tion of the instrument, and at fifty-five minutes past nine P.M. a living male child was born. After the introduction of the forceps, some difficulty was experienced in consequence of the forcible extension of the patient's legs, and the constant disposition to straighten the body during the strong expulsive efforts. With the assistance of Mr. Fisher and another gentleman, the pelvis was held in a favourable position, the right leg was separated from the other, and flexed on the abdomen, so as to admit the handles of the instrument between the thighs. By those means, and by occupying a position in front of the patient, I could easily employ traction in the direction of the outlet with my right hand, whilst with the left I supported the perineum."

One of the great advantages anticipated by Dr. P. Smith from the use of ether is, "that during operations in midwifery the patients will lie perfectly still. This patient it however appears, instead of lying perfectly still, caused great embarrassment to Dr. P. Smith while working with the forceps in front of the person, "in consequence of the forcible extension of the patient's legs, and the constant disposition to straighten the body during the strong expulsive efforts." So violent were the tetanic actions of the muscles of the trunk and extremities caused by the ether, that two strong assistants were "required to hold the pelvis in a favourable position," and bend the right leg on the abdomen, and separate it from the other, "so as to admit the handles of the instrument between the thighs." In what position the patient was placed during the operation is not stated; but the position of Dr. P. Smith must have been sufficiently novel, in front of the patient during the fifty-five minutes he was making strong traction with the forceps, and while the pelvis was being kept fixed by the help of Mr. Fisher and the other gentleman. The scene altogether must have been one of the most novel and interesting ever witnessed in the practice of midwifery, and especially when the patient came to her senses, "five minutes past eight P.M.," expressing a hope that she would soon be delivered, and adding, that she was very comfortable, and thus expressed herself: "It is a dream!—it must be a dream! Oh, what a good thing it is that I had the ether!"

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

SPECTATOR.

London, May, 1847.

THE SYRIAN MEDICAL STUDENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I read with much surprise, in THE LANCET of last Saturday, a paragraph, in which mention is made of my name, and in which it is stated that, in a letter addressed to you, and inserted in your journal of the 20th of March, I had denied that Mr. Assaad Kayat had brought to this country and educated at his own expense four Syrian medical students.

Now, Sir, if you and your readers will do me the honour to refer to the letter in question, you will see that I never denied anything of the kind. For aught that I knew to the contrary, Mr. Kayat might have brought over to this country four or four hundred students, and whether or not he had done so was a matter which in no way concerned me. But that which did concern me was, to deny that my friend Abdallah Asmar was one of these, or that he had any connexion whatever with Mr. Kayat; and I beg to remind you that *this* was your original assertion, made on what you call good authority, in THE LANCET of the 27th of February, and not simply, as you now put it, that four students had been brought over. Everything which I stated in my former letter I now re-assert, and as I explained to you the relation in which I stood to Mr. Asmar, I have a right to ask that my statements with regard to him may be credited. And I must observe, Sir, that it is as inexplicable to me what good authority could have told you, in the first instance, anything so entirely unfounded, as it is how you could construe my correction of an inaccuracy with regard to an individual into a general denial of Mr. Kayat's benevolence, or how the inscription in the books presented by the College of Surgeons can be made to confirm the inaccurate report.

I must ask that you will do me the favour to insert this letter in the next number of THE LANCET, first, because the paragraph of Saturday is a substantial, though not a verbal, re-affirmation of the original incorrect statement, and might, if not again contradicted, be referred to as such hereafter; and secondly, for my own sake, that I may be put right in the eyes of Mr. Kayat, whose liberality I am bound to honour, while by you I am made to deny it.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Sloane-street, May, 1847.

EDWARD CATOR SEATON.

FRACTURE OF THE THIGH.—DEATH FROM ENGORGEMENT OF THE LUNGS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As the following case, which lately occurred in the Middlesex Hospital, narrowly escaped being recorded as an instance of the fatal effects of ether, I am induced to send you this account, as there seems a disposition just now with some persons to attribute every untoward event which may occur after the inhalation of ether to the effects of that agent. There seems a determination, on the part of some persons, to forget the well-established fact, that death does occasionally occur after severe local injury, where no so-called vital organ has been involved, and where it is not always possible to connect the immediate cause of death with the original lesion.

Henry W—, aged thirty-five, a tall, powerful man, a painter, was admitted on the evening of March 1st, having just before fallen down an area, a height of about ten feet. It was found, on examination, that the right thigh was fractured about the junction of the upper with the middle third. There was considerable degree of swelling and shortening of the limb. No other injury was detected. The thigh was placed on the double inclined plane—the treatment usually adopted for the first few days. As there was considerable spasm and retraction of the muscles, it was proposed to get the patient under the influence of ether, to relax the spasm of the muscles, and in that state to apply the long splint. This proceeding, however, was very fortunately put off for a day or two; for in the evening of the 3rd, forty-eight hours after his admission, the patient, who had previously made no complaint of pain or uneasiness, but appeared going on very favourably, was seized with vomiting after taking a little beer, which he had been allowed for the first time. Mixed with the contents of the stomach were some small elongated clots of dark blood. His head was hot; his tongue tremulous, moist, but somewhat furred; his pulse rapid, but weak. He appeared muddled and confused, and rambled a good deal. Bowels confined. Ordered, calomel, five grains, and a dose of the house medicine six hours after.

