antimony, employed so as to act as rubefacients, not pustulants, and occasionally the exhibition of aperient medicines.

I have had many persons apply at the dispensary, who have been considered incurably deaf, the cleansing of the meatus having been imperfectly done, and consequently no advantage was derived from the operation. The proper use of the syringe, after the diseased secretion has been dissolved, will frequently entirely remove the complaint without having recourse to other measures. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
J. HARRISON CURTIS.

2, Soho-square, Nov. 1st, 1838.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE LOBELIA INFLATA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—If you consider the following observations, on the employment of a valuable medicine, of sufficient merit to occupy a place in your Journal, they are at your service. I am, Sir, yours obediently,
ALFRED BOWER, Surgeon, &c.

63, Hoxton Town, Oct. 29, 1838.

It is for the purpose of directing the attention of my professional brethren to a remedy which I believe is not so generally known or appreciated as it should be, but one which merits to rank high on the list of remedial means, that these few observations are penned.

I might fill many pages with the narration of cases from my note-book; they would be no more than faithful transcripts from the records of my experience in the use of the lobelia inflata; but I content myself by merely noticing it as a remedy in certain diseases of the lungs, or in functional derangement of the mechanism of the respiratory apparatus; for confident I am that if once used recourse will be had to it frequently.

In all cases where dyspnoea is a leading and urgent symptom the lobelia is applicable, and its exhibition is attended with the most salutary effects. I say in all cases, because I have never observed any unpleasant symptom to supervene upon its administration, though many are the cases, of so opposite characters, which give rise to this distressing symptom; but hence, as this agent has, I believe, a distinct or localising action on a particular track of nerves, its great utility in the varied phases of disease, will appear obvious.

The lobelia is, beyond doubt, a *contra-stimulant*; nevertheless, it is useful in asthenic diseases, for *contra-stimulants* act as *tonics* upon the specific part on which their

power and influence are exerted; by "repressing the expenditure of nervous influence they cause the heart to struggle less and take repose;" "by the constringing property of the sedative circulated to them (the capillaries) the nervous system recovers power."

Lobelia acts upon the cerebro-spinal system, at least upon a special track of that system, viz., on the respiratory track of Sir Charles Bell; and this opinion is not merely theoretical, for it may be easily reduced to demonstration by every watchful clinical observer; in fact, it is a beautiful illustration, not only of the existence of that particular track, but also of the distinctiveness of functions regarding or relative to the distinctiveness of organisation.

Let the clinical observer administer the lobelia to an asthmatic patient,—one worn down by continued suffering—the wearing and painful efforts at respiration, and let it be, if he pleases, when the paroxysm is at its zenith,—let him stand by and watch the effect; the labouring chest will soon comparatively cease to heave; the gasping for breath will gradually subside into an almost quiet respiration; the wild hollow eye, which was before fixed with earnest solicitation in the steadiness and agony of its gaze, and seemed to speak for relief, will be closed to sleep and repose,—will mantle her gentle spirit over the tortured and exhausted victim.

It has often been a most pleasing occupation to me to watch the effects of this remedy, and let each one observe for himself. It may be said, I think, to be a direct sedative upon the respiratory track, as I have before mentioned, as its obvious action is the production of repose of the respiratory function, and sleep follows as a consequence upon the previous exhaustion.

A remedy that will thus act must have many secondary effects, but I do not examine into these, being content to point out its primary action.

I have given it repeatedly in those cases of catarrh termed by the olden authors "suffocative," and with the happiest results; in dyspnoea arising from oedema pulmonum it has afforded great relief; and in those forms of catarrh marked particularly by occasional paroxysms of dyspnoea, combined with expectorants. In many of those cases of catarrh, especially in the aged and debilitated, where the different rhonchi are very audible, and there is great dyspnoea, from the obstruction caused by excessive secretion, the lobelia, in union with decoct. senegæ, acts almost like a charm.

Speaking of the senega, this, too, is a most excellent medicine, but not often employed. Why? Perhaps because it is somewhat ancient! Yet it is a medicine, the value of which will be readily acknowledged and appreciated by those who have

employed it in cases in which its use was clearly indicated.

