THE ELECTION OF COUNCILLORS IN THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

MR. GOSSET.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I think we owe much to the able letters of "Detur Digniori," which from time to time have appeared in your journal, indignantly exposing the dirty tricks of which the Council have already been guilty, and warning the fellows to be on their guard at the next election. Since his last letter, the Council have placed an advertisement in the *Times*, by which it appears that Mr. Gosset is the only fellow that has expressed his determination, and who is therefore, according to the Charter, the only one now capable of opposing, the "protégée" of the Council.

The importance of electing Mr. Gosset, should he hold "reform principles," is now manifest. For if any one will take the trouble to examine the Charter, and at the same time the list of the fellows, he will find, that should Mr. Gosset be not now elected, the Council will for some years be released from all further trouble and anxiety, everything will go on as smoothly and quietly as the most dishonest of the councillors could wish, and just in the same manner as of old, as if no new Charter had ever been granted. For the Charter says, that all those who have been nominated twice, or twice have had their names passed over for want of nomination, without being elected, will for ever after be ineligible to the Council, whereas the list of fellows shows us a long line of hospital surgeons following the protégée of Sir Benjamin, to whom "Detur Digniori" evidently alludes. Could anything be more snugly managed? I was going to say comfortably, but I think the Council, during the past year, have not had a bed of roses to sleep on.

There is one other point in the Charter to which I wish to draw your attention, which appears to me unjust, and evidently framed for dishonest purposes. Thus the fellows are obliged to give one month's notice of their intention to stand for the Council, whereas the Council need only give a fortnight's of the day of election, and which is to be, this time, on the 30th of July. Honestly, the system ought to have been reversed—the fellows ought to have sufficient warning of the election, to enable them to give notice of their intention to contest the election. Sir Stephen Hammick, Messrs. Kingdon, Lloyd, Macilwain, &c., may possibly, by this very fraud, have been cheated of their election. I am surprised that Sir James Graham, ignorant as he might have been of medical politics, did not see through this cheat.

One word more: if Mr. Gosset be elected, will he support and vote for an alteration in the Charter, so that all respectable members, who have held their diplomas ten or fifteen years, shall be eligible to become fellows, and that all fellows, practising midwifery or not, shall be eligible to the Council? I can hardly expect Mr. Gosset to answer me, but one word from you might elicit a reply before the election. For if Mr. Gosset's views are these, then I think Mr. Guthrie would do honour to himself, and good to the cause he is now advocating, should he nominate Mr. Gosset on the day of the election.

I remain, your obedient servant,

July 15th, 1845.

MACHAON.

* * We think that Mr. Gosset should publicly address the fellows on the subject of his being a candidate.

VOMITING IN UTERINE HÆMORRHAGE.—STIMULANTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—With reference to Mr. Higginbottom's remarks on the utility of ipecacuanha in profuse uterine hæmorrhage, published in THE LANCET of the 28th ult., page 732, I beg leave to observe, that for twenty-five years I have occasionally induced vomiting for the purpose of arresting uterine hæmorrhage after delivery, both before and subsequent to the expulsion of the placenta, and, in several instances, with rapid and decided benefit. Mustard, however, is the emetic that I have invariably employed, as it acts speedily and freely, and leaves little or no nausea or exhaustion behind.

It is only fair to mention, that I was first led to try the effect of vomiting in uterine hæmorrhage by reading an extract of a letter from Mr. George Williams, published in the *Medico-Chirurgical Review* for June, 1820, in which, after detailing the particulars of an alarming case of this kind, the writer says, that he excited vomiting by irritating the fauces, when "the uterus contracted powerfully and expelled several coagula; in short, the patient returned to life, and did well." Mr. Williams asks, "did the percussion of the effort to vomit stimulate the uterus to con-

traction? Would it be safe practice, in cases of uterine hæmorrhage, to excite vomiting to obtain this end?" And he adds, "It is a most powerful means of bringing on reaction, as we often see in performing venesection; for the patient being faint, the stream of blood falters; but no sooner is vomiting excited, than the colour returns to the pallid cheeks, and the blood (almost as florid as arterial) rushes impetuously from the orifice." I have no personal acquaintance with Mr. Williams, but, at the time the extract from his letter was published, he was practising, I believe, at Portsmouth or Portsea.

It is to be regretted that the profession is still so much divided in opinion as to the propriety of exhibiting diffusible stimulants in uterine hæmorrhage, occurring soon after the expulsion of the child; but I think that this difference of opinion is chiefly owing to many confounding hæmorrhage of other kinds with that from the uterus after delivery. In the latter case the bleeding is not arrested, as in the former, by the formation of clots in the vessels from which the blood issues, (which process is always facilitated by whatever reduces the heart's action,) but principally, if not entirely, by the firm and permanent contraction of the uterus—a powerful muscular organ, in the structure of which the bleeding vessels are situated. Whatever tends to relax or debilitate the muscular system, has a tendency at the same time to lessen the contractile power of the uterus, and this more particularly immediately after the birth of the infant; and stimulants of all kinds, when properly administered, have just the opposite effect. Do not suppose, however, from this, that I am an advocate for the use of stimulants, either during or after labour, under ordinary circumstances; on the contrary, no person can be more opposed to their indiscriminate use than I am, and always have been.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ARCHD. BLACKLOCK.

