size. Not crepitating—fleshy, its substance darker than muscular fibre, heavy, sinks in water. Pleura costalis lined with the same kind of membrane, and similarly corrugated. *Heart* and *Pericardium*. On puncturing pericardium, about a pint of milky-colored fluid escaped. Pericardium enlarged. Heart covered by a layer of false membrane throughout. This membrane was of a yellowish or dirty white color, and of a cellular appearance, not unlike tripe, or the cells of a honey-comb. Heart soft and pale as to its muscular fibres. Pericardium also covered by a layer of false membrane, with the exception of a surface of two square inches, where it was reddened. This layer was not cellular, like that on the heart, but rough, with many loose shreds attached. In some parts bands extended from pericardium to the heart. On removing this membrane it was plain the pericardium was roughened. Color of membrane same as that on the heart. *Aorta* natural. *Abdomen*. Some cellular bands and marks of inflammation on peritoneum in upper parts. Peritoneum covering liver, especially its upper surface, was inflamed and appeared thickened.

The other organs were examined, but nothing unnatural was observed.
Charlestown, July 15, 1836. M. W.

A NEW CATHARTIC.

[Communicated for the Boston Medical and Surgical Journal.]

WE have among us a new medicine—new, I presume, to you, though it has been used for some time by some western physicians, and is said to be an old Indian remedy. It is the bark of a small tree that grows on our richest land, commonly called *wahoo*, or Indian-arrow wood. Its botanical character I have not been able to learn (being absent during its flowering season last spring, on a visit to Vermont). It is prescribed in a loose manner. Whenever it is wanting, we send to the woods for it, and direct a decoction or tincture to be made and used as the occasion requires. Its principal virtue is as a hydragogue cathartic. Its operation is very slow, certain, and much gentler than any medicine I know of, of its class. I have many times reduced dropsical swellings with it; and in those simple dropsies which follow protracted intermittents, I never knew it to fail. In a case of ascites, in a young lady, of four months standing, the sequel of hepatitis complicated with intermittent fever, it succeeded in a remarkable manner. The treatment of the case began with mercury, which soon removed the hepatic obstructions. To evacuate the water, nearly all the common hydragogues were tried in vain. Squills, gamboge, colocynth, digitalis, cream tartar, tincture of iron, all had a fair trial; and when six weeks had been spent, and the fortitude of the patient nearly exhausted, I directed the wahoo to be given in decoction till it should purge freely, continuing the muriated tincture of iron. Copious discharges of fluid by stool and urine soon followed, terminating in health.

The wahoo is also used by the common people as a laxative; and I have often directed it for that purpose in costive habits. It neither de-

bilitates the stomach like salts, nor irritates the rectum like aloes. I am clearly of opinion that this medicine deserves a high place among our cathartics. If you desire it, I will send you a quantity of this bark. I intend to make some experiments upon its extract.

Did you ever notice the account of an extraordinary case of a girl from whose face and under the eye, blood, flesh, and bones would occasionally issue, which I communicated to Dr. Chapman? If not, let me refer you to the 20th No. (No. 2, new series) of the Philadelphia Journal of the Medical and Physical Sciences, 1825. I have nothing to add to nor take from the account there given. The subject of the phenomena still lives in this vicinity, is married, and the mother of a family. The facts of the case are susceptible of the clearest proof, and should, I think, be preserved, as they may some day throw light on the physiology of the female system.

CH. FULLERTON.

Owensville, Indiana, July 3, 1836.

POWER OF COMBUSTIBLE SUBSTANCES FOR PRODUCING HEAT.

TRANSLATED FROM THE JOURNAL DE CHIMIE MEDICALE, DE PHARMACIE ET DE TOXICOLOGIE, BY J. CHICKERING, M.D. BOSTON.

AS COMBUSTIBLES are daily becoming more expensive, on account of their great consumption in the arts, it is important to ascertain their composition and properties, in order to use them in the most economical manner in producing heat.

The method employed for determining the calorific power of combustibles, rests on this hypothesis, which all the facts tend to prove, viz. that the quantity of heat evolved during combustion, is proportional to the quantity of oxygen absorbed, and it is reduced to estimating this quantity of oxygen by the weight of the lead which different combustibles give when we burn them by means of litharge.

This is the process: we take one *gramme** of a combustible substance reduced as fine as possible; if it be coke, reduced to an impalpable powder; if wood, to fine saw-dust, or rather rasped to small grains. This powder is mixed with from 20 to 40 grammes of litharge, a quantity a little larger than that which will be reduced; we know nearly this quantity, from the nature and appearance of the combustible. We first put this mixture into an earthen crucible, and then add 20 or 30 grammes of pure litharge: this crucible should be half full at most; we place it in the calcinating stove already heated, and filled with ignited charcoal; we put on the lid, and heat gradually. It softens, and boils, and sometimes it boils over. When the fusion is complete, we cover the crucible with charcoal, and give it a current of flame, which is continued long enough to cause the excess of litharge to form glass by melting the silex of the crucible, but being careful not to allow the crucible to be perforated. When the crucible is cold, we break it, and the button of lead is separated at the first blow; this no longer adheres to the dross, which is

* A French *gramme* is equal to 15.4327 English grains.