

belonged to the herd supplying the nursing home where the operation took place. Bearing in mind Kipling's story of the war correspondent and the sea serpent I refrained at the time from doing more than indicating my views to the surgeon in charge of the case. Lately I have been planning a series of ingestion experiments with a view to threshing the matter out thoroughly. Should the suggestion prove not to be fallacious it is easy to foresee elementary prophylaxis would demand the "Pasteurisation" of all food for at least a week after operation. With regard to research in this direction, I should esteem it a favour if any of your readers could suggest literature bearing on the point. Klein omits to refer to the matter, also Woodhead. Sternberg, I think, passes it by. Also our most able exponent of asepsis fails to mention the possibility of the idea in his invaluable monograph on Aseptic Surgery.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

LANCELOT WILKINSON.

St. Bartholomew's Hospital, London, Sept. 5th, 1904.

PHIMOSIS AND HERNIA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In his lecture on the Pathology and Treatment of the Herniæ of Children, published in THE LANCET of August 20th, p. 511, Mr. Edred M. Corner refers to the causal relation between phimosis and hernia. He lays most stress in his argument against this theory upon the fact that "the preputial orifice is rarely small enough to be of such paramount importance" and he proceeds to say that "ballooning of the prepuce" would occur and be observed by the nurse. In most cases of phimosis there is usually so much adhesion that ballooning would be impossible. Mr. Corner ignores some other evidence on this subject. The reflex irritation of an ordinary phimosis induces frequent micturition and the amount of straining exerted to empty a bladder with very little in it is greater than that required to discharge one moderately full. Moreover, besides the straining of frequent micturition, the persistent annoyance of a tight prepuce irritates the baby, makes him not only fretful and restless but induces paroxysmal attacks of screaming and these vocal efforts exert no mean amount of pressure on the abdominal walls.

Experienced nurses have repeatedly told me how much less frequent attacks of crying have been after circumcision. Quite recently I have had an opportunity of watching a small inguinal hernia which made its appearance about six weeks after birth completely disappear soon after circumcision. It is true a truss was worn for a few weeks but it was then removed and there has been no recurrence of the hernia up to the present. Among the ancient sanitary laws of the Jews I am inclined to believe that the rite of circumcision was by no means one of least value.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Uppingham, August 29th, 1904.

H. LYON SMITH.

PATENT INFANT FOODS AND THE RISK OF SCURVY.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The subject of infant feeding is often treated in your columns, forming the substance of lectures, papers before medical societies, and books under review. There are many observers seeking by scientific methods to devise normal physiological foods for infants who are deprived of breast milk. In the meantime we have to deal in practice with such means as are available and to recognise that a large and increasing number of infants are still fed on "sterilised milk," condensed milk, or one of the numerous patent foods which are in the market. That these foods vary greatly in quality and value has been shown, especially by Dr. R. Hutchison,¹ and the careful reader of his excellent address will have no difficulty in distinguishing those that have some claim to be considered as normal infant foods from those the composition of which is altogether unsuitable. Recent works on infant feeding either condemn patent foods *in toto* or admit one or two as perhaps useful in certain conditions.

There is one feature of the use of these prepared foods

which has not, I think, had full attention: its relation to the risk of scorbutic disease. Only a few weeks ago² Dr. G. F. Still described in THE LANCET two cases in which well-marked symptoms of infantile scurvy appeared after feeding with condensed milk and Allenburys and Benger's foods. It is well known that infants in whose dietary "fresh" or living food has no place are liable after the age of six months to the outbreak of this disease. It is also generally agreed that milk loses what have been called in this connexion its "natural living qualities" by heating to the extent necessary for boiling, for producing sterilised or pasteurised milk, and for making so-called "condensed milk." For the same reason those patent foods which belong to the class of desiccated milk and are mixed for use with water only, like the Allenburys (I. and II.), Horlick's, Carnrick's, and Nestlé's foods, form when given alone a diet insufficient to provide against the risk of scurvy. Patent foods directed to be mixed with fresh milk are much less liable to this objection, but if, as in the case of Savory and Moore's, Benger's, Allenburys No. III., and others, the milk is to be boiled, it furnishes no protection against such disease. It is further to be noted that although infantile scurvy is a comparatively rare disease and appears in a developed form only after the age of six months, it is probable that the like disorder may be present in slighter degrees; and that anæmia and poor nutrition, with perhaps tender gums, occurring in many infants at an earlier age may be attributable to a similar though less severe change in the blood. On the other hand, the means of preventing such blood disorder are simple and ready to hand—viz., the administration of a little floury potato, crushed rice, grated banana, raw meat juice, or the juice of orange or grape, besides fresh unboiled cow's milk. The habit of the poor to give to their babies "a little of what we have ourselves" may often disturb their digestion but in my opinion the teaspoonful of potato and gravy from the mother's plate saves many infants fed on condensed milk or on one of the cheaper patent foods from scorbutic trouble. In this way the poor may actually avoid some of the risks attending the stricter feeding practised by the rich.

