New-street, Cloth-fair, as examples where the disease had so prevailed. All these, he says, are places where the poor are congregated, and where the habits of the people are not cleanly.

Correspondence.

"Andi alteram partem."

IS AMAUROSIS PRODUCED BY TOBACCO?

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—If the subject of the impairment of vision by tobacco-smoking is to be seriously entertained, it is very desirable that the grounds of that opinion should be stated with intelligible consistency by those who affirm it.

It was difficult to understand how Mr. Wordsworth could connect the atrophy of the optic nerve which he described lately in three patients with the habit of tobacco-smoking, from the clinical facts associated with those cases, and especially from what we know of the general pathology of that disease; it is still more difficult to understand by what logical process he can find satisfaction in quoting the observations of M. Sichel, who has found in his cases the optic papillæ "sometimes pale and sometimes reddened," and "the ophthalmoscopic signs generally negative or but little marked."

I repeat that optic atrophy is a diseased condition which is found in children and women and abstinent adults, as well as in adults who smoke tobacco; that it is not found in thousands of hard smokers, and that many who are most seriously affected with it never tasted the flavour of tobacco. We know it to be commonly the result of tumours, effusions, and alterations in brain-structure, certainly unconnected with smoking. At present there is nothing but arbitrary assertion to connect the two, and all the facts are on the other side. It is obvious that the onus of proof lies with those who assert this singular pathological connexion.

It is for Mr. Wordsworth to adduce something like satisfactory clinical evidence of his proposition, and to find support less equivocal than that which he can derive from reference to observations which are, when examined, found to be wholly opposed to the views as to optic atrophy which he has advanced.

However some may think that social interests may be furthered by putting forward any theory which is likely to discourage the use of tobacco, yet moral evils are not well combated by a fashionable complaisance on the part of men of science. The medical opponents of tobacco have now cried "Wolf!" so often and so causelessly, that they begin to weaken our legitimate influence in respect not only to this matter but to others of a like nature. The terrible utterances of these gentlemen appear to me now to have reached the climax of paradox, when we find Dr. Richardson, (after running over nearly the whole gamut of disease, and finding everywhere the influence of this herb,) quoting amongst others Mr. Wordsworth for the statement that tobacco causes atrophic wasting of the visual nerve, but ending with the declaration that tobacco may be considered less hurtful than many other luxuries, especially sugar; and when we find Mr. Wordsworth, on being put to the proof, produce three utterly inconclusive cases, and fall back on the support of a surgeon who makes a declaration that the ophthalmoscopic signs of tobacco-smoking are "obscure and little marked."

To that obscurity I believe, Sir, they are destined to return; for indefinite diseases shrink from the light like other phantoms, though it be only the light of an argand burner reflected by an ophthalmoscopic mirror.

I am, Sir, yours very truly,

Wimpole-street, Cavendish-square, Aug. 1863.

ERNEST HART.

RHEUMATOID ARTHRITIS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I beg to send you a few notes of a case of rheumatoid arthritis similar to that reported by Dr. Gibb in your journal of the 1st instant:—

Mary Anne B—, aged thirty, was shown to me at the dispensary, June 30th. For the last eight months she has felt and heard a peculiar creaking, almost grating, noise in the right knee-joint, both on flexion and extension of the limb.

The sound is loudest on extreme flexion, and comes from under the ligamentum patellæ. On comparing the two knees there is no marked difference in shape or feel between them. No other joint is, or has been, affected with a like creaking. General health feeble; no history of rheumatism. Blisters have been tried, iodine in various shapes and forms, also mercurials, but no benefit has resulted. Her general health has improved much. Citrate of iron and quinine was ordered, but the knee is noted on July 23rd as being in no way improved.

About four years ago I saw a man about forty years of age who had a most unpleasant grating noise in both shoulders; he had had this for two years, and it seemed connected with syphilis. The syrup of iodide of iron, in large doses, for two months seemed of some value in this case.

Yours obediently,

August, 1863.

JOHN C. THOROWGOOD, M.D. Lond.

P.S.—So far as my judgment goes there does not seem a better name for these joint affections than that of Rheumatoid Arthritis. Like rheumatism and general rheumatic affections they most certainly are, and that they originate in chronic or subacute inflammatory action in or about the joint is, I think, tolerably certain.

STATISTICS OF VACCINATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am collecting statistics on the subject of vaccination and revaccination. May I ask the favour of the insertion of this communication in your journal. To those members of our profession who have made observations, and are willing to correspond on any of the following questions, a letter addressed to me will greatly oblige:—

Primary vaccination.

