right side, and all the vertebræ of the neck, with exception perhaps of the last, seem to be absent; the column seemed to stop suddenly at the level of the shoulders. This part is covered in by cellular tissue instead of skin, and what is extraordinary is, that there exists at the very extremity, a rounded cicatrice, about four lines in length. The genital organs are pretty well formed; the great and small labia can be well distinguished, as also the urethra, which is very large, but the vagina remains in a rudimentary state. The anus is completely absent; in its place we remark a depression at the extremity of the coccyx, and a deep-red colour of the skin, at the point where it should exist.

At the moment of birth the acephalous child was not larger than one's fist, and did not descend lower than the umbilicus of her sister; but since then she has been developed proportionately, if not more so. The parents have never remarked any spontaneous movements in the limbs of the acephalous child; but though the muscles of animal life do not enjoy an independent principle of movement, those of organic life act sensibly, for the bladder acts with force, and expels the urine to some distance, and here we may notice a very remarkable phenomenon, viz., that the bladder of the acephalous child often expels the urine at periods which differ considerably from those observed by the other infant. How, we ask, are we to explain this double sensation, regularly produced on the brain by two organs, belonging to distinct beings, whose structure shows that the nervous communication must be extremely limited? We endeavoured to ascertain if the child was furnished with a heart, but though long accustomed to the use of the stethoscope, we were unable to determine anything. The sensibility of the acephalous child does not seem to be awakened by pain, and only on one occasion was it observed that the well-formed sister cried, when the other was violently pinched.

HUFELAND.—We perceive, by the Continental journals, that the fiftieth anniversary of this distinguished professor has just been celebrated at Berlin by all the learned bodies of the kingdom of Prussia. Orations in honour of him were delivered, and an additional title was conferred upon him by the king. Other distinguished compliments were also paid to this renowned individual.

EXAMPLE OF A PERIODICAL MYOPATHY,

FOLLOWING A CONTUSION OF THE THIGHS.

By JACOBUS SONNERBERG, *Professor of
Physic in the University of Lund, Sweden.*

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—If among the abundance of not common cases of maladies which naturally occur in this metropolis, as the most populous in Europe, the following is worthy of attention, I take the liberty to request its insertion in one of the first numbers of THE LANCET. I am, &c.

JAC. SONNERBERG.

London, July 10, 1833.

CASE.

A Swedish officer, about 30 years of age, during the war in Norway in 1814, got a contusion in both thighs by a cannon-ball. At first he hardly felt himself affected by the accident, but afterwards fell down, and having lain on the ground for six or seven hours, affected by cold and rain, and scarcely sensible, he was brought to the hospital. After a week he was so far restored, that he could resume his duties, although he had some difficulty to ride on horseback, and felt himself molested by the movement and extension of the legs, which inconvenience, however, by the use of spirituous inunctions and wrapping the thighs in bandages, subsequently ceased.

The following year, after riding hard, one of his thighs commenced to smart and swell, but the pain was again dispelled by frictions and fomentations.

In the years 1816-1817, he sometimes felt smarting in the right thigh, especially after riding and taking strong exercise. In the year 1818, the extensors of the right thigh above the patella began to swell at intervals, the symptoms returning after nine days, but without particular pain.

In the summer of 1819, while on a journey in foreign countries, the right thigh was for three days affected with vehement smarting, and so swollen that he could not move it; but by refrigerations with cold water, and the use of plasters and bandages, the inconvenience vanished, although some rigidity and difficulty of moving the limb remained.

Continuing his voyage, the pain returned, so that he was obliged to confine himself in a hospital at Paris during three weeks, where use was made of *cucurbitæ*.

cruentæ, vesicatories fontanels, inunctions, plasters, and bandages.

In 1820 returning to Sweden, his carriage overturned in a journey to a mineral fountain, by which accident the thigh was so hurt that the malady became worse, and the physician thought of amputating the leg. Not agreeing to this, he repeated his former treatment, and was, by pursuing a sedentary life, and the use of fontanels, somewhat relieved. During the three following years, the several different medicines, employed at various times, procured him but little ease.

From the year 1824, the pain very much remitted; he certainly suffered somewhat, but not so much as to prevent him from attending to his domestic concerns, although he was obliged to desist from riding and taking strong exercise. In the following years he had periodical assaults of the illness, at longer or shorter intervals. He continued to use mineral waters and bathing. From the year 1830, the periodical attacks became regular, being renewed every ninth day, although during one or other month he was free from the symptoms. But from the months of May 1832 to this day the attacks have assumed a regular periodical type, so that every ninth day the extensors of the right thigh swell as large as a hand around and above the patella, with, for three days, smarting, swelling, and induration nearly to a bone-like or stony consistence, during which time the patient can walk only by aid of a crutch, when he has the sensation of moving on a wooden-leg. In the following three days the induration and swelling successively vanish, with a feeling of stupor, and a pricking sensation (*formicatio*). After this period of six days, during which the symptoms augment and diminish, the patient becomes free from suffering for the three following days. He then regains the free use of his thigh, which takes its natural form and softness. The attacks of the illness were greater or milder in proportion to the hardness or gentleness of the exercise he adopted; but he felt no difference from variety of season or difference of weather. On the approach of an attack, of which he has a short previous intimation, he is obliged to keep himself quiet.

Although afflicted so many years by this singular illness, he has retained his health in every other respect, as well as his alacrity of mind and strength of body.

REFLECTIONS.