Dumfries, July 5th, 1845.

COPY OF A LETTER TO THE REPRESENTATIVE IN LONDON OF THE MEDICAL CONSTITUENCY IN WARRINGTON.

"TO JOHN KENDRICK, ESQ.

"DEAR SIR,—We were glad to find you willing to act as our representative at the medical conference, for in the present state of medical affairs there is great need of active co-operation in upholding the interests of our profession, which were never more seriously endangered than they are just now. What with the reckless despotism of the Council of the College of Surgeons, and the treacherous conduct of the Committee of the National Association, the interests, as well as the respectability, of the great mass of the members of that College have been well nigh sacrificed, and we may be thankful that the *PHYSIC-AND-SURGERY BILL* is not to be proceeded with during this session of Parliament.

"The requisition to Mr. Guthrie has happily proved a stumbling-block to the Minister, in his career of unjust retrospective legislation; and the very temperate statement of the Royal College of Physicians has, no doubt, contributed to arrest the progress of the obnoxious measure. The liberal and conciliatory spirit which this document exhibits, stands out in striking contrast with the insulting tones of the one which was issued by our own College; and it will be strange, indeed, if it does not exercise its due influence over your future negotiations with the Council.

"Sir James Graham declares himself to be desirous of acting fairly towards the profession, but, unfortunately, his intentions have been frustrated by the ill-considered provisions of the Charter he was too hastily induced to grant the College, and the misrepresentations of the Committee of the National Association. Should the Council ultimately be prevailed upon to enfranchise its members and the general practitioners, and to do justice to its senior members, by admitting them to the fellowship without further examination, there is no doubt that Sir James Graham would very willingly frame his measures accordingly, and that the profession would be abundantly satisfied. This is what all the members here desire to see accomplished; and we trust the Conference, or the Committee in connexion with it, will be unceasing in its efforts to bring about this much wished-for result.

"There is one alteration in Sir James Graham's last Bill which will require your especial attention. By the one introduced in April last, every registered practitioner, whether physician, surgeon, or licentiate, was legally empowered to recover reasonable fees for attendance and medicines; but, strange to say, by the last 'Physic-and-Surgery Bill,' this power is exclusively conferred upon the inferior grade, physicians and surgeons being denied the right of recovering payment by legal process. This is a monstrous injustice. If in April it was right and proper that all should have this power, it seems to me marvellous what can have happened, that in July, physicians and surgeons should have become unworthy of it. It seems rather like an attempt to degrade

every member of the profession who is dependent upon it alone for his subsistence, by compelling him to join a corporation of an inferior class of practitioners; and I hope it will be resolutely resisted. Sir James having once acknowledged the right, cannot very consistently refuse to confirm it. Physicians stand quite as much in need of it as surgeons. Dr. Black, of Manchester, mentioned to me two instances which had recently occurred to him, where executors had positively refused to pay his fees, on the ground that he could give them no legal discharge. Dr. Holme, of Manchester, also mentioned, at the Newton meeting, an instance where a wealthy patient of his died, after a very long attendance; his bill was 400*l*. The executors, however, refused to pay, because, as they said, he had no legal right to make the demand; and he was glad to compromise the matter with them for 100*l*. If surgeons were to be similarly circumstanced, one half of us might starve, for, unfortunately, gratitude is a principle medical men seldom see called into action, and vast numbers of those whom we attend would be glad to avail themselves of such an excuse as this for evading the payment of fees and charges which are already much too low. This part of the Bill must be altered, for honours can be of no value to the man who cannot obtain his daily bread.

"We should have forwarded a petition to the House of Commons, in accordance with the request of the secretaries of conference, but having already done so, we were disposed to see the final alterations in the Bill before we sent another. Whenever you wish us to co-operate with you, however, you have only to write to me, and we shall be glad to second your efforts to advance the interests of the profession. There is sadly too much apathy manifested in reference to medical legislation, which, I fear, is in some measure attributable to the distrust and want of cordiality with which medical men are but too prone to regard each other. Where nothing is done, it too frequently arises from *all* contenting themselves with *waiting* till some one of them shall think it time to act, which time never comes. Even here, where there is perhaps less professional jealousy manifested than in most places, nothing would have been done, had I not determined that something should be; and so in other places, it only requires some one to take the lead in the matter; and if the voice of the whole profession could only once be heard, there can be no doubt that the agitation which at present distracts it would soon cease.

"I remain, dear sir, in haste, yours truly,

"Warrington, July 14th, 1845."

"G. W. HARDY.

PITYRIASIS NIGRA (SO CALLED).

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I presume to suggest, if such indulgence be conceded, to those members of the Medico-Chirurgical Society who took part in a conversation recorded in your last week's journal as originating in the case of the young lady from Belfast, that they had altogether lost sight of a law which is now tolerably well known in every school of medicine in Europe.

