and engravings of encysted disease of the testicle, which are given in "Curling on Diseases of the Testis," and appeared to originate from a degeneration of the tubular structure of the kidney, similar to that which Sir Astley Cooper considered to be the cause of cystic sarcoma of the testicle. Both kidneys are now in the museum of the Bristol Medical School.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

JOSEPH GRIFFITHS SWAYNE, M.D.,

Physician-Accoucheur to the Bristol General Hospital, and
Lecturer on Midwifery at the Bristol Medical School.

Clifton, May, 1857.

TAPPING IN HYDROCEPHALUS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In your valuable and interesting "Clinical Records" of last week, I see an account of a case of tapping in chronic hydrocephalus, and a statement that 10 out of 19 cases had been successfully operated upon by Dr. Conquest. Such a result is totally at variance with my own practice and that of all the best authorities. The history of the operation, from the days of Hippocrates, is marked by epochs of an exaggerated faith in the efficacy of the operation, caused by garbled accounts of its pretended success. Hildanus, Monroe, La Motte, Le Cat, Remmett, Brown, Money, Gray, Witmore, Hood, Freckleton, Sym, Callaway, Rœckling, Hall, Marsden, Oppenheim, Ruppis, Cooper, Dugus, Wittoridge, Smythe, Armstrong, Kilgour, Schœffer, Malgaigne, and Coldstream, all, truthfully, have published their unsuccessful cases. From the most favourable account, out of thirty-seven cases, only six recovered, and of these I should like to have learned the probability of recovery if no operations had been performed. I do not write against the operation so much as against the marvellous efficacy attributed to it, and never borne out by facts or practice when rigidly scrutinized. Drs. West, Battersby, and Winn, in very able papers, have recently investigated the subject, and all concur in the inutility of simply tapping the head. The latter authority, Dr. Winn, in an article published in THE LANCET, Nov. 3, 1855, records a case in which iodine had been used by him in the form of injection. Mr. Bride, of Vauxhall-road, brought me a case that had been for some time under his care, and we injected cold water only and the child recovered: but it was so favourable a case, and the child was so strong at the time, taking calomel, that I should hesitate to decide upon it as conclusive.

I remain, Sir, yours faithfully,

Finsbury-square, April 27, 1857.

JOHN GODFREY, M.D.

A HINT FOR PHYSIOLOGISTS ON PHTHISIS AND CHANGE OF COLOUR OF THE BLOOD.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg leave to offer the following observations to your numerous readers, with the hope that some one may be induced to show that they are either right or wrong; for more has been written on consumption for the last 150 years than upon any other disease whatever, and yet the root of the evil has not been touched upon. We are now left almost as much at a loss as our forefathers were.

Phthisis is a constitutional disease, apt to occur during the virility of the person—say from fifteen to forty-five. It would therefore appear that the sympathy of the genitive nervous function has something to do with consumption; and let us remember one actual fact—viz., the arrest in the progress of phthisis in pregnant women, when the ovarian function is quiescent.

The remedy I would propose for consideration (not for practice) is *castration*. I would not propose it on Malthusian principles, but on the simple principle of saving life. The plan I propose is a most important one; it is one that produces very marked effects on animals. Then why not on our own species, when "the destroyer" begins to prey on their delicate tissues? Castrated animals are easier fattened than entire ones, and it is well known that the beneficial effects of cod-liver oil in emaciating diseases of the chest is owing to its fattening properties. We have often seen patients who had every symptom of incipient and even advancing phthisis unexpectedly recover, sometimes by the use of medicine, and sometimes without any, which probably ought to be attributed to some new mental associations, and yet we have no physiological rule to guide us to a regularly successful treatment. I believe that Dr. Dover's old plan of bleeding has been too indiscriminately laid aside. I merely wish the above to be taken for what it is worth.

I beg leave to throw out another hint on the change of

colour of arterial and venous blood; it will not materially affect the theory of the oxygenation of the blood, but it will tend to strengthen the theory that *an animal being is a galvanic circle*. I would say then that the dark blood of the pulmonary artery (with its new acquisition), at the moment when it insinuates itself through the microscopical valvular capillary at the point where its cribriform tissue has access to the air (or oxygen), becomes that instant charged with electricity—the proof or test whereof is, its change of colour from dark to bright red: it is now arterial or electrified blood; and everybody knows that an electrified or magnetised body possesses very different properties from the same body whose electricity or magnetism is discharged. This arterial blood then traverses the heart and the whole body; but when it reaches its extreme destination at any part, it then insinuates itself through the valvular capillaries into the veins (being the other pole of the battery), its electricity is discharged, and the blood becomes dark and venous; so that our lives are made up of this charging and discharging of electricity, which is kept going by means of the nervous systems in decomposing air, food, and drink for that purpose. The torpedo and gymnotus are acknowledged to have this electricity in a concentrated state, therefore it requires but a small effort to believe that all animals possess it in different degrees.

I have (on May 17th, 1842) found and demonstrated the nervous system of plants. When those nerves were isolated in a peculiar manner, they showed symptoms very much like worms writhing in pain. I am, therefore, well satisfied that vegetables live and grow by means of their nervous systems, like animals.

I am, Sir, yours respectfully,

Wrexham, 1857.

GWILYM.

THE SPECULUM OCULI, OR OPHTHALMOSCOPE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As I believe your journal is intended for the publication of original communications, I think it right to inform you that the illustrations which have recently appeared in a series of papers by Mr. Jabez Hogg, are copies of some original drawings of my own, and are now published without my consent.

These drawings having been made when I was only commencing the study of the ophthalmoscope, and with no view to publication, are in many respects imperfect, and are, therefore, not likely to advance the scientific investigations of those diseases of which Mr. Hogg's paper professes to treat.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

Grosvenor-street, May, 1857.

GEORGE PARKINSON.

POOR-LAW MEDICAL REFORM.

GREAT MEETING OF THE PROFESSION.

A PUBLIC MEETING, of a very important and influential character, consisting of the Poor-law Medical officers of England and Wales, and the profession generally, was held on Thursday last, at Freemasons' Hall, for the purpose of adopting a petition to Parliament, having for its object the amelioration of the condition of that portion of the profession engaged in Poor-law practice throughout the country. The Right Hon. the Earl of SHAFTESBURY occupied the chair.

The noble Chairman, in opening the proceedings, stated that the condition of things was much the same as when he attended a meeting in 1841. He entirely concurred with the terms of the petition about to be submitted to them. The status of the Poor-law medical officer was not what it ought to be, and he thought such a state of things should not be permitted to continue. (Hear, hear.) He looked upon the question as one in which the poor were very much interested, for they greatly depended upon the facility with which medical relief could be obtained. When the state of the working man was taken into consideration, with bad drainage, unventilated houses, &c., they could not attach too much importance to the way in which the medical officers of the poor were treated. If they wanted a sober, loyal, and healthy population, and one which could recognise not only their own rights but the rights of others, means must be taken whereby poor people would be able to obtain that proper medical treatment to which they