

guous. Powerful purgatives having failed in relieving the bowels of their enormous load, I prescribed bleeding, followed by full doses of calomel and opium, and subsequently mild laxatives, which, on the third or fourth day, effected the evacuation of an immense quantity of scybala, some of very large size. The pain was now much relieved, and the general appearance improved.

Suspecting the existence of an abscess I now directed an accurate measurement of the hips to be made, from the spine to the symphysis pubis, when the right hip and side were found to be much larger and rounder than the left, to the extent of six inches; the iliac region also presented diffuse, though defined, swelling, which extended downwards towards Poupert's ligament, and conveyed a distinct impression to the hand when the patient was made to cough; reclining on her back with the knee raised and bent, afforded most relief from pain, which the erect posture and walking invariably brought on. The treatment now adopted consisted of small doses of blue pill, slightly affecting the gums; iodide of potassium 3ss, three times a-day; cupping over the lumbar and superior gluteal regions; bleeding from the arm whenever plethoric symptoms presented themselves, and purgatives, under which her general health improved greatly, and the swelling rapidly diminished. Towards the latter end of April she was quite convalescent, entirely free from pain, and could walk with freedom considerable distances, all trace of the swelling having disappeared. I ordered a continuance of the medicines to prevent a reaccumulation of matter, but my advice was neglected.

On the 15th of May, after a day of unusual exertion, a recurrence of the symptoms took place; she was suddenly seized, on getting out of bed, with acute and violent pains in the right groin, extending to the region of the lumbar muscles, with a partial return of the swelling to the extent of a couple of inches, accompanied by great fever and general uneasiness, quick, hard, and wiry pulse (130); skin hot and dry; great jactitation. Saw her at one, p.m., and bled her to approaching deliquium, which was productive of immediate relief. Ordered a full dose of colomel and opium, to be repeated every hour, with tartarised antimony every two hours, until free from pain.

16. Reaction having come on, the bleeding was repeated, which she bore well; omitted the calomel and opium, and administered a purgative, and subsequently an anodyne, which procured a good night's rest.

17. Much relieved; all acute symptoms entirely absent. Continue the medicines at longer intervals. The swelling once more subsided, leaving the integuments over the ilio-lumbar region of the right side in a very

flaccid state, and in marked contrast to those on the left.

18. By desire of her step-father, Dr. Campbell was called in consultation at four, p.m. My patient, who had remained in bed in expectation of our visit, appeared to be then in excellent spirits, and seemed to have regained an extraordinary degree of strength since the preceding day.

Dr. Campbell, finding no abscess existing, entered into an argument at the bedside of the patient, and flatly denied that it ever could have existed, his chief reason being the absence of acute pain, which, he said, was always one of the symptoms of lumbar abscess; and, again, that an abscess could not have been absorbed in so short a time. I resigned the case into his hands. The lady is now well. I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

C. CARTER, M.D.,
Licentiate of the Royal College
of Surgeons of Edinburgh.

January 8, 1844.

DR. HUTCHINSON AND THE WATER-CURE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I hope you will not refuse me the opportunity of making a few remarks on the case reported in your Journal of the 13th instant, by Dr. Hutchinson, of Nottingham, entitled by him a case of "cold-water murder," which I have only just read.

Granting that the particulars of the case are correctly reported, and that the cause assigned by Dr. Hutchinson was the actual cause of its fatal termination, it is far from warranting the denunciations which he has founded on it upon the whole body of what he terms the "well-educated" hydropathic practitioners. Surely it would not be considered a reasonable ground for attacking the whole medical profession as murderers, were some imprudent invalid to hasten his own death by an unadvised abuse of drugs. Such cases are not unfrequent in occurrence, and are properly regarded as instances, not of medical quackery, but of the lamentable weakness of judgment induced by illness. Now, the case recorded by Dr. Hutchinson is precisely of the same nature in its reference to hydropathy as the cases in question are in reference to other modes of treatment.

