he then saw objects, but without colour, and ultimately recovered his sight completely.

Mr. WALTON then exhibited the use of the ophthalmoscope upon a healthy and a diseased eye; and the Society adjourned.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

THE RAPID ABSORPTION OF POISONS.

[LETTER FROM DR. E. COOPER WILLIS.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The doctrine of the sympathetic action of poisons is now by most authorities numbered amongst "the things that have been." There are, however, still a few who doubt whether absorption and circulating power can be sufficiently rapid to account for the extremely short duration of time which elapses between the introduction of some poisons into, and their action upon, the system. I trust, therefore, that the memoranda of the following experiments may prove interesting to some of your readers, tending, as they do, to show, not so much the velocity of circulation, but the diffusive power of certain poisons, and to demonstrate the fact, that prussic acid may be found in the tissues where theory would teach us to look for it, but in which there has often been some difficulty in detecting it. I have no new test to bring forward, no new dictum with regard to the *modus operandi* of the poison, but simply offer these few facts as contributions confirmatory of the opinions and experiments of others.

Experiment 1.—Into the pleura of a young rabbit, aged seven weeks, I injected one drachm of dilute prussic acid, containing four per cent. of the strong acid. Symptoms commenced in ten seconds; and death supervened in twenty-five more. The moment that the symptoms commenced, I drew a string, which I had previously placed loosely round one of the hind legs, so tightly, as to stop all possible circulation; it was, in fact, as tight as it could possibly be drawn. The leg was immediately cut off below the ligature, and laid by in a little fresh water, well covered up. The next day, though perfectly unable to detect the least odour of prussic acid, I obtained unmistakable evidence of its existence, both by the sulpho-cyanogen test, and also by Scheele's test after distillation by means of a water-bath.

Experiment 2.—This was a repetition of the first, but with this difference, that symptoms began and the leg was tied at the end of eight seconds. Death ensued in thirty seconds. In this instance also, I obtained evidence from the water in which the leg was immersed by both tests, and by the sense of smell in addition.

Experiment 3.—The same quantity was injected into the pleura of a small pup, five days old. Symptoms began and the leg was tied four seconds only after the injection; and in this instance also I was enabled, by smell and the sulpho-cyanogen test, to demonstrate satisfactorily the presence of the acid.

These experiments were performed in the presence of several pupils, whose noses and eyes I brought into requisition to confirm my own senses.

I conceive, however, that we are not bound to believe that this poison (and others also) is tied up, as it were, in a certain small quantum of blood along which it is carried through the vessels, but that there is a diffusiveness in it by means of which it may pass on in advance of the blood, and so surpass the circulation itself in rapidity of action.

I remain, Sir, yours &c.,

E. COOPER WILLIS, M.B.,

Lower Baggot-street, Dublin, Professor of Forensic Medicine at Steeven's Hospital.
May, 1858.

THE LATE PUBLIC MEETING ON THE MAIN-DRAINAGE OF LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The brief report of this meeting, in your last number, was taken from *The Times*. It, therefore, bears, as might be expected, the impress of the prejudices of that journal upon this subject. *The Times* is deeply affected with that most incurable of all mental diseases—"infallibility." Some year

ago, and consequently before the recent inquiries which have thrown quite a new light upon the matter, *The Times* committed itself unreservedly to the theories and views of the Main-Drainage projectors. It is unreasonable to look for a very favourable reception of the opposite views *just yet*. The day, however, it may be safely predicted, is not far distant when *The Times* will endorse the opinion of Mr. Freebody, Mr. Goldsworthy Gurney, Mr. Walker, and the Royal Commissioners on Town Sewage, that Main-Drainage will not improve the Thames, or the health of the metropolis.

In the meantime, those "crotchety or eccentric sanitarians," who have been mainly instrumental in determining the opinions of these gentlemen, may be content with having at least excited inquiry into the fundamental medical, and engineering questions; and with having successfully aroused that beast of burden for all the vagaries of speculative engineers and chief commissioners—the metropolitan ratepayer—to a due sense of the importance of having evidence of the necessity and utility of the works projected at his cost.

It should be borne in mind, that those who are stigmatized as "eccentric sanitarians," are those who invite public discussion and inquiry; while those who so politely resort to "calling names," are also those who, dreading to see the overthrow of their delusions, and shrinking from the pain of acknowledging their errors, resist a fair and open inquiry.

The four following propositions surely prove that a little calm discussion is desirable:—

1. It is not proved—(if it be, where are the proofs?)—that the Thames acts prejudicially upon the health of the metropolis.

2. It is not shown, that Main-Drainage and Sewage-Interception will materially improve the river. The great evil—the mud-banks—will certainly not be removed by this means.

3. It is not probable, that the diversion of the sewage of London from its natural valley-outfalls towards the bed of the Thames, into intercepting tunnels requiring the aid of reservoirs and steam-engines to propel the sewage where gravitation fails, will improve the sewerage of London.

4. It is probable, to say the least, that the difficulty of ventilating the sewers, when connected with the huge Main-Drains, will be greatly increased; and that consequently we shall be more exposed than at present to the reflux of poisonous sewer-gases into our streets and houses.

When the Main-Drainage projectors shall have satisfactorily answered these difficulties, and a few others equally important,—when they shall have agreed upon a plan,—when they shall have fixed the estimates, which at present range from £2,000,000 to £11,000,000, to say nothing of cost of maintenance and compensation,—above all, when they shall have proved the *practicability* of their schemes, it will be time enough to denounce those who call for inquiry as "eccentric sanitarians."

I am, Sir, yours &c.,

May, 1858.

A SON OF THE THAMES.

ON THE USE OF KAMALA AS AN ANTHELMINTIC.

[LETTER FROM ARTHUR LEARED, L.R.C.P.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In THE LANCET of May 15th some cases of tapeworm successfully treated by kamala are related. The writer adds: "In this country, as far as I know, but one solitary case has been recorded;" by whom is not mentioned; I beg, therefore, to supply the omission. Sometime ago I became possessed of a couple of tin cases containing kamala. They had been exported from Calcutta, as it would seem, accidentally. I made my first trials of the drug, which were quite successful, at the Great Northern Hospital. Thinking it important that a remedy of such efficacy should be laid before the profession without delay, I published a case, in December, 1857, in which it was successful after the failure of other approved means of cure. My friend, Mr. D. Hanbury, who was previously only acquainted with the dyeing properties of kamala, on having his attention drawn to its anthelmintic powers, published, in February last, an article fully descriptive of the drug, and the plant from which it is derived. A further account of it has been lately published by Dr. Moore. The latter gentleman has drawn attention to kamala as a remedy in diseases of the skin.

Since the period first mentioned, a large number of cases of intestinal worms of all kinds have been treated at the Great