Poison of the Cobra di Capello," published in 1852. Basing treatment upon such supposed changes in the blood, transfusion in similar cases was therein advocated.

The recent and most important experiments (second series), communicated to the Institute of France, by Eulenberg and Landois, as to the effect of transfusion of blood in animals poisoned by agents either in the gaseous or solid form, are very strongly corroborative of the value of the method suggested. Indeed, at present, no other means would seem to offer, in really urgent cases, a fairer chance of success. I venture to express a hope now that some of the poison will be forwarded to Dr. Tilbury Fox, that the plan may be submitted to the test of experiment, *in vili corpore*.

Another most interesting point in the pathology of serpent-poison respects the protective power seemingly acquired by the system against its further action by frequent repetition of the bite. Dr. Halford supposes that the system thus becomes hardened against the effect of the venom. The question, however, obtrudes as to the manner in which the original protection was acquired. Here the risk to life would obviously much depend upon the amount and intensity of the venom introduced, the locality of the wound, idiosyncrasy of the subject, &c.

May it not be possible, as hinted in the essay alluded to, that when recovery has actually occurred in any given case, the virus may have so modified the organism that, like to that of some eruptive and other fevers, it confers comparative immunity against subsequent attacks?

Finally, with regard to the correlation of serpent-poison to that of some forms of tropical fever. That such correlation does exist between serpent-poison and yellow fever would seem probable from the experiments recorded in the remarkable memoir of De Humboldt, laid before the Royal Academy of Medical Sciences of Havanna in 1852-3.

The inoculation of individuals upon an immense scale at Vera Cruz, New Orleans, and Cuba, with serpent-poison largely diluted was confidently affirmed to afford protection against an attack of yellow fever.

Although the statement of De Humboldt has been since called in question to some extent, there yet remain strong grounds for further experiment in this direction.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN COCKLE, M.D.

Brook-street, London, July 21st, 1868.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In *The Times* of Friday, the 19th inst., there is an interesting account from Melbourne, Australia, of the death of a respected magistrate of that town from the bite of a tiger-snake. A showman was exhibiting venomous snakes of this description, pretending at the same time that he had a remedy for their bite, which he sold. To prove the asserted fact, he was in the habit of allowing himself to be bitten, and then applying his remedy, without evil consequences. Mr. Drummond declared the snakes were harmless, that the whole business was an imposture, and insisted on being bitten himself to prove his assertion. Although the showman was very averse to the experiment, Mr. Drummond was bitten above the wrist. The usual symptoms of snake-poisoning came on, and, notwithstanding the remedy, he died the next day.

The important medical or physiological feature in this case is the undeniable fact that the showman was in the habit of exposing himself to the bites of the same snakes without suffering to any perceptible extent; in other words, that he was proof against the animal poison of the snake.

I believe this fact corroborates an opinion which I have long held, that there are many animal poisons, besides the pathological ones of small-pox, measles, &c., which have the power of so modifying the animal economy, if it does not succumb to their influence, as to render it subsequently all but proof against them. This fact I may illustrate by the mosquito, whose attacks I witness every autumn on the Genoese Riviera. Most newcomers, fresh from northern countries, are terribly punished on their arrival in the south of Europe, as also in all warm climates; and when these same persons return to the South a second and third winter, they are still bitten, but the poison produces scarcely any pain or swelling, as is the case with the natives of the district. In tropical climates it is generally considered, I believe, that the skin gradually becomes less freely supplied with blood, under the influence of

continued heat, and less liable to inflame under the influence of the poison. But, in my opinion, the real cause of this comparative immunity is that the entire economy has been inoculated with the poison, and is henceforth less liable to its action.

A friend of mine, Colonel Meadows Taylor, tells me that he has known in India snake-charmers and others who could bear the bite of the cobra di capello, a most venomous snake, with perfect immunity. Probably, having escaped death the first time they were bitten, the inoculation rendered them proof against the poison afterwards. These facts certainly open the field to much speculation with regard to the influence of the inoculation of animal poisons generally on the human economy.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Grosvenor-street, July, 1868.

J. HENRY BENNET, M.D.

CASE OF SUICIDE BY CARBOLIC ACID.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As I believe the following case to be unique, and that it will prove interesting to many of your readers, I should feel obliged by your giving it publicity.