"Under errors of diet, as also under great mental and physical agony, the simple combustibles accumulating in the blood pass through the tissue of surfaces, cutaneous, mucous, and still more rarely, serous, (e. g., in the *graminivoræ*,) loosely, languidly, and therefore imperfectly, combined with oxygen, and occasionally become reduced on such surfaces. Thus sulphur, phosphorus, carbon, nitrogen, or hydrogen, are eliminated."

Pyrosis nigra, or black-water, follicular stains, phosphorescent illuminations during life, &c. &c., furnish illustrations of this law. If called for, a series of such analogous cases, and several from your own journal, might easily be supplied. The phenomena never last more than a day or two, though often recurrent, and the affected surface is commonly tense, uneasy, and distressed, just before it throws off the surplus.

I lately sent Professor Owen a specimen of *tænia*, curiously maculated with follicular carbonaceous deposit.

MODESTUS.

July, 1845.

PITYRIASIS NIGRA.—ACNE PUNCTATA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the notice of the Medico-Chirurgical Society, contained in your last number, (page 46,) I perceive reported a "case of pityriasis nigra." Now, it is acknowledged by all dermatologists of the present day, that Willan was in error in his application of this term, and that instead of being a squamous disease, his *pityriasis nigra* was, in reality, that modification of the natural pigment of the skin which is named *melasma*, a disorder by no means uncommon, and sufficiently well known. But the case in question was not even a *melasma*. It was, obviously, an altered action of the follicles of the skin of the eyelids resulting from vas-

cular congestion, the vascular congestion being, in all probability, as remarked by Dr. Mayo, a vicarious determination, having reference to imperfect menstruation. The case, in fact, comes under the same head as those curious modifications of the exhalation from the skin which are described by Conradi, Lemery, Fontenelle, and others, denominated blue and black perspirations. In Conradi's case, for example, the morbid secretion was limited to one hemisphere of the scrotum.

I perceive another cutaneous disorder adverted to in the discussion which followed the communication of the above case, and some doubt expressed as to the cause of blackness in *acne punctata*. The dark head of the comedo of *acne punctata* unquestionably results from an external agent, and that agent the smoke and dirt diffused through the atmosphere. The discoloration of the little mass of sebaceous substance is very different from the altered secretion sometimes found in the follicles of the intestinal mucous membrane, and the proof is easily attained. Squeeze out the comedo. The end which abuts upon the skin is black, but the rest is quite white.

The pigmentary element of the animal body is, I believe, identical in its nature, wherever, or under whatever circumstances it may be found; whether, for example, in the cells of the *membrana pigmenti* of the eyeball, in the nucleus of the epidermic cell, in the cell of melanosis, or diffused in a morbid secretion; at least, this is the result of inquiries into this subject instituted by me, and of which I have lately laid a report before the Royal Society.

I have the honour to be, Sir, your obedient servant,

ERASMUS WILSON.

Charlotte-street, Fitzroy-square, July 12th, 1845.

CURE OF NÆVUS BY INJECTIONS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Having treated several cases of *nævi* by injection, with perfect success, I am induced to describe the mode I have adopted as being, in most instances, preferable to the removal of them by ligature, or in any other way. I first puncture the *nævus* with a needle, in four or five directions, making but one puncture through the skin. I then charge Anel's eye-syringe with a saturated solution of alum, insert its pipe into the puncture made by the needle, and inject the *nævus* until it become somewhat hard and swollen. No other treatment will be required; and after the subcutaneous inflammation has subsided, (occupying a period of ten days or a fortnight,) the *nævus* will be observed gradually to diminish, and will in a few months entirely disappear, leaving no scar, nor the slightest disfigurement.

I have in one case operated twice on the same *nævus*, but am now of opinion, that if I had waited, time would have rendered a second injection unnecessary. I do not wish to claim the merit of originating this proceeding, as it was practised by the late Mr. Tyrrell, but as it is not generally adopted by the profession, I have adverted to it, in the hope that it may have a fair trial. The operation, as far as my experience goes, is entirely free from any dangerous or unpleasant consequences, and if the inflammation should appear to be in excess, I have invariably found that an aperient, reduced diet, and a cold lotion applied for a day or two, have been sufficient to restrain it.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

RICHARD S. DAVIS.

Mecklenburgh-square, June 14th, 1845.

THE TREATMENT OF INSANITY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I was alike surprised and grieved to read a note on this subject, in THE LANCET of April 19th last, page 457. I did hope the old plan of "repeated bleedings to sixteen or twenty ounces, strong cathartics, large doses of tartarized antimony, large-sized setons, and blisters," was expunged from the therapeutics of insanity, and succeeded by the modern and far more reasonable and successful practice of removing exciting causes, allaying and subduing excitement by narcotics, and, above all, supporting the strength by a well-selected nourishing diet, so as to enable the patient safely to meet the consequent and subsequent exhaustion.

Your correspondent observes, "that his plan will be successful in three months, if the patient survive;" but I should expect few, very few, would bear up under such exhausting measures for that period. I am glad to find, however, the following salvo in the last clause of the notice—"Large doses of calomel and opium occasionally, to quiet the mind and promote absorption, without salivation, and some slight tonics, and strict attention to the regimen."

I have not had thirty years' experience, but have been the