The object of stating these facts is in order to urge the duty of our profession to show to the manufacturers of sterilised and condensed milk and infant foods the need of clear directions, to be printed upon all their tins and bottles, that after the age of three or four months one or other of the articles of fresh food alluded to should be given in small quantities twice a week in addition to the prepared food. It is necessary, too, that the public should be educated in the same sense, especially as printed instructions are often little read. Some of the best foods are already protected in this way—e.g., the Allenburys, Mellin's, and Benger's—whose proprietors give clear directions to the consumers for the occasional use of fresh diet whilst taking the patent food. It is only fair to state this as it is pretty evident that in Dr. Still's cases the printed advice had been disregarded. I quote from the label on the Allenburys food No. II. :—

It is advisable, after the first two or three months of life, to give, in addition to the manufactured food of whatever kind, some fresh material, such as grape juice, the sweetened juice from an orange, &c.

If these directions were made still more prominent and if the numerous patent foods which at present give no such warning were provided with it I think that the health of a multitude of hand-fed infants would be helped, without waiting for the day, for the coming of which food reformers are working, when a truly normal substitute for human milk in cases where this is not available shall find full acceptance.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Weymouth-street, W., Sept. 5th, 1904.

R. HINGSTON FOX.

LAYMEN AND ELECTRICAL TREATMENT.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I trust that you will allow me a little space to reply briefly to Mr. Chisholm Williams and others who have criticised my note on the above subject in THE LANCET of August 6th. People have a curious way of misunderstanding or overlooking language the meaning of which appears quite obvious. I specially guarded myself against the idea of handing patients over to "people who pose as healers or who prefer to act apart from medical men." If this quotation from my letter has any meaning it disposes beforehand

¹ See THE LANCET, July 5th, 1902, p. 5.

² THE LANCET, August 13th, p. 441.

of all your correspondents' virtuous indignation over my supposed advocacy of the support of quacks or quack institutions.

None of your correspondents have advanced any arguments or stated any facts to support the contention that it needs the skill and knowledge of a qualified medical man to apply electricity in the great majority of conditions in which it is found useful, such as those I mentioned in my previous note. I should say that to one case which requires the knowledge and skill of a man like Mr. Chisholm Williams there are at least 20 that can be perfectly well treated by a masseur or masseuse who has received the excellent training of the modern teachers of massage and electricity; indeed, I venture to suggest whether it is not somewhat derogatory to the dignity of the profession for a qualified medical man to undertake the routine treatment of such cases.

To correct Mr. Chisholm Williams's and others' misconstructions of my remark about having one's ideas of diagnosis and treatment overhauled by another practitioner I will narrate a case in point. I sent an intractable case of Graves's disease for treatment to a highly qualified medical electrician (who, I believe, charged a guinea for each sitting). Without any thought or intention of breach of faith towards me he rather pooh-poohed the idea of using electricity and, of course, absolutely discouraged the patient, thereby preventing her giving electrical treatment a trial of sufficient duration to convince me of its value or otherwise in her case. Had I sent this patient to a lay electrician acting under my own instructions she would have continued the treatment as long as I thought it worth while. I have no lack of confidence in the good faith of my professional brethren, but I contend that skilled knowledge of a special line of treatment does not put the electric practitioner in possession of all one's reasons for desiring a certain line of treatment in a particular case. I cannot see any analogy between the case of a non-medical but trained person applying electrical treatment when prescribed by a physician and that of a patient being treated by a bone-setter or quack oculist. Finally, I must say that to talk about "covering" in connexion with my letter—if read with ordinary intelligence—appears to me to be rank absurdity.