1. Medium of communication. Whether from cow direct, vesicle of primi vaccinati, vesicle of revaccinati, ivory points, glasses, bottle, capillary tubes, or purchased lymph.
2. Proportion of success to failure in primi vaccinati through any or all of the media.
3. Proportion of mature vesicles in primi vaccinati on fifth, sixth, seventh, eighth, ninth, or subsequent days.
4. Proportion of primi vaccinati in whom erythema, enlargement or suppuratation of glands, or other symptoms of absorbent mischief have occurred.
5. Whether traceable to struma in the vaccinati or in the subject whence the lymph was obtained.

Revaccination.

1. Medium of communication.
2. Proportion of success to failure.
3. Number of times of revaccination before failure is recorded.
4. Result in persons who have had small-pox.
5. Result in persons who have been inoculated.
6. Number of days required for maturity of vesicle.
7. Time elapsed since last vaccination or revaccination.
8. Evidence of successful vesicle—1st, by appearance of vesicle; 2nd, by appearance of cicatrix.
9. Cases of insusceptibility to vaccine virus.
10. Results in children who have had intra-uterine small-pox.
11. Proportion of revaccinati in whom absorbent mischief has occurred.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

METCALFE JOHNSON, M.R.C.S.,

Lancaster, Aug. 1863.

Public Vaccinator.

STUDY OF EPIDEMIC CHOLERA AND THE ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—With reference to the letter from Dr. MacLoughlin in your impression of the 25th of July relating to cholera, I beg leave to say that Dr. Gibson has probably opposed the inquiry suggested by that gentleman for a good reason—viz., because he knows that the disease has been studied scientifically by many army surgeons who have had a far greater experience in it than Dr. MacLoughlin, and also by a Brown-Séquard, who was with us attentively studying the disease during the fearful epidemic in Mauritius in 1854, when four of our number died, in and near the small town of Port Louis.

In this epidemic, as also in that of 1856, post-mortem examinations were made, every treatment known was tried, with some good results it is true, and every theory was studied; and as regards the electricity and ozone theory, the quantity in the atmosphere was registered daily by myself, and handed in to the Army Medical Department. I need hardly say that the invariable premonitory diarrhoea of Dr. MacLoughlin has been proved in India and Mauritius to be a fallacy. He may still persist in his declaration to the contrary, like the Federals in their victories; but when army surgeons declare that they have seen men suddenly roll up in a ball, get cold and blue, and die within two hours, without diarrhoea, and have seen the vomiting commence first, or be present without diarrhoea, the opinion of Dr. MacLoughlin will very likely carry but little weight with the profession. The diarrhoea he dwells on is too often the true cholera, and frequently nothing will arrest it; whereas many men suffer from simple diarrhoea throughout a cholera epidemic, without any ill effects, it not arising from the same cause. Is it likely that such men as Professors Longmore and Maclean have not studied scientifically the disease in the Crimea and India?

Dr. MacLoughlin will find many of us able and willing to prove that he is not ahead of us in the study of the disease, and also to bear testimony that Dr. Gibson has wished to assist us all in studying this and other diseases, as far as lies in his power.

I have the honour to be, Sir, yours obediently,

H. B. FRANKLYN,

The Curragh Camp, August, 1863.

Surgeon, 1st Batt. 10th Foot.

ON THE SMALL SIZE OF THE SPLEEN IN LUNATICS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a paper by Mr. P. W. Jones, published in last week's LANCET, the very small size of the spleen (two drachms) in a lunatic patient is noted amongst the post-mortem appearances. An interesting paper on this subject by Dr. John Wilson, F.R.S., has been recorded; and you did me the favour to publish a note of mine on the same subject in 1854. I think the condition of the spleen is worthy of the attention of those who are specially engaged in investigating the etiology and pathology of lunacy, although, in the present state of our knowledge, it might be rash to affirm that the fact alluded to can have any practical bearing on psychological medicine.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Kidderminster, August, 1863.

JOHN ROSE, M.D., Surg. R.N.

"THE LANCET" MEDICAL FUND FOR LANCASHIRE DISTRESS.

THE Committee, having regard to the actual mitigation of the distress in the cotton districts owing to the season, and to the probable extension and aggravation of suffering in the approaching winter, have resolved to postpone the issue of further grants. The balance in hand amounts to £128. The Committee, in the mean time, desire these gentlemen who have heartily aided them by undertaking the duties of almoners to receive their best thanks. The Committee trust, when the season for renewed exertion shall return, again to have the advantage of their assistance.