It is evident that the periodical disposition of diseases has so wide a latitude, that scarcely any aberration of the vital process can take place without periods,

while even the normal course of life consists in a struggle between contending powers, in a series of dynamical oscillations, whence it follows that the states of health and disease are subjected to the same laws of nature and life, differing only in modification. But such maladies alone have been termed "periodical," as return by intervals, after which they leave only a relative degree of health—a health which is external only to the patient. And this lasts until accumulation of the imponderable matter (nervous fluid or power?) within, forces, in a determinate time, a fresh explosion of the disease, arising from an injured nutritive process of life. These irruptions seem to consist in the efforts of nature to remove the cause of the malady, and restore the normal course of life; and nature is rife for this purpose as often as causes exist for the reaction, and there is vital power sufficient to perform it. Of this we have evident examples in intermittent fevers; besides which, nearly all nervous diseases (neuroses) approach to periodicity, such as epilepsy, hysteria, arteritis, cephalalgia, insanity, &c. But there exist other maladies, proceeding periodically, the relation of which to the nervous system is not equally evident, and which, because they appear in an unusual form, and conceal their æthiological relations, are called "*morbi latenti*." The celebrated German physician and physiologist, Casimir Medicus, has collected a great many such examples; and, among others, he mentions a sexagenarian whose eyes every six months were projected from their orbits, appearing as though hanging on the cheeks, without diminution of his sight, and subsequently retiring gradually into their orbits. That nervous maladies are not only produced, but also restrained, by the mind, is generally known.

It seems to me, that the morbid affection of which I have above given a description, consists in a periodical congestion of the humerus, and a rheumatismal fluctuation; and it is not without example, that the congestion of blood and spasmodical contractions, arise after an increase of cold, and finally end in a rheumatic tetanus. Such a case of rheumatic myopathy we find related by Boerhaave. A young man, who was of a phlegmatic constitution, and who studied the sciences, after having exposed his feet to strong cold, felt spasmodical smartings in the muscles of the feet, which rose by degrees to the legs and the thighs, and were renewed periodically during two years, each assault lasting two or three hours. To these were united afterwards, spasms of the muscles in the

right side of the back, which ascended to the head, precluding epileptic attacks, and more painful in the winter than in the summer. The patient had a previous intimation of its approach some hours before the attack (which came on without any feeling of cold and *aura epileptica*), by the occurrence of a livid colour on the superior part of the metatarsus (*dorsum metatarsus*). By bandaging the leg the disease ceased.*

It is a common remark, that the pathology of the muscular system is but little cultivated and explained, although pathological anatomy has given us plenty of facts for illustrating it. But because the nervous and vascular systems are factors or regulators of the functions and nutrition of the muscles, and the muscles exist as the chief agents of the nerves, it is easily explained why the diagnosis of muscular affections is so doubtful and obscure, though difficult to determine whether the muscular affections are protopathic or sympathetic.

It is evident that a contusion produced by a cannon-ball, must effect an injury at once of the nerves, the vessels, and the muscular substance; but as the nerves are the conductors of the imponderable matter, every anomaly of irritability is to be sought in an abnormality in the functions of the nerves (*intemperies nervorum*), for the greater part of periodical morbid affections emanates from the ganglionic system.

London, July 10, 1833.

ON

MEDICINAL PRUSSIC OR HYDRO-CYANIC ACID;

AND ON A

NEW AND EXTEMPOREANEOUS FORMULA

For Preparing it always of the same Strength; and free from liability to Spontaneous Decomposition.

By RICHARD LAMING, Esq., M.R.C.S.L., &c., London.

It need hardly be remarked that in a public directory every formula should be perfect in construction, easy of adoption, and uniform in its result. Of this necessary perfection the five forms hitherto used for the preparation of medicinal prussic acid fall so very far short as fully to warrant their exclusion from the phar-

macopœias of London and Edinburgh. One of them, namely, that proposed by Magendie and Robiquet, is much too difficult for ordinary operators; and the remaining four, although more practicable, are of so equivocal a character as almost to preclude the hope of ever obtaining by their means prussic acid twice alike. That it would be futile to entertain an expectation of such a result, generally, will at once be made plain by a cursory reference to the several plans:—

1. Scheele's acid is made by decomposing cyanuret of mercury, dissolved in water, by means of sulphuric acid; and subsequently distilling it over with a portion of the water employed.

In this process, immediately on its formation, the prussic acid is subjected to the destructive operation of sulphuric acid; from which cause no larger a proportion of the strong acid is sometimes found to come over than one part in forty of water; although if the whole were obtained, the same quantity of water should contain more than five times as much. Scheele's solution, therefore, as prepared at different times, will have a strength somewhere between one and a half and eight grains of the pure anhydrous acid to each fluid drachm; and this is the only certainty it can boast of.

2. The medicinal prussic acid of the Dublin College of Physicians is made after the manner of Scheele, substituting muriatic for the sulphuric acid. The strength aimed at is not Scheele's, but that adopted into the Pharmacopœia Gallica, bearing date 1818; the estimated strength, however, is not obtained; the prussic acid being in this, equally as in the former instance, liable to decomposition, on account of its admixture, at the time of its formation, with a mineral acid—the muriatic; which has the additional disadvantage over the sulphuric used by Scheele of more readily distilling over with the prussic, and thus subjecting the medicinal product to a continued cause of deterioration. On these accounts the Dublin solution, which by calculation should contain one and a half grain, seldom possesses, even when recently made, more than one grain of anhydrous acid in the fluid drachm.

3. Gea Pessina has proposed to decompose ferrocyanate of potass, in solution, by means of sulphuric acid: and to separate the prussic acid by distillation, as in the former cases.

This mode is, of course, open to precisely the same objections as attach to Scheele's; in addition to which the necessary arrangements are much more diffi-

* Portal Beobacht. über die Epilepsie.