With regard to the x rays, my experience is limited to their use by qualified medical men. I am glad to learn from Mr. Chisholm Williams that it is possible to get such treatment at a scale of fees within the reach of middle-class patients.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

E. STANLEY SMITH, M.D. Durh., M.R.C.P. Lond.
Wimpole-street, W., Sept. 10th, 1904.

APOCYNUM CANNABINUM.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The editorial note on the Uses of Apocynum Cannabinum in THE LANCET of Sept. 3rd, p. 734, will, I hope, direct the attention of the profession to a remedy which I have found of the greatest value and have constantly prescribed for the last 14 years. The drug was first introduced to my notice by Dr. Joseph Kidd who recommended me to try it in the case of a patient with dilated heart who had passed from his care to mine when she moved into the country. The disease had reached a stage when the patient could no longer rest recumbent, the anasarca and ascites being so advanced that paracentesis appeared to afford the only chance of relief. The "vegetable trocar," however, answered admirably. Within the first two days of its administration the urine rose from about ten ounces in the 24 hours to 60 and the diuresis increased daily until the ascites and the anasarca almost disappeared, the patient getting about again and living for two years. Again and again I have had similar experience and a large number of my colleagues in this district now employ the remedy, having seen such marked benefit from it in cases of cardiac and renal dropsy in which we have consulted.

I have always used "Keith's concentrated tincture" which Dr. Kidd recommended as the only reliable preparation of the drug. Several of my professional brethren who have employed the tincture usually kept by chemists have

¹ Keith's concentrated tincture of apocynum cannabinum may be obtained from Gale and Co., 15, Bouverie-street, London, E.C., and probably from other wholesale druggists.

been disappointed in its effects; and to the want of activity in this, the ordinary, tincture must, I think, be attributed the fact that apocynum cannabinum has not come into more general use. The fluid extract recommended by Dr. J. Pawinski may be equally efficacious with Keith's preparation but of this I have no experience. The irritant action of the drug upon the digestive organs is a positive quality which must be borne in mind. In the first case in which I so successfully employed apocynum the dose recommended by Dr. Kidd, who was, at the time, I believe, supposed to prescribe drugs in decillionths and similar fractions of their ordinary doses, caused violent vomiting and purging and I had at once to reduce it to one-sixth the amount. In cases of cirrhosis of the liver I have found the smallest doses cause dangerous gastric irritation and I always warn the colleagues to whom I recommend the medicine against employing it in cases complicated with liver disease; in these cases I consider that it is contra-indicated. I prescribe the concentrated tincture in doses of from one to two minims every four hours or three times a day, increasing the dose by one minim every two days until the maximum which the stomach and intestines will bear is reached; this is seldom as much as ten minims. The medicine may be combined with other heart tonics. Employed carefully in this way its beneficial effects have, in my own experience and in that of the many friends to whom I have introduced apocynum cannabinum, been astonishing and yet so little is the medicine known that only once, when in consultation I have advised its use, has my colleague been familiar with it and that man immediately said, "I know where you got that from, it was from Kidd."

With the precautions which I have indicated I strongly advise your readers in cases of cardiac and renal dropsy to try this remedy, the merits of which I have long intended to press upon the notice of the profession through the medium of your columns.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

THOMAS JAMES WALKER, M.D. Lond.

Peterborough, Sept. 10th, 1904.

THE UTILITY OR OTHERWISE OF FEVER HOSPITALS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I entirely endorse the view to which Dr. C. K. Millard gives expression in your issue of to-day's date that, should an inquiry take place, the fact of having taken part in this controversy ought to constitute a disqualification for a place on the Commission. I agree, also, with the suggestion that "sanitarians who have been actively instrumental in securing the provision of fever hospitals in the past" should not be placed in the invidious position of having to sit in judgment on their own actions. The fact that many able and conscientious medical officers of health will thus be excluded need not be deplored, seeing that their evidence will be available and will lose none of its weight. Now a word of caution. I cannot help thinking that undue haste would be a great mistake. *Festina lente!* The reasonable demand that an inquiry should be held has been too grudgingly conceded up to the present time to justify the hope that this important question is ripe for settlement on its merits. Let us leave it for a time in the crucible of intra-professional discussion where the truth should be in no danger.

In conclusion, I echo your suggestion, Sirs, that the controversy may well be conducted without personalities in the future. Indeed, there is no room for them. For whatever be the outcome of this inquiry, should it take place, it will not be denied that much good has *already* been accomplished which will be a distinct gain to the cause of public health.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Nottingham, Sept. 10th, 1904.

EDWD. DEAN MARRIOTT.

THE BOILING OF MILK.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—May I, as the "iconoclastic scientist" referred to by Dr. J. M. Fortescue-Brickdale in THE LANCET of Sept. 10th, p. 792, offer a word of explanation with regard to the slight misapprehension he is under as to my views on the boiling of milk. In the course of my conversation with Mr. R. Bevan I did not enter on the very debatable ground included under reasons (2),