

# Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

## ON THE ABORTIVE TREATMENT OF HOOPING COUGH.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In one of your leading articles of the 5th instant, you remark that "the proceedings of the various medical societies in London offer few points for comment," and "that the reader of your journal is in a position to arrive at a correct opinion as to what extent they have served the interests of the profession." For my own part, I must say that I always read the report of the proceedings of these societies with much interest, and sometimes with advantage; and if there be any point in which they appear to me to be defective, it is that they are not of a sufficiently practical character. I have often thought that the gentlemen who bring forward papers at the various meetings for discussion take too elevated a range,—they aim too high; and, from their extreme ambition to excel, that the useful and really practical portion of what I conceive their discussions should convey is often lost in a labyrinth of speculative mysticism and of crude and a difficultly-comprehensible nomenclature. The medical man who is called to a case of fever or inflammation, or any other of "the thousand ills to which flesh is heir," generally speaking, cares little whether the disease be of the neurotic or zymotic class—whether it be centric or peripheral,—his desire is, or should be, to relieve his patient by the shortest possible means from the abnormal condition in which he finds him; and therefore the knowledge of a remedy, or information which may communicate such knowledge, would be to him far more valuable than the most sublimated disquisition upon some interminable dispute as to their pathology. I have been led to these remarks, more especially, from reading the discussion on Dr. Hyde Salter's paper on Hooping-Cough in the number of THE LANCET of the 5th instant, and accordingly, as I have been disappointed in my expectations of finding therein some useful practical hints, I shall, with great deference, venture to bring before your numerous readers a remedy for the management of this singular disease, which I have been for many years in the habit of employing,—a remedy whose abortive powers completely upset the distinguishing characteristic of its being definite in its course, which Dr. Salter would ascribe to it as one of its essentials for taking its rank amongst the zymotic class; but, if I might venture to indulge in any hypothesis, the beneficial effect of the remedy I make use of, no less than the acknowledged efficacy of tonic treatment—such as quinine and change of air—would dispose me to classify it among the Neuroses. Whooping or hooping-cough, then, is a well-known disease; but, like many other epidemics, its origin is, and ever will continue to be, in all probability, a mystery, and every speculation as to the *materies morbi* must prove vain and unprofitable.

The catarrhal or bronchitic symptoms that manifest themselves in its early stage, would show its similarity to the exanthematous tribe of diseases; from these latter, however, it peculiarly differs in the fact of its period of duration in the system being indeterminate; thus, while measles, scarlet-fever, and small-pox, run through their courses respectively within a well defined period, hooping-cough takes a range varying between three weeks and six or eight months. The fact of the system being only once in the course of a lifetime susceptible of their irritation, that *quiddam morbosum*, shows them likewise to possess some analogous and allied features. Many years since, having spent a short probationary period with an apothecary in the west of Ireland, I found that, for the cure of hooping-cough, "in reputation he was *solus*," that "his fame through all the country raised his name," numbers from a distance flocked to him whenever the disease became prevalent in any neighbouring locality. His *methodus medendi* he never imparted to any of his pupils; we were enabled, however, to notice a constant drain upon the bottle which contained the tincture of cantharides, and the fact of many of these tender patients suffering from symptoms of strangury, was convincing evidence that this potent drug formed the chief ingredient in this much-prized nostrum. About the period to which I allude (1834), there was published "A Translation of the Dublin Pharmacopœia, with Observations, Clinical and Practical," the conjoint production of Professors Barker and Montgomery, whose names and well-known

character for accuracy in their respective departments of knowledge, stamped their writings with great value. Dr. Montgomery therein informs us, that tincture of cantharides "has been administered in hooping-cough, and in one case of which I was informed, with great success. It was thus given to an infant: Tincture of bark, half an ounce; tincture of cantharides, three drachms; compound tincture of opium, half an ounce. A tea-spoonful to be taken three times a day in a table-spoonful of linseed tea." This remedy, then, or a modification of it, I have been in the habit of employing in cases of pure uncomplicated pertussis, and invariably with the effect of cutting short the disease after a few days' persistence in the treatment; the strangury which it induces must be kept up in a mitigated form for some days, and never more palpably did chlorosis fall before the power of that admirable remedy steel, or discharge in gonorrhœa become suspended when the system of the unhappy sufferer becomes the subject of some more potent constitutional malady—upon the principle laid down by Hunter, that both diseases cannot coexist—than that the painful paroxysms of hooping-cough shall gradually decline, and in a few days cease altogether, by a careful and gentle maintenance of strangury, from a persistence in the use of cantharides. I at first order for my patient a gentle emetic of ipecacuanha powder, give one or two active aperients, place him or her, as the case may be, on a non-stimulating diet, and then commence the foregoing remedy. I likewise combine with it the use of an empirical remedy, the well-known Roche's embrocation; but this is, perhaps, from some prejudice as to its efficacy from having tried it, rather than from claiming for it any superiority over any other plan of counter-irritation: indeed, as a general rule, I have a great aversion to such nostrums, but this seems to have acquired and maintained its position, so as to meet with the sanction of its employment by men of the highest professional standing, who do not go to the extreme length that a celebrated Yorkshire baronet did, whose devoted loyalty made him spurn at a certain *radical* cure for the gout, to which he had been a great victim, but which same remedy he swallowed with extraordinary avidity when informed of its *sovereign* virtues.

The above plan of treatment does not seem to me to be generally practised in England, as far as I am aware of it; I think I noticed some allusion to it in a work on the Practice of Physic, by Dr. Cragie of Edinburgh, which I looked into soon after its publication several years ago, and in an admirable paper on the Contagion of Hooping-Cough, by Dr. John James McGregor, in Vol. II. of THE LANCET for 1846. The same prescription is (almost *verbatim*) recommended as the suggestion of Dr. Thomas Beatty, of Dublin. With the sanction of their names as to its utility in cutting short this distressing malady, I have no hesitation in asking medical gentlemen to give it a trial, confidently assuring them that in appropriate cases it will not disappoint their expectations.

I am, Sir, your very obedient servant,

Nottingham, July, 1856.

P. J. HYNES, M.D., M.R.C.S.E.

## HOSPITAL PHARMACEUTISTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The trustees of the Bristol Royal Infirmary have recently adopted certain resolutions, a notice of which may be interesting to those who have the management of other hospitals. I therefore beg to enclose copies of such resolutions, and to state that, in accordance with the new rules, our committee have elected a pharmaceutical chemist of the neighbourhood to the office of "Honorary Pharmacist to the Bristol Royal Infirmary."

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Bristol Royal Infirmary, July, 1856.

WILLIAM TRENNERY, Sec.

Resolved—"That the interests of this charity have been proved to require the assistance of a professional pharmacist, and that it is desirable that the office of honorary pharmacist to the Bristol Royal Infirmary be created, and that the pharmacists of this city be invited to a position of honour on the staff of this establishment.

"That power be vested in the committee to appoint an honorary pharmacist to this infirmary, who shall purchase and be responsible for the selection, quality, and price of all the drugs and chemicals required in the institution; such appointment to be continued during the pleasure of the committee."