strength to that of Vauquelin, when due calculation is made for evaporation during the formation of the latter.

Each fluid ounce will contain exactly 12 grains of pure acid.

Each fluid drachm will contain exactly $1\frac{1}{2}$ grains of pure acid.

Each fluid minim will contain exactly $\frac{1}{40}$ th grain of pure acid.

The proportions given in the formula may be maintained for any quantity of product that may be desired, by taking

Tartaric acid 25 grains.

Cyanide of potassium 11 grains.

Distilled water 3 fluid drachms.

Or any multiple of these numbers, my original formula being their multiple by six.

I am, Sir, &c.,

RICHARD LAMING, Surg.
89, Bishopsgate Within, July 22, 1831.

TRIAL

IN THE

COURT OF COMMON PLEAS.

COLLIER *v.* SIMPSON.

LETTER FROM DR. COLLIER.

"Modus utendi ex veneno facit medicamentum, ex medica mento venenum."

"Medicines are life-saving in life-saving doses, and poisons in poisonous doses."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I hate scribbling and paper wars, and on this account I have not penned a line in any medical journal these ten years. You, however, by inserting in your LANCET of last week certain misrepresentations, compel me most reluctantly to sacrifice a few minutes in disabusing your mind, and that of the medical public, to whose good opinion I do not affect to be indifferent. In the cause COLLIER *v.* SIMPSON, tried recently in the Court of Common Pleas, and in which a verdict was given against the defendant for slander, five medical men were examined. Your correspondent gives a garbled account of the evidence of four, and leaves out the fifth entirely. Now, Sir, can any man doubt, after reading Mr. Simpson's extracts from the evidence, that it is his wish to gull the medical public into a belief, and that his object on the cross-examination of my witnesses was to gull the jury into a belief (as he had temporarily gulled Messrs. Granville, Copeland, Johnson, and Thompson), that I had exhibited half a grain of corrosive sublimate, and six grains and a

half of digitalis, in twenty-four hours? Now for the refutation.

It was in evidence that the prescription was written on Sunday evening at six o'clock; that in the very act of prescribing, I requested the mother to show me her teaspoons; that she showed me three; that I selected the least, a very small metal spoon, such as the lower classes use as a sugar-spoon; that I had just before been using this same spoon while showing them how to feed my hydrocephalic patient; that although a second bottle of the medicine was compounded, only one dose of that second bottle was exhibited, scarcely sufficient to compensate for unavoidable loss in the exhibition of the several doses of the first; that the medicine was discontinued on Tuesday night at twelve o'clock; that the mother had exhibited it regularly every four hours; and yet, that the whole taken between six o'clock on Sunday evening, and twelve o'clock on Tuesday night, an interval of fifty-four hours, or fifty, allowing four hours for compounding it, was one bottle, and one dose out of a second, or, in other words, half a grain in fifty hours, and not half a grain in twenty-four hours, as your correspondent has erroneously stated.

Now, Sir, upon this part of the evidence I shall only remark, that the spoon was produced in Court; that it was passed up to the bench; that it was examined by Sir Henry Halford, and that that distinguished physician very properly prefaced his opinion with these words: "This is an unusually small spoon. I presume that each dose would contain one-twenty-fourth part of a grain of corrosive sublimate," &c. Refer, Sir, to the evidence of Sir H. Halford, as stated by Simpson, and published by yourself, and make the *amende honorable* as soon as possible, for having done him much injustice in publishing such a garbled statement of it.

So much for the affair of the spoon, about which your correspondent is as silent as the grave. I call upon you to come forward and give your opinion as an independent journalist, and say whether this surgeon-apothecary deserves any lenity at my hands. I here, "ex more tuo," challenge you and the whole medical world to canvass my treatment of this case, and to show that a more scientific prescription could have been substituted. It is important to know, that the druggist who compounded the prescription was in court during the trial, and that he is intimate with the defendant.

