one passing by, who, like them, had been afflicted, might tell of a remedy; you, Sir, will not, therefore, I trust, object to give a place in THE LANCET to the following (merely because it is non-professionally given), and I will be as brief as I can in stating what has invariably proved with me a remedy, and sometimes a very quick one, in that distressing disease of the legs, varicose veins. I have, through excessive fatigue (being sometimes without rest for ten or eleven nights together), been very subject to varicose veins; and, during the period of twenty-five years past, I have met with a great number of females in like manner afflicted. All these, as well as myself, have been cured, whenever placed upon an insulated stool, and had the electric sparks drawn from the leg along the veins affected, beginning at the *extremity* of the swelling of the veins. Under this mode the swellings soon subside, without ever requiring a bandage. For me, in my business, this is an unspeakable advantage, for I could not do to be bandaged, and, without electricity I think I could not long follow my business, for whenever I have neglected to have recourse to it in time, I have found, that although the vein itself did not *rupture*, a wound would begin to form even at a distance from that part of the vein most affected, and most likely to burst. The skin of a distant part of the leg will, in some instances, be abraded without any visible cause, and a thin ichor run from the part, a part which, to a superficial observer, would appear to have no connexion whatever with the varicose veins; but spark the veins and restore them to a healthy state, and this wound immediately skins over and becomes sound.

With a view of keeping my promise of "brevity," I shall only add, that in cases where, unhappily, deep ulcers have been formed, the "wooden point," so called, must be used, for I have known instances where it has been used with very great effect; it cools the wound and brings on a disposition to heal, by the wound secreting a much more laudable species of matter.

I am, Sir, yours, very respectfully,

FRANCES SIMPSON,
A Midwife, and formerly a Pupil
of the late Dr. Thynn.

Leicester, March 26th, 1834.

CONSTIPATION CURED WITH THE STOMACH PUMP.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—At the request of my friends, I forward you the following particulars of a case of severe constipation, that has recently occurred in my practice, for insertion in your valuable LANCET. It occurred in a robust elderly sailor, and had resisted, I believe, every attempt at relief,—bleeding, injections, warm-baths, croton oil, castor oil, elaterium, and blistering. I cured the patient by introducing the tube of a stomach-pump, two feet one inch in length, into the stomach, and working it in the usual manner, without causing pain or inconvenience to the man. On raising the piston the fourth time, it brought up fecal matter, and continued to do so till I had extracted more than a quart. On withdrawing the pipe, he was enabled to void his feces per anum, and speedily recovered from a hastily approaching dissolution. I had introduced the largest-sized rectum bougie three times, without meeting with interruption to its passage, showing apparently that the cause of obstruction was beyond surgical reach. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ALFRED DAVIS, M.R.C.S.L.

Cerne Abbas, Dorsetshire,
27th March, 1834,

EXERCISE OF THE LEFT HAND.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The celebrated Mr. Hunter is represented by Sir Charles Bell to have said, "Give a part its natural use, and that use will be its stimulus to attaining perfection,"—an observation that seems consonant with practical experience; for there can be no doubt that the healthy exercise of any member of the human frame is highly conducive to the perfection of such member.

The deficiency of strength and activity in the left arm and hand compared with the right, is sufficiently illustrative of such an opinion. There is a much greater equality of efficiency between the two legs and feet, than there is between the two arms and hands, which arises from their more equal exercise. Such being the fact, I think it will be a public benefit if the old and singular custom of rearing children to the constant use of one hand, to the prejudice of the other, were totally