4th.—Passed a very restless night, not sleeping more than half an hour, continually rambling and tossing about. At ten A.M. appeared scarcely conscious of what was passing around him; face pale and void of expression; lips not livid; the breathing very hurried; but there was very little action of the *alæ nasi*; pulse quick, and very weak; tongue tremulous, moist, but somewhat furred. Nothing satisfactory was made out by auscultating the chest. Considerable tenderness over the liver; bowels not yet open. The house medicine had been rejected by vomiting, the vomited matter being again mixed with the elongated clots of blood. Ten grains of calomel in powder were placed on the tongue; a sinapism to be applied to the epigastrium; beef-tea and wine. Was not sick after he took the calomel. Continued through the day to become gradually weaker; his breathing very hurried, and his pulse extremely rapid and feeble. Towards night, his pupils were somewhat dilated, and did not contract on exposure to light: he appeared then perfectly insensible. Latterly he became very restless, tossing about his arms and his sound leg, so that it was with some difficulty he was kept in bed; his breathing was accompanied by loud mucous rattles; and in this condition he died at half-past ten P.M., twenty-six hours after he first exhibited any unfavourable symptoms.

The body was examined sixteen hours after death. Muscles rigid; skin pale.—Head: Arachnoid dry, opaque in parts; no increased vascularity of the membranes; veins tortuous; substance of the brain firm, rather more than usually vascular; a small quantity of serum in the ventricles. The man, it appears, was a patient in the hospital, about six months before, with delirium tremens; but is said to have led a very sober life since he quitted the hospital.—Chest: Lungs scarcely subsided in the slightest degree; both slightly adherent at the upper part by old adhesions; both remarkably congested throughout their entire extent, (the first stage of pneumonia;) no part preserving the natural appearance, but no part so dense as to sink in water. A quantity of bloody, muco-serous, frothy fluid was found filling the trachea and bronchi. In some of the bronchi were firm dark clots of blood, exactly resembling those which were brought up during life, mixed with the contents of the stomach, and therefore suffered to come from that viscus; but which had no doubt been expelled from the bronchi in the action of vomiting. The pericardium contained a small quantity of clear serum. The heart, which was firm and perfectly

healthy, was filled with a large quantity of firmly clotted blood on both sides, extending into the arteries. The viscera of the abdomen appeared quite healthy. The stomach was contracted, and contained a small quantity of dark fluid, but no blood. The thigh, which was much swollen, but the skin not discoloured, contained a considerable quantity of blood, injected amongst the muscles, and between their fasciculi.

This patient evidently died from congestion of the lungs, which proved thus rapidly fatal in consequence of the whole of both lungs being simultaneously involved, leaving no portion to carry on the function of respiration.

Had the ether been inhaled in this case, as was proposed, would it have been possible to persuade any one that it was not the cause of the congestion of the lungs, and of the death of the patient?—I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,

East Grinstead, April, 1847.

HENRY ROGERS.

ARE IMPROVEMENTS IN MEDICINE AND SURGERY PROPER SUBJECTS OF PATENTS?

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

HAVING been recently made aware, by disagreeable experience, of the existence among the members of the medical and surgical profession in England of a strong and general feeling against the taking out of letters patent for improvements in medicine and surgery, and being persuaded that this feeling is founded in error, and in the non-appreciation of the true interests of the profession and of society, I venture to address you a few remarks upon the subject, in the hope that they may contribute to the cause of truth and science.

The feeling alluded to has its origin, no doubt, in an opinion, that it is contrary to dignity, liberality, and humanity, that any member of the healing profession should endeavour to monopolize or appropriate to himself the advantages of an improvement in an art or science which so nearly concerns the welfare of every human being. It seems base, mercenary, and cruel, to say to a suffering fellow creature, I will not allow mitigation of your pain, administration to your disease, or removal of the cause of your distress, unless you first pay me a consideration for so doing. It is therefore held that every improvement in medicine and surgery should be made a free gift to society. This is apparently liberal and humane, amounting to self-sacrificing, and noble, amounting to magnanimous; and as it pleases the imagination and consoles the heart, it is applauded as generosity, and made imperative as a part of duty.