Let it not be thought that I desire to vaunt the lobelia, and extol its virtues above its merits, nor to palm it upon the world as a charm or a specific. No! but as a powerful and valuable auxiliary for the relief of disease and the amelioration of human suffering.

It should not be imagined, from the above remarks, that its employment is to supersede every other remedy,—the use of the lancet, mercury, antimony, &c. &c., but its grand effect is to obtain *repose* in those cases of pulmonary or thoracic disease where the chief object is to quiet and relieve the painful efforts at respiration.

There are many cases, I am well aware, which we meet with in children, sometimes in adults, where the respiratory passages are so clogged by excessive secretion, arising from some morbid state of the tissues themselves, and kept up primarily by the debility of the capillaries, and secondarily by the general atony of the system, where a permanent benefit can only be anticipated by the exhibition of tonics, &c.; and here comes in the judgment and discrimination of the practitioner to determine the important point of treatment, Shall he give quinine or iron where there is troublesome cough and much dyspnoea?

The careful examination of the patient, both constitutionally and locally, his aspect, general health, temperament, physical appearances, &c. &c.; the exploration of the chest by a careful stethoscopic examination, must be his guides, and safe ones, too, will he find them. Next comes the query,—May not the *sedative* and the *tonic* be happily blended?

The results which spring from such a combination are very pleasing to the medical man, and most grateful to his patient; whilst the sedative induces repose and quiets the urgent efforts at inspiration, the part recovers tone by the influence of the said repose; and the action of the tonic upon the capillary system prohibits the secretion of more; the regained power, both by the tonic and the sedative, enables the parts to throw off the excessive secretion, and the general health is improved and the disease disappears.

I have given the lobelia, also, in some diseases of the heart with great benefit, in pleurisy, &c. &c.; but I reserve whatever observations I may make upon these subjects for a future communication.

It only remains for me, now, to mention the preparation of the lobelia which I employ; it is the *ethereal tincture*, made with the *compound sulphuric ether*; and this forms the best preparation, the most active, of the lobelia. There is a tincture made with the nitric ether, but that is a preparation far inferior to the sulphuric; I obtain

it at Apothecaries' Hall, being particular to obtain the comp. sulph. tinct.; it is of a greenish-yellow tint; the dose I commence with, from 10 to 15 minims, generally the former, to be repeated every one, two, or three hours, until relief is obtained.

If I have occupied too much space I can only solicit the indulgence of the reader. My earnest desire that the great value of the lobelia should be generally known has, perhaps, made me rather prolix.

UNEXPECTED PTYALISM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—I am induced to transmit to you, for publication, if you deem it sufficiently interesting, the following case of ptyalism, arising from the *accidental*, if I may use the term, exhibition of minute doses of calomel, and the treatment adopted, in order to meet the wishes of Mr. Potter, conveyed in the last Number of THE LANCET. As a junior practitioner my experience in similar cases has not been extensive, but the same successful results having invariably followed, they confirm, in my mind, the propriety of the course pursued, and I venture, with great deference, to submit the practice to the notice of the profession. I am, Sir, your faithful servant,

G. P. HEYWARD.

Egham, Nov. 3, 1838.

Sept. 26, 1837. J. W., ætat. 58, requested me to send him a box of aperient pills, and I prescribed as follows:—

Calomel, 12 grains;

Comp. extract of colocynth, 1 drachm. Divide into 12 pills; one or two, according to circumstances.

Oct. 5. His bowels having become constipated, he had recourse to the pills, and during 48 hours he took eight of them, containing, of course, eight grains of calomel, and two scruples of the compound extract of colocynth, without obtaining an evacuation. At this period I was sent for, and his constitution was evidently under the influence of the mercury; his head, face, and tongue, were swollen, and salivation had commenced; the breath was very offensive; tongue furred; pulse full.

Sulphate of magnesia, 1 ounce;

Croton oil, 2 drops;

Comp. infus. of senna, $\frac{1}{2}$ ounce;

Tincture of senna, 2 drachms. One quarter part to be taken at once, and repeated every two hours, until purgation follows.

6. The bowels have been freely purged; the evacuations are dark and extremely fœtid; the swelling of the head and face has increased; tongue moist; pulse regular; the salivation is more abundant.