MEDICAL TRIALS.

FORFAR SHERIFF COURT.

POOR CUTHILL v. HERD.

JUDGMENT in the following case was given by Sheriff Robertson on Thursday, the 30th ult. :—

This was an action for filiation and aliment against a medical practitioner in Forfar, who, it will be seen, has been assoilzied.

The Sheriff-Substitute, having heard parties' procurators, and advised the whole case, for the reasons contained in the subjoined note, finds that the pursuer has failed to prove that the defender is father of her child libelled: Therefore sustains the defence, and assoilzies the defender from the conclusions of the summons: Finds the pursuer liable in expenses and decerns.

(Signed)

ALEX. ROBERTSON.

Note.—The defender is a medical practitioner in Forfar, and the pursuer is a poor woman residing there. The defender was ordered to visit the poor by the parochial board, being at that time a medical officer to the board. The pursuer admits that one of the complaints under which she was suffering, and for which she was treated by the defender, was of a private nature. The defender, in the discharge of his duty, was bound to regard it as such, and private interviews between the parties were then necessary.

Under these circumstances, the Sheriff-Substitute is of opinion that an unusually strong case must be brought out by the pursuer in order to fix the paternity of her child upon the defender. The Sheriff-Substitute has no hesitation in saying that the evidence, as led by the pursuer, is not such as to warrant a decision in her favour.

Her story is unusually disgusting and improbable. The first act of connexion deposed to took place in her own house, without the defender ever having attempted liberties with her; and this act is entirely without corroboration of any sort or kind.

The next act spoken to is said to have been in defender's own house, in a room off the defender's sitting-room, where a friend of the pursuer's was waiting for her. The pursuer and her friend had gone to consult the doctor, who admits that he took the pursuer into a room apart, because the question he wished to put to her regarding her health was unfit for her friend's ear. A bed was in this room, and it was the only other room the defender had to take pursuer to. The friend (Lakie) says that no question of a private nature was asked in her presence. The pursuer says the same, but on cross-examination she says the doctor asked her about her private complaint when Lakie was present. Independently of the obvious reason for the defender taking pursuer aside on this occasion, it is most unlikely that he would have connexion with the pursuer under the circumstances. The door between the rooms was not bolted, and the defender knew quite well that the pursuer's friend was waiting, and would at once suspect anything improper between them. The Sheriff-Substitute cannot believe that, if the defender is the designing man the pursuer attempts to make him out to be, he ever would have taken this opportunity for having connexion.

Lakie and pursuer both say that a quarter of an hour elapsed before this private interview was concluded. The defender denies this. This is the only part of the pursuer's case where she meets with anything like an important corroboration. But the Sheriff-Substitute can never bring himself to believe that the time spoken to by these girls was as long as they say it was.

Then the horrible attempt at abortion is not in any way corroborated, and is most improbable. The pain the pursuer suffered she swears to have been greater than child-bed; and yet, though three women lived on the same floor as the pursuer, no cries of distress were heard by any of them. This alleged attempt at abortion took place on a Tuesday, and yet by Saturday no one is told of it. Even on Saturday the pursuer did not allude to it.

Then the pursuer denies ever having stated to Mr. Dargie that the defender was not the real father. Mr. Dargie directly contradicts this.

In short, the whole case proved against the defender is that some irregularity is shown in entering his visits to pursuer in his medical reports and diaries—that he was often alone with the pursuer—and that a discrepancy exists between his evidence as to the time he and pursuer were alone together in his house, and between the evidence of pursuer and her friend on this point. If a medical man is to have his reputation blasted upon such evidence as this, the result will be that no practitioner can ever with safety be alone with a female patient for a moment; and that, if a female patient has any complaint of a private nature, a third party ought invariably to be present at any necessary operation, as a witness to the decorum of the medical gentleman who performs it.

If the pursuer's story is true, her case is a hard one; but not more so than the defender's would be if her story be false.

(Intld.) A. R.

Montrose Standard, August 7th.

* * The facts of this case are so closely similar to those which have recently occupied public attention at Chester, that they assume a value which removes it from the category of vulgar crimes. It affords a further illustration of the difficulty medical men have to encounter in the discharge of their professional duties, and also of the necessity, as we have already indicated, of using every precaution to prevent such gross charges having