If it were a mere question of the remuneration of inventors or discoverers, it would not perhaps be worth while to make the slightest attempt to disturb the prevalent feeling upon the subject, though it may be affirmed, and it is undoubtedly true, that it never can be for the good of society to sacrifice the rights of any individual, much less those of a benefactor. But the question is by no means confined within these narrow limits,—it is a question as to the very creation or discovery of such improvements in future time,—it is a question, not merely of equity towards the discoverer, but of the policy and interests of society itself; for I am quite sure that, constituted as men are at the present day, no stimulus can be found sufficiently active to call forth ingenuity and effort, especially in cases involving the outlay of much time, industry, or money, except the stimulus of reward. Perhaps at some future, far-distant day, when it shall be more easy for men to satisfy their physical wants, and gratify, without expense, their natural propensities and desires, purely philanthropic exertions may be relied upon for the advancement of science and art. We are informed, that in some instances small bodies of early Christians “had all things in common;” but it does not appear that the custom was either generally adopted or long continued, even among assemblies zealous with the enthusiasm of new-born faith, and confirmed by the testimony of present miracles.

The natural and proper reward of successful skill and industry is property; and though when the laws and rights of property are respected, society may derive advantage from holding out inducements to exertion not founded in a sense of property, it may be safely affirmed, that such other inducements are comparatively of little or no value except they concur with or reinforce the natural laws and rights of property. The instinct of property is the very foundation of civilized society; without it men would become first idle, then ignorant, and finally barbarous; and any system or custom which militates against that instinct tends, in the same degree in which it opposes it, to idleness, ignorance, and retrogradation. Who will sow, without hire, that another

may reap? or build a house, without wages, that another may live in it? or toil and watch, without recompence, that others may live easy? And if there be any such, so forgetful of themselves, it would not become society to take advantage of their devotion; however magnanimous such disinterested exertion might be, society would fail against “dignity, liberality, and humanity,” as well as against its own best interests, if it allowed such exertions to go unrewarded. But there are none such, or, at least, none wholly such, or such to any practically useful degree; so that counting upon such disinterestedness is altogether absurd—an absurdity so manifest, that no one exhibits it in his private affairs; and if he were to do so, he would soon be roused from his dream by the rough handling of experience. In such a case as this it is a great error to suppose that society can safely adopt any other course than such an one as would be politic for an individual. The principles, instincts, operations, and parties, are the same in both cases, and in no age and in no country has society, or even armed or despotic government, been able to extort from men valuable labour without valuable remuneration; and just in proportion as the remuneration is valuable and certain and wisely bestowed does society derive advantage from the exertions remunerated. Compare Egypt and England, Wallachia and the United States.

If there be any property which may be said to be inherent and absolute, it is the property which a man has in his own thoughts. Property in chattels, in land, even in one's own person, may be disputed, as it frequently is violated; but our thoughts are our own, beyond dispute—beyond the reach of violation; ours to give forth or to keep back, to add to or to take from, to sound abroad or to enjoy in silence; ours to reserve as defensive armour, or to employ as offensive weapons. Our inventions and our discoveries being, in the first place, merely thoughts, are our own; and upon the first suggestion of them we are masters, to let them die, or give them birth—to arrest their growth, or to develop them to maturity. Few inventions are born mature. They spring not, like Minerva, perfect from the brain of Jupiter. They come into the world, in general, like man himself—weak, defenceless, helpless; needing much care and attention, much painful nursing—“fleur animal”—at its birth, though the invention may also claim “cæteris imperaturum.” This care, attention, and painful nursing, who will devote to it but its parent? Certainly not society. There is no foundling hospital for infant inventions, and if there were, it is very doubtful whether any of them would survive the treatment they would there receive. It is as clearly for the advantage of society to grant to inventors and discoverers a certain temporary ownership in their inventions and discoveries, as it is to grant to parents a temporary right of control over their children: in no other known way can they be protected from injury, developed, and brought to useful maturity.

It may be said, this is good reasoning in regard to mechanical inventions and discoveries, but the case is very different when improvements in medicine and surgery are concerned. A physician is neither an artisan nor a tradesman; he is a member of a profession calling itself liberal, occupied with practical science and benevolent art; and it is necessary to this proper formation and support of his character, that he should be kept as far as possible from the contamination of mercenary traffic. I have stated the objection strongly, in order that it may be allowed its full weight. The proper and sufficient answer is, that to receive compensation for valuable services is not mercenary. We have the very highest authority upon this point—“the labourer is worthy of his hire;” nay more: to exact or expect valuable services to be rendered without compensation—this is mercenary—this is grasping—this is ignoble. Does the physician decline to receive his fee in advance because he is not a tradesman—because he is concerned with high science and benevolent art? Does he go about doing good gratuitously? By no means: he cannot, he ought not; and were he to attempt to do so, he would become a burthen upon society. No other system of subsistence can be devised so economical, so convenient, so just, so politic, for society itself, as well as for the individual, as that of compensation for services rendered; and the imperfect state of the law in England, which impedes the physician in the recovery of compensation for professional services, thereby fostering the ridiculous custom of exacting payment in advance, and bringing the members of a liberal profession thereby into contempt, is an evil of which the profession have a good right to complain, and one which, being an infringement of the natural law of compensation, ought speedily to be abolished.

It may further be asked—why should the person who happens to discover or invent an improvement in medicine