Having read this statement, which, if the defendant can succeed in impeaching, I pledge myself to pay the heavy costs which his malignity has fixed upon him, I now ask you, Sir, and the public, how much bearing had the cross-examination of my witnesses

to do with the cause. For example, suppose the defendant's counsel, instead of asking each witness, "Did you in your own practice ever give half a grain of corrosive sublimate to a child seven years old within twenty-four hours?"—suppose, I say, he had asked, "Did you ever give half a bucket-full of corrosive sublimate to a child seven years old within twenty-four hours?"—would not this last question in strict equity be just as applicable to the case as the first? Why then was it asked? To throw dust into the eyes of the jury, whose minds, as the defendant called no witnesses, he knew my counsel would have no opportunity of disabusing—and why does he continue to fiddle on the same string?—to throw dust into the eyes of the public, with the vain expectation, that as he had never known or seen me engaged in a paper-war, I might digest the misrepresentation in silence.

It is my next business to subjoin a few comments on the evidence of Dr. Elliotson, which the defendant would construe as strongly reprehensory of my practice, but which, in fact, was only reprehensory of a course of practice which the defendant proposed for his own gratification, and for the misleading of the jury. Thus Dr. Elliotson was led to say he would not depend on the term "teaspoonful" for such a medicine. Had I trusted to the term? Was it not in evidence that I had carefully selected my measure out of three teaspoons? He then goes on to say, that he would wish to produce salivation and flux of urine in such a case. Did I not succeed in that indication? And had we not the evidence of Mr. Dale, the apothecary, to prove that the child was mildly salivated, and was under as favourable circumstances for recovery as the nature of the disease would permit? "Dr. Elliotson would have been very anxious in inquiring what had been done before." Was it not in evidence that the physician knew, and that even the poor woman Minter knew, that her child had been taking calomel powders every four hours for four days, without any effect. "After such a prescription he (Dr. Elliotson) would have seen the child twice in the day, or heard from some one on whom he could depend." Was it not in evidence that, on the only day I omitted to see the case, I had two interviews with Hannah Minter, and heard from her the progress of it, and the effects of the medicine; and I would ask those who heard her evidence, Did she not manifest more than usual intelligence? "If the tongue were swollen," said Dr. Elliotson, "and the teeth denuded, the effects were stronger than desired." Did the defendant's counsel dare to support this inuendo, by putting on either of the witnesses who saw the child a single question, by which the court and

jury might have determined whether the salivation was mild or severe? And did not the plaintiff's counsel, with Orfila in his hands, opened at that page in which he described the effects of excessive salivation put question after question to elicit from the young woman (age 22) Minter, who was constantly in attendance upon her brother whether such effects had been observed? And were not this girl's negative answers sufficient refutation of that most iniquitous calumny which the defendant first conveyed to Dr. Birkbeck, who was told by the defendant the prescription was for a child three years old,—from thence to Dr. J. Johnson, who was told by the defendant the three bottles of the medicine had been given,—from thence to Drs. Granville Thomson, and Copeland? And were they not all told, that this child had died from and under the effects of corrosive sublimate? Was not a written paper shown to them, describing the extensive ulcerations which the medicine had produced? And had not the defendant his justification on record up to the day of the trial? Dr. Elliotson, "according to the directions, imagined the whole of the medicine would be taken in twenty-six hours." Where was Dr. Elliotson when it was proved, that the aggregate quantity of the medicine taken did not exceed one bottle, and one dose out of the second bottle? Where was Dr. Elliotson when the spoon was produced, and when that spoon was proved to have been selected at the time of prescribing? Where was he when it was proved, that after regularly exhibiting the medicine every four hours, from Sunday evening to Tuesday at midnight, one bottle and two teaspoonfuls of the second bottle was the aggregate quantity that had been given?

For those who take an interest in this trial, not from an itching after slander, but from a love of science, I shall here subjoin a few references:—

Underwood's Diseases of Children, 8th ed., p. 358. Several cases of *hydrocephalus acutus*, treated by the corrosive sublimate, from the one-thirtieth to one-sixteenth of a grain every four or six hours: of these, two were successful.

Medical Commentaries, vol. 5, p. 332. A successful case, treated by Dr. Thomas Aery, of Whitehaven, by corrosive sublimate, calomel, and mercurial inunction.

Dr. Cheyne on Hydrocephalus, 2nd ed., 1819, p. 100, treats a child, three years and six months old, with mercury and fox-glove; begins with twelve drops of tinct. digitalis, a much greater dose than mine, and ascends to thirty-three drops four times a day. P. 65, 66, records his opinion, that opium should be given with mercury in hydrocephalus, not to check but to increase the

effects of the latter medicine, and to tranquillize internal irritation.

