

the great importance of having a *lying-in ward*. The profession generally are beginning to feel that this branch has hitherto been much overlooked; indeed, sufficiently to induce the College authorities to institute a Midwifery Examining Board. As you have ever proved yourself to be the students' friend, may I hope you will be kind enough to insert this letter?

And believe me to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,
St. Bartholomew's Hospital, Jan. 1853. A. B.

KING'S COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A more considerate man than "A King's Student" would not, I think, have troubled your readers with a complaint of the absence of *tow* or *solution*, but would rather have directed his appeal to the college authorities, who would, no doubt, have supplied the missing requisites. It is a pity, too, that he should have enlarged so much upon some very trifling circumstances, and still more unfortunate that he should have obtruded his sentiments upon matters which do not in the least degree concern him.

The absence of hot water and other comforts in the dissecting-room for two or three days, (not for a "week," as he states,) was due, not to the vacations of the other departments, of which we are perfectly independent, but to a very short holiday allowed at Christmas to the servants of the institution. Again, I think that he goes very far out of his way to relate a strange story about the secretary refusing to give up a key, thereby preventing the delivery of a lecture announced to take place on Tuesday, Jan. 4. A notice to the effect that the lecture could not be delivered was posted in the College the day previously, and the unavoidable delay was not quite so alarming as your correspondent wishes to make out. It seems scarcely probable that the secretary would needlessly interrupt the College arrangements, and insult a professor. Such charges as these appear more puerile than we should be likely to expect from a gentleman studying at King's College.

But the most serious part of "A King's Student's" letter is, that he takes up a cudgel and belabours the unfortunate secretary, introducing him even by name, and calling public attention to some alleged machinations against our professor of anatomy.

Mr. Partridge and the demonstrators of anatomy must feel somewhat surprised at finding a matter of so delicate a nature thrust before the profession, without their sanction—an allegation which, if true, is no business of "A King's Student;" and, if false, a very unfortunate misrepresentation. Your correspondent also is seemingly undecided in his opinion; for, after having at first laid the blame upon the "civil" authorities, (as he in an aged pun describes them,) towards the end he comes to the conclusion that "it's all the dean"! The majority of my fellow-students will, I am sure, testify with me to the uniform kindness and attention of that gentleman, and to the absurdity of this charge.

In conclusion, as I observe that "A King's Student" hints at some further communications, I must sincerely hope that he will not inflict any more of his letters—I beg his pardon, "grievances"—upon your readers, and, amongst them, upon

Your very obedient servant,
"ANOTHER KING'S STUDENT."

King's College, Jan. 1853.

THE KIRWAN CASE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I send you the particulars of a case which may elucidate the points bearing upon the marks of violence observed on the person of the late Mrs. Kirwan, and which incontestably prove that such injuries may have been inflicted entirely by the bite of crabs.

William Davey, a boatman, of Exmouth, aged twenty-five years, at eight o'clock, on Sunday the twenty-sixth of December, accidentally fell out of his boat and was drowned. His screams were heard for the space of fifteen minutes. The following day at noon, the body was found, with a few inches of water covering it, and several small crabs were seen biting the lips.

The next day (Tuesday), I examined the body, and found the following marks:—The upper and lower lids of each eye were nearly devoured, leaving the harder portion at the edge of the eyelids, which consists of cartilage, untouched. Both lips at the parts covered by mucous membrane, were gnawed from one commissure to the other. The *small lobe of the left ear was completely eaten away*, without any other part of the ear having been attacked. The small lobe of the right ear was also consumed, and the posterior edge of the helix, as it were, nibbled through-

out. There was a *livid mark* round the neck, close under the jaw, dotted with minute abrasions, apparently caused by the bites of small animals. There was blood in the concha, which had flowed from the meatus. The nurse, who washed the body, certified that a considerable quantity of blood flowed from the internal ear; that she "mopped it out with a cloth three times, and wiped it dry, but blood still oozed out." She also certified, that she found "froth hanging about the mouth."

The body was sixteen hours under water; it was found lying with the face downwards, and covered by about five inches of water; several small crabs were seen upon the lips. It did not bleed when first removed into the air, but soon after a considerable quantity of blood oozed from the crab-bites. The man, at the time of his death, had all his clothes on, including a neck-cloth.

From the facts of this case, it is evident that the portions of the surface of drowned persons which are first bitten by small crabs, are the softest and most projecting portions of that surface, and that blood *does* flow from the ear in drowned persons.

In the foregoing case, and in that of Maria Kirwan, the eyes and the lobes of the ear were the portions attacked, and there is little room for doubt, that if the trunk of this man's body had not been protected by clothing, the nipples (as in her case) would have been wounded.

In the case of Davey, the crabs were actually seen on the body. In Mrs. Kirwan's case no crabs were observed; but it is well known to those conversant with the habits of this little crustacean, that it retires before the receding tide has left its prey dry. I have myself watched this operation.

In her case also blood flowed from the ears; whether this ever takes place after death by drowning was, I believe, doubted at her husband's trial.

We have here several points of interest to the medical jurist.

1st.—The position of the body; which I believe to be the usual one.

2nd.—The froth about the mouth.

3rd.—The bleeding from the ears.

4th.—The parts attacked by crabs.

5th.—The fact of crabs leaving their prey before the tide ebbs out.

6th.—The bleeding of the wounds sixteen hours after death, on the body being removed from the water.

7th.—The livid circle round the neck; this has been observed in other cases of drowning, and has been attributed to a tight neckerchief, and other causes of a like nature; however, the mark in this case was close under the jaw, and extended up on either side to the ear, and was evidently *not* caused by the neckerchief. I attributed it at first to the number of minute wounds before mentioned; but it has occurred under other circumstances, and I am at a loss to account for it: *the facts*, however, should be borne in mind, as a suspicion of murder by strangulation might otherwise arise.

The appearance of the bites on the ear, eyes, and lips, were precisely like the nibbling of mice or rats; it might be a matter of difficulty to distinguish one from the other, especially as bodies are often put in barns or outhouses to await the inquest. The wounds on the neck consisted of innumerable triangular holes one or two lines in diameter—the greater number not penetrating the cutis vera; evidently caused by the bite of an animal possessing sharp cutting jaws.

On the fourth day after death, the wounds were so dried and shrunk, that it would have been difficult to have determined their cause; showing the necessity for holding inquests with the least possible delay.

I am, Sir, yours truly,
GEORGE PYCROFT, M.R.C.S.E.

Kenton, near Exeter, Jan. 1853.

The plot thickens in this extraordinary case. Notwithstanding the additional charges brought forward against the man, we adhere to every word and opinion we have expressed. He is not, on any principle of English law or justice, *proved guilty*, by the evidence brought forward against him, of the crime of which he has been convicted. If he has committed other crimes which deserve capital punishment, we must feel as others who respect the laws of their country on seeing those laws vindicated.—SUB. ED. L.

THE EXAMINATION IN MIDWIFERY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Although disposed to give credit to the Council of the College of Surgeons for their good intentions, when instituting their Examination in Midwifery, I fully believe that an unlooked-