

fact, that a phial, known to have contained essential oil of almonds a short time previous, was found empty by the proprietor of the shop soon after the man's death.

The facts relative to the autopsy were simply these: that the stomach presented a "phlogosed," or highly excited state of the vessels of the mucous membrane and the upper intestines, and that the brain displayed an increased state of vascularity. There was not *much* serum effused, but only more than usual. The colour of the blood in the brain was not in the least altered. The turgidity of the stomach, Dr. Whiting explained, was not that of inflammation, but an unusual quantity of blood in the minute ramifications of the artery—a turgidity of the mucous membrane and upper part of the duodenum. All the mucous glands were remarkably large, standing up or projecting, particularly towards the large curvature of the stomach. One of the points most particularly attended to, was an attempt to detect prussic acid in the brain. After opening the stomach, in which of course the quantity was large, and the smell proportionably strong, the nose was carried gradually along the body, and in the brain the scent was discovered to be perfectly plain, though the detection of acid in it, by any other means, was not possible. Some of the fluid, both from the brain and stomach, was collected in a bottle, and carried by Dr. Whiting, on his way home, to a chemist, to be tested. Presenting the bottle, first, which contained the fluid from the brain, the chemist, on smelling it, immediately said the fluid contained prussic acid, from which there could be no doubt that that poison was present to a greater or less extent in the ventricles. Not a trace of it, however, could be detected by analysis. This is in accordance with the statement of Orfila, who says, that though discoverable by the smell in different parts of the body, the most delicate chemical test is inadequate to its detection.

It happened that ammonia was made use of immediately the indisposition of the man was discovered; not as an antidote to the prussic acid, however, but under an impression that he was merely affected with faintness. The intended remedy, of course, did not produce the least effect.

The rapidity with which fluid must have been formed in the brain, was thought, by the relater, worth attending to, as an indication of the prompt treatment which should be pursued in acute diseases terminating in effusion.

Mr. STEPHENS mentioned the result of some experiments in which he had administered the prussic acid to animals, the particulars of which will be found in the following extract from a letter, communicated to

us by Mr. Stephens, shortly after the exposure of the impostor Chabert: "In attempting to destroy a pack of hounds, eighteen in number, amongst which rabies had made its appearance, I found that five, six, and eight drops, Scheele's strength, were sufficient to kill the majority only, the youngest dogs dying first. Others required a much larger dose, and three or four of them I could not kill at all by the acid. The latter fell down, and lay gasping for some time, but recovered, and took second and third doses, considerably increased, with the same result, and were ultimately compelled to be destroyed by other means. The conclusions I drew from these experiments were, that unless this acid produces its full effect *speedily*, it fails altogether, and that the constitutions of some dogs are almost proof against its influence. The same tenacity of life appears to characterise kittens, which I have also tried to poison in lieu of suffocating them. The animals were a few days old, and though they took several doses, were ultimately obliged to be drowned. With the same agent I readily destroyed a pheasant and some other birds, a piece of thread moistened with the acid, and applied to their throats, being amply sufficient for the purpose."

GEORGE MANN BURROWS, M.D.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—An association of medical men in Surrey, under the title of "The Surrey Benevolent Medical Society," and meeting yesterday at Epsom, have thought proper to address a letter to Dr. Burrows, of which the following is a copy, and at the same time directed me to request the favour of you to insert it in the next Number of THE LANCET. I have the honour to be, Sir,

Your most obedient servant,

THOS. MARTIN, Sec.
Reigate, May 11th, 1830.

To Dr. Burrows.

Epsom, May 10th, 1830.

SIR,—The members of the Surrey Medical Society, in consequence of circumstances which have occurred, and from which you have been most strangely and unjustly misrepresented and traduced in the public newspapers, beg permission to express their sympathy, and the assurance of their most cordial and undiminished regard to you, as individually their friend, the friend of the society, of medical science, and of humanity.

Conscious of your integrity, and of the blameless, as well as praiseworthy, tenour of your professional conduct upon all occasions, you hardly stand in need of this assurance from such humble individuals; but you have been so hardly and unjustly treated by the public press in particular, that they consider your professional brethren may, without impropriety, state to you, that they are not forgetful of your former labours in behalf of the general practitioner, of the merits of your admirable writings, and of the friendship and kindness they have collectively and individually experienced at your hands.

Wishing you a long career of happiness, success, and of meritorious exertion on behalf of your suffering fellow-creatures, they remain

Your faithful friends and servants,

John Parrot	Charles Cooper
Thomas Martin	Thomas B. Toovey
John N. Shelley	John W. Mayd
Geo. Fletcher	T. W. Montagu
James Tunstall	William Hart
Joseph Ward	W. Chaldecott
Geo. Bottomley	Thomas Steele
Edw. Wallace	Thomas Smith.