He seems to have entirely overlooked the real cause of death. It appears that the patient had been drinking large quantities of water, and scrupulously abstaining from drugs and stimulants for four months, without any professional advice. Finding himself getting worse, he calls in a surgeon, who is subsequently aided by Dr. Hutchinson. In their combined wisdom, they give him "stimulants, opiates, effervescing medicine,

prussic acid, tincture of sesquichloride of iron, beef-tea, brandy with soda-water (not salt), creosote, and small portions of solid food," "as frequently as the state of the stomach would permit"! The consequence of this treatment is that the original symptoms "continued with little or no improvement," but, in addition, "*the stomach became very irritable,*" and *rejected all its contents*. After ten days of this judicious stimulation, the patient died, as might be expected, and almost the only morbid appearance detected on post-mortem examination, was "*the mucous membrane of the stomach injected from the effects of the vomiting.*"

Can it be doubted that the patient died from poisoning, and that the immediate cause of death was inflammation of the stomach? It appears that the vomiting ceased some time before death, and Dr. Hutchinson imagined its cessation was attributable to his having "frequently" administered "one drop of creosote." Can he possibly be ignorant of the well-known fact that vomiting almost invariably ceases, in such cases, some hours before death, and that its cessation indicates the gradual departure of vital energy, which repeated doses of creosote would be exactly calculated to hasten?

Dr. H. must be strangely incompetent to practise his profession, if he pours in drugs and stimulants, with such precipitate rashness, upon a stomach which long abstinence from them had rendered peculiarly susceptible to their injurious influence, and where, consequently, especial caution ought to have been observed in their administration. I have met with many instances of this unnatural irritability of the stomach, in patients who had pursued a course of the water-cure.

In conclusion, I have only to remark that I trust I shall have awakened Dr. Hutchinson to a more charitable feeling towards his professional brethren, in having directed his grave attention to his own remark, that this case was "striking in its course, and fearful in its termination." I am, Sir, your very humble servant,

JAS. FREEMAN, M.D.

Cheltenham, January 18, 1844.

* * As we always wish to give all parties a fair hearing, we have inserted without delay the above letter, as also that of "Non-Hydropathicus." We have been unavoidably obliged to omit many passages of Dr. Freeman's letter, as we cannot make our Journal a medium for personal attack.

THE WATER-CURE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As a constant reader of your Journal, I take the liberty of putting one question

to Dr. Hutchinson. What precept does he wish to enforce by the publication of his case? Does he regard it as at all bearing upon the merits of hydropathy? Assuredly not. It only shows the imprudence of the person who lost his life by the untimely and improper use of what is stated by one of the physicians whom Dr. Hutchinson has such a horror of—one of those who have taken the trouble to investigate the facts relating to hydropathy—that it is a strong and dangerous remedy in the hands of *unskilful persons*.

If Dr. Hutchinson were present at the post-mortem of a person who had died from an overdose of prussic acid, what conclusion would he come to? To be consistent, he would at once avow his horror of a remedy so dangerous to life, and stigmatise those gentlemen who, after long and patient investigation, had found it a most valuable remedy, as quacks—or more.

Dr. Hutchinson is evidently "moved" by the true professional horror of any innovation upon old-established rules of treatment, and in his hurry to show his disgust at such an absurdity as hydropathy, and in his haste to consign it "to the contemptuous tomb of all the Capulets," has, instead, only perpetrated a *non sequitur*.

Apologising for the length of my letter, I have the honour to be, Sir, your very obedient humble servant,

NON-HYDROPATHICUS.

January 16, 1844.

LETTER FROM DR. H. BENNET

ON

AUSCULTATORY SOUNDS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On referring to THE LANCET of the 25th of November, and on comparing with the original the quotation from your editorial article on auscultation contained in my paper of the 6th instant, I find that I have to plead guilty to the charge of imperfectly quoting the passage I alluded to. The omission complained of in your last number was made by me quite inadvertently; indeed it can only be considered an error of the pen, inasmuch as in my subsequent remarks on the indistinctness of certain *valuable* auscultatory phenomena, I evidently combated the assertion contained in the original paragraph which runs thus: "Every sound yielded by auscultation, *that is worth one straw of confidence*, is, to a well-organised and well-trained ear, as distinct, although not so loud, as the stroke of St. Paul's bell." The words marked in italics are those which I unintentionally omitted.

As regards the question at issue, I still contend that *all* sounds yielded by auscultation in disease are valuable, whether distinct or indistinct, as they *all* have a pathological meaning. But some are valuable to nearly