

ton-lane, about 28 years of age, who had been in labour for several hours with her second child, with strong, regular, and expulsive pains. On making an examination, I found a large tumour between the thighs, which, on exposing the parts, I found to be the perineum covering the child's head. The os externum would scarcely admit the point of three fingers; the hair of the child's head was just seen; the anterior part of the perineum was firm, thick, and resisting. As the finger passed posteriorly, it became gradually thinner, until the sphincter ani, which was on the full stretch, was as thin as writing-paper, and was on the point of giving way. I made the nurse keep up pressure on that part to prevent such an accident. It was now very clear what ought to be done; and just as I was about to make the incision, I observed what I supposed to be a scar, and was told, on inquiry, that the late Dr. Walshman had been obliged to divide the perineum for the delivery of her first child. I commenced the incision at about an inch anterior to the margin of the sphincter ani, and carried it through the whole length of the perineum, the anterior and resisting part of which was about half an inch thick. A strong, healthy male child was immediately expelled. There was little hæmorrhage; the parts united by the first intention, and the mother was about again at the usual time.

Until the foregoing happened to myself, I was very incredulous as to any case requiring division of the perineum, having had cases where delivery was retarded for a long time, owing to the unyielding state of the perineum and other soft parts, which invariably have relaxed after waiting for some hours, taking away a sufficient quantity of blood, and using warm-water fomentations, or, what is much better, desiring the patient to sit over hot water. My reasons for operating in this case were, that the perineum would be more likely to unite by the first intention from an incision made with a scalpel than if the parts were lacerated, believing that the perineum very rarely, if ever, unites after laceration, although I am aware that it frequently contracts very much. My other reason was, that there would have been the inevitable destruction of the sphincter ani, and the woman, in all probability, made miserable for life. The mucous membrane of the rectum was slightly protruding, the anus being longitudinally stretched to its utmost bounds, and every practical obstetrician must have been consulted in cases where, from laceration of the perineum, and its extension into the sphincter ani, the patient has been placed in a state which admits of little, if any relief.

SIR C. ALDIS ON HOMŒOPATHY.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

"Nihil tam absurdum quod dictum
Sit ab aliquo philosophorum."—CICERO.

SIR:—As the system of prescribing minute doses of medicines on the plan of Hahnemann appears to be adopted by persons of consideration, a simple observation or two may not be inconsistent with the objects of your excellent publication, THE LANCET.

If the usual doses of medicine be prescribed,—say from 20 to 30 minims of liquid laudanum,—for pain, without any alleviation, and a learned Homœopatheal physician be called in, who says, "This is wrong, I shall order one minim, or the 48th part of a minim, of *tinct. opii*." He does so, and the patient becomes easier, nay, quite free from pain. He ascribes, immediately, the good he has done, to the small dose given. Certainly he has done good; the patient is well; but to assert that the benefit received was from the minute dose, would be most inconsistent, and it would be but arguing *de lãnã caprina*, to enter on the subject. In this case the opium was unnecessarily given, and, like other medicines wrongly administered, do harm instead of good. I have, during a course of many years' practice, witnessed numerous cases where severe medicines have been injudiciously prescribed, and have cured my patients by adopting an opposite treatment. *Digitalis*, henbane, and mercury, especially the latter, for instance, I have seen carried so far as to be prescribed almost in every variety of disease, and do a vast deal of harm. Those who were acquainted with the late Dr. Currey and Mr. Abernethy, must have seen the frequent use they made of it,—men highly esteemed for their talents and education, yet so wedded to their favourite medicine, mercury, as to be induced to use it in almost every case. If we are to receive, for instance, substantial benefit from the 1000th part of a dose of any medicine, might we not as reasonably expect substantial strength from 1000th part of what we usually take at a meal? If the minute dose of opium be sufficient to conquer pain, surely the same proportion of food might as well be expected to be sufficient to satisfy a hungry person. If a patient recovers from leaving off all medicine, or by adopting the Homœopatheal system, which to me appears to be the same thing, it shows that medicine was unnecessary; but where would the patient be who had a serious disease, one which was making rapid strides on the constitution, and which could only be subdued by proper medicines? I believe it would soon be pretty clear that he was fast hastening to that "country from whose bourne no traveller returns." I am, Sir, your obedient servant

CHARLES ALDIS.

Old Burlington-st. St. James's, Dec. 10, 1836