Dr. Withering on Digitalis, p. 57. Successful case of hydrocephalus acutus; child six years old. M. M. blood-letting, cold effusion, mercurial inunction, and half an ounce of the infusion of digitalis every third or fourth hour!!! P. 97. Another successful case similarly treated.

Hunter on Venereal, edited by Adams, 2nd ed., 1818. P. 505. His opinion is in favour of the most soluble preparation of mercury.

Orfila, p. 47, *Waller's Translation*, 2nd edit. 1818. Considers one-eighth of a grain of the sublimate a very small dose.

Cross's Medical Sketch of Paris, 1815, p. 160. The sublimate the only preparation used at l'Hôpital de Venerien, and administered in half-grain doses. P. 166. The same medicine administered to a child ten weeks old.

See also *Darwin's Zoonomia*, under the article on Hydrocephalus, where that eminent physician suggests the exhibition of this medicine in very large doses, far exceeding my dose.

To sum up as briefly as possible, I complain that Mr. Simpson records, by innuendo, his belief that water is never absorbed from the brain, and yet was giving calomel every four hours for four days. I complain that Mr. Simpson was himself trying to salivate, and yet condemns salivation. I complain that whereas Mr. Simpson, in the face of a judge and jury, and in a court crowded with medical men, heard it satisfactorily proved, that the quantity of corrosive sublimate taken in the fifty-four hours was half a grain and one-twenty-fourth. He has barefacedly made your Journal the vehicle for carrying far and wide his statement, that the quantity was half a grain in twenty-four hours. I complain, that Mr. Simpson is holding me forth as a physician oppressing an apothecary, because he differed in a medical opinion.

Mr. Simpson closes his account by saying, that Drs. Granville, Johnson, Copeland, and Thomson, were subpoenaed on the part of the defendant, but were not called. Why were they not called? Why were they subpoenaed? Mr. Editor, I will tell you. They were subpoenaed to prove that a lad of seven years of age, who takes half a grain of corrosive sublimate every twenty-four hours for three days, and who, after such treatment, has a tongue highly swollen, teeth denuded, fetid breath, ulceration of mucous membrane, vomiting, purging, &c., &c., may be reasonably supposed to have died from bad treatment; but, as the defendant knew perfectly well that my patient had none of these symptoms, and that the lad had been seen by three medical men,

by Mr. Dale, of Holborn; by Mr. Gibson, Surgeon, R.N.; and, within an hour of death, by Mr. Wright, Surgeon of Hammersmith; who could all prove that he had no such symptoms,—the defendant very wisely, although at the eleventh hour, when he saw no chance of saving his own pocket at the risk of my reputation, threw overboard the justification which he had entered on record, and reserved it for the safer mode of discussion among his own medical friends, with whom the slander might rest safe, protected by the doctrine of “confidential communication.”

I have now undeceived you and the public as to the quantity of the medicine exhibited. Permit me to explain the *animus* with which this action was brought. Mr. Simpson has declared, and you have published his declaration, that this trial is evidence of the necessity of medical reform. Sir, it has no more to do with medical reform than with the clay-eating Ottomaquees on the banks of the Orinoco. By the law of this land every apothecary has an undoubted right to express his opinion of a patient's case, even though such opinion be diametrically opposed to that of the physician in attendance; it is his privilege; “the court awards it, and the law doth give it.” But, if an apothecary indulges in the coarse and malignant language of detraction; if in the next breath, after expressing his recognition of a patient's amendment whom he expected to find dead, he unhesitatingly, without calculation, without inquiry, and without qualification, pronounces the remedial agent of that amendment a “rank poison,” he must take the consequences of his malignity.

Engaged in the threefold capacity of practising physician, medical teacher, and author, I have neither time nor inclination for further controversy. Suffice it therefore to say, I brought this action to punish malignity; the jury, by their verdict, have pronounced the defendant's conduct malignant; and now, Mr. Editor, disclaiming all further disputation, I here make a second offer to pay the defendant's costs (£300. at least), if a majority of the medical men, who are his and my neighbours at Hammersmith, will state that, judging from the evidence and from the defendant's professional conduct towards them, they verily and indeed believe that he, the said defendant, was not actuated by a malignant feeling towards

Your obedient humble servant,

G. F. COLLIER, M.D.

32, Spring Garden s, July 25, 1831.

[We shall decline inserting any further communications on the subject of this trial, unless they are comprised within a *very brief space*.—ED. J.]