On July 15th, at 11 A.M., M. E—, a married woman, aged forty-three, was admitted into the Birkenhead Borough Hospital, suffering from the effects of poisoning by crude carbolic acid, taken an hour previously with a suicidal intent. She was insensible, retching, the breathing stertorous, the pupils much contracted, and the pulse intermittent. There was a strong smell of the acid from her breath, and on opening the mouth the tongue and fauces presented a white, corroded appearance. I was informed that, before being brought to the hospital, chalk had been administered. I immediately injected several ounces of olive oil by means of the stomach pump, and subsequently an emetic. Death ensued about noon.

Autopsy, two hours after death.—On opening the body, there was a strong smell of carbolic acid. The oesophagus, dark-grey in colour, was singularly harsh to the touch, the inner coat tearing readily, and friable. The stomach, having been ligatured and removed, was found to contain seven ounces of brown flocculent fluid; the mucous membrane, for the entire extent, was grey, corroded, and easily rubbed off, being coated all over with so-called "Lister's carbolic putty," a combination of the poison with the chalk and oil which had been given. The duodenum presented a curious gradation of colour, from dark-grey at the pyloric end, lapsing into the bright-red appearance of inflamed mucous membrane. The jejunum was congested for about two feet, the remaining portion of the gut being healthy, as were the other viscera, abdominal and thoracic. The brain was slightly congested, and smelt almost as strongly of the acid as the other organs. I may add that the blood was incoagulable; an ounce which I retained is now, five days after death, in a fluid state.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

GEO. WM. HARRISON, M.R.C.S., &c.,

The Borough Hospital, Birkenhead,
July 28th, 1868.

House-surgeon.

THE RAILWAY TRAVELLERS' ASSURANCE COMPANY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Mr. Carter is angry with me for writing to him respecting a patient who is insured in the Railway Passengers' Assurance Company, and he *politely* refers to my literary efforts. It may be a matter of taste, but I much prefer a hastily written, *civil* letter to an elegant and well-studied composition which contains charges and expressions a *little offensive*; but the weather is hot and Mr. Carter is impulsive. He rushes into a difficulty without consideration, and charges me with "obtaining gratuitous opinions about injured persons by an abuse of the courteous relations of professional brotherhood!" Mr. Carter has forgotten *his courtesy* upon the present occasion, and his allegation is altogether unfounded. By the terms of the policy the assured are bound to furnish every information the directors may require, and they can compel the assurer to provide them with as many certificates as may be necessary for their satisfaction. To prevent a repetition of these certificates, as well as on other grounds, I write a short note to the attending surgeon, and am happy to say, that with six or eight exceptions during a period of twenty years, I have

always received a courteous reply. Mr. Carter says, "such letters would, in most cases, involve the acceptance of grave professional responsibility." What responsibility attaches to a simple answer respecting a sprained ankle I am utterly at a loss to conceive; but if it did, Mr. Carter is prepared to incur this *grave responsibility*, provided he has his fee. He may not be usually fond of medicine, but he is quite prepared to swallow the golden pill. The matter, however, is really in a nutshell. If I ever require a confidential opinion, our secretary always pays for it; but when I only require a reply to a simple question I shall still adhere to the plan I have so long adopted, without in the least degree fearing either Mr. Carter or his pen.

I am, Sir, very faithfully yours,
Savile-row, July, 1868. BARNARD HOLT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having read the letter of Mr. Robert B. Carter, of Stroud, in the last number of THE LANCET, respecting the custom of Mr. Barnard Holt to obtain from medical men, for his company, gratuitous opinions about injured persons, I beg to state the following, which occurred in my practice about two years ago. A patient of mine sustained a severe injury. Being insured against accidents, I filled up a certificate sent to him by the Company. After a certain time I had a letter from Mr. Holt similar to the one received by Mr. Carter. Having on several former occasions furnished Mr. Holt with information as to the amount of injuries, &c., sustained by those patients insured in the Railway Accident Assurance Company, and receiving no remuneration for my services, I wrote to Mr. Holt to say that I considered it unfair to the profession to give certificates without receiving a fee; therefore I declined to give the required information unless the company would promise to pay for it. Mr. Holt refused to accede to my request, and said that he would take care not to trouble me for the future. I consider it unnecessary to comment on Mr. Holt's conduct in aiding a public company by seeking gratuitous opinions by private letters to members of his own profession; but I only hope you will take up the matter so that it may receive the publicity it deserves.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Milford, July 21st, 1868. G. GRIFFITH.

THE LATE ELECTION TO THE PRINCIPALSHIP OF THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a letter of Professor Syme in your number for the 18th July, he alleges:—1st. That the 800 members of General Council and graduates of the University of Edinburgh, who signed a memorial to the curators in favour of Sir J. Simpson as candidate for the Principalship, were "beguiled" into doing so by a "disingenuous" "trick" that had been played upon them. 2ndly. That Sir James Simpson had sanctioned the said "trick."

My sole object in writing at present is to controvert the latter allegation, and to inform Professor Syme and your readers that his ungenerous insinuation against Sir James is utterly groundless, because the letter of which Professor Syme specially complains, and which accompanied the memorial, was suggested, composed, printed, and posted on the Thursday previous to the election, during the whole of which day Sir James was in the country, and knew nothing whatever of the said letter, or of the steps that had been taken by his friends during his absence.

With regard to Professor Syme's first allegation, an answer will be forthcoming if deemed necessary.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
JOHN MOIR, M.D., F.R.C.P. Ed.
Castle-street, Edinburgh, July 20th, 1868.

LITHOTRITY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In Sir Henry Thompson's lecture on Lithotrity, in a late number, there is an omission which ought to be supplied. The operation as described in that lecture was introduced into this country fifteen years or more ago by Mr.

Coulson, and has been adopted by Mr. Walter Coulson, myself, and others for many years past. Even the most difficult part of the operation—viz., seizing small calculi and fragments behind the prostate—is described in THE LANCET, March 24th, 1855, with greater minuteness than in the lecture alluded to:—

"Alluding to cases in which the stone or fragment could not be dislodged from behind the prostate, Mr. Coulson recommended that the handle of the instrument should be depressed so as to raise it from the floor of the bladder, and, whilst in this situation, should be completely rotated, the concave part being turned downwards. The handle should then be raised so that the instrument should incline to the floor of the bladder, and the male blade be drawn towards or as far as the prostate. By this manipulation, when carefully performed, the fragments of stone could be easily and safely extracted from that situation."

The direction not to inject water prior to the operation, and not to wash out the bladder afterwards, differs from what has been hitherto recommended. The instrument described in the lecture differs, as far as I can make out, in no respect from the instrument which Mr. Coulson has used during this period.

I have no desire whatever to detract from the merits of Sir Henry Thompson; but it seems to me that we should not forget the services of those who preceded us.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Finsbury-circus, May 18th, 1868. BUXTON SHILLITOE, F.R.C.S.

ST. ANDREWS MEDICAL GRADUATES' ASSOCIATION.

A GENERAL SESSION of this Association was held during the week. On Monday the members met at the Freemasons' Tavern, at 4 o'clock—Dr. Richardson, F.R.S., in the chair. It was stated that a circular had been issued to every graduate by the registrar, informing him that the register will be closed after the 1st October for some time, and that none will be able to vote whose name is not on the list before that date. The fee for registration is £1; and it is necessary that the graduates who wish to be registered should send their names, degree, the year of admission, and profession.

The main topic discussed at the meeting was the question of the representation of the Universities of Edinburgh and St. Andrews. The Council of the Association, believing that the member returned to Parliament should be an authority in medical science, recommended (1) that the representative should be a *bonâ-fide* member of the profession; (2) that Dr. Richardson should be brought forward as the proper candidate.

Dr. RICHARDSON entered at some length into the position in which the Association was placed, remarking that if it determined to carry any one candidate, and its members united, they could no doubt achieve their object. He expressed himself as not ambitious of a Parliamentary life. He would rather discover a cure for cancer than be Prime Minister; but he thought the Association would be deserting their post if it did not support a medical man; and he would stand if it was the wish of the graduates of St. Andrews that he should do so. He declared however that he would not spend a penny upon the election; he eschewed politics, and would go into the House independently or not at all.

Dr. DRYSDALE intimated his intention of supporting no one who would not vote for disestablishment.

Dr. SHORTHOUSE did not care for politics in their member, but only that he should support medical interests.

Dr. PROSSER JAMES, in reply to a question, intimated that he was a *bonâ-fide* candidate.

Dr. MARTIN would not vote for any one who supported the disestablishment.

Dr. DUDFIELD mentioned later in the meeting that he had received letters from many men promising support to Dr. Richardson if he would go into the lobby with Mr. Gladstone, and, again, other support if he would do the reverse. And indeed the meeting itself, which amounted to about forty or fifty graduates, was in no way unanimous; and, finally, twenty-seven hands were held up for the adoption of the resolution of Council, no one voting against it. There was a good deal said about the late candidature of Dr. Richardson, and the probable effect of this in damaging medical interests.