

MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

SATURDAY, JANUARY 29, 1853.—MR. BISHOP, PRESIDENT.

THE FURUNCULOID EPIDEMIC.

MR. DENDY made some observations on the present asthenic character of disease, more especially, however, with reference to a carbuncular epidemic at present prevailing. These cases, scarcely to be classed under the head of carbuncle, commenced sometimes as a pemphigus bulla, and were very troublesome; they bore more resemblance to what was known as the "Persian Fire." He had found in these cases that the use of the knife was not advisable, but he had employed the *argentum nitratis* with very excellent effects. He used the caustic in the early stage, and by causing a slough, quickly arrested the spread of the disease. In all these cases, the blood was in a depraved condition, and tonics and support indicated. In some cases, the tenderness of the skin was so great, that pressure of the slightest kind in the neighbourhood of the sore could not be borne.

MR. B. W. RICHARDSON had found in these cases that the best and most effective treatment consisted of tonics, support, and, above all, change of air. He had used the knife sometimes freely, but little matter escaped. He had noticed the irritation of the skin referred to by Mr. Dendy.

MR. HANCOCK had seen many cases similar to those mentioned by Mr. Dendy. He regarded them more in the light of furunculoid tumour than of anthrax, as several occasionally occurred in one limb. The cases were usually accompanied with disorder of the digestive organs and want of power. He had found the best plan of treatment was to leave the tumour quite alone, and allow it to suppurate. When interfered with, either by the knife or the nitrate of silver, others were apt to form, which was not the case when the first tumour was allowed to take its course. Alterative doses of mercury, followed by the nitro-muriatic acid, he had found the best internal medicines.

MR. CHILDS remarked that the cases under discussion had been very prevalent, particularly amongst the police force, during the last two or three months. He agreed with Mr. Hancock on the impropriety of early interference with these tumours. Tonic treatment was early required.

MR. DENDY observed that the nitrate of silver acted on the absorbents around the tumour, and by stimulating them, cut short the progress of the disease, in the same manner that erysipelas was arrested. He had seen only good effects follow the nitrate of silver; it was in his hands preferable either to the use of the knife or to doing nothing.

MR. CANTON said that chlorate of potash in these cases was more likely to do good than any other internal medicine. Wine and good diet were early required. The blood disease might, he thought, be in a great measure attributed to the state of the weather. He did not agree with Mr. Dendy respecting the application of caustic; his own (Mr. Canton's) experience was in favour of a free opening at the proper time, extending to the healthy textures underneath and around, so that the disease might fairly be eliminated from the system. He had noticed, in families who had been subject to the furunculoid affection, that those members of it who escaped became the subjects of diarrhœa.

DR. HAWKSLEY had found large quantities of the oxalate of lime in the urine of patients affected with the furunculoid disease. In very obstinate cases, he had found the use of quinine and iron, and the local application of the resinous ointment, the best means of treatment.

(To be concluded.)

Reviews and Notices of Books.

The Journal of Psychological Medicine. Edited by FORBES WINSLOW, M.D. January, 1853.

THE present number of this ably conducted journal sustains the reputation of its predecessors. The first article takes a comprehensive survey of the condition of the British Asylums. The second contains a powerful exposure of a most glaring anomaly in our system of Jurisprudence, illustrated by the interesting narrative of Captain Johnston, who has been for seven years a prisoner in Bethlehem, on the charge of murder, committed on board his ship during a paroxysm of insanity. This narrative, and it is said the testimony, positive or negative, of the physicians of Bethlehem, clearly establish that he is of perfectly sound mind. The third article is a vigorous and fearless commentary on the disgraceful abuses at Bethlehem Hospital, and the conduct of the governors and medical

officers of that institution. It is with no small satisfaction that we welcome the support of a journal, specially devoted to mental pathology, and independent enough to denounce the conduct of those who have betrayed the trust they had usurped. The Report of the Commissioners in Lunacy upon Bethlehem is also given in full. There is also an interesting article upon the Epidemic Mental Diseases of Children.

THE ANALYTICAL SANITARY COMMISSION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Your remarks on different specimens of tincture of opium, in the last number of your journal, show the necessity of more precise directions in the Pharmacopœia for ensuring uniformity of strength in that important medicine. In the twenty-one samples which you have examined, scarcely are there two alike, either in specific gravity or in the solid contents; and the specific gravity seems to bear no relation to the solid contents, for 981, which is the heaviest but one, contains, with one exception, the least quantity of solid matter. You may well express astonishment at such results. But you will find, on examination of opium of the first-class, great difference in character; pieces taken out of the same chest contain very different relative proportions of soluble and insoluble matter in proof spirit. In drawing attention to my tincture, which yielded, on evaporation, the least amount of residue, you say that it contains little more than half what the College intended it should. No required residuum is mentioned in the Pharmacopœia; the formula *only* is there given, and in order to show that this formula has been strictly followed in my case, I trust you will do me the justice to publish a minute taken from my laboratory-book respecting the tincture which you have examined:—

"Sept. 27, 1852.—12 oz. powdered opium; 1 gallon proof spirit; digest 7 days."

Pressings, when dried, weighed $7\frac{1}{2}$ oz.; this added to the weight of the residue, you found the tincture yielded on evaporation—viz., 3.1 per cent, for one gallon=70,000 grains, which amounts to $4\frac{1}{2}$ oz. 10 gr.,—makes up the original weight of the powdered opium employed as directed in the London Pharmacopœia.

I employed the best quality of Turkey opium, selected from the stock of one of our first drug merchants, of a light colour, rather soft, and possessing the odour of genuine opium: it was dried and powdered in my own laboratory.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Oxford-street, Feb. 1853.

P. SQUIRE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The tinctura opii, to which reference was made in your last journal, is prepared by myself with exactly the quantity of opium and spirit of wine prescribed by the Pharmacopœia, and should your correspondent test its action, he will find that the gummy principle held in solution contains in a high degree the virtues of the opium. As now prepared it has been used for forty years without a single complaint.—Your obedient servant,

Piccadilly, Feb. 1853.

GEORGE REECE.

THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL ASSOCIATION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I entirely agree with your Brighton correspondent (Jan. 22), that with the removal of the *Association Medical Journal* to London, and the formation of a "Metropolitan Counties Branch Association," the character of the Society, and of its feeble publication, is at an end. They are no longer provincial. But instead of looking on this revolution of things with dismay, I look on it with hope, and I embrace with avidity the idea of Dr. Forbes, of the formation of a "British Medical Association"—of a *federal union*, in which the various corporations may, through the medium of a real representative council, act with a common purpose, and for the common good: a federation in which the public may recognize a real medical faculty—a union for all beneficial purposes, within and without; and a political *status*, compelling respect from the Legislature, and binding together the *disjecta membra* of a much abused profession.

And for helping out the establishment of such an Association—unlike your Brighton correspondent—I have no objection, notwithstanding his heterodox opinions on some therapeutic agencies, to a four years' presidency, at least, of that same Dr. Forbes.

I am, Sir, &c.

Pulborough, Sussex Feb. 1853.

T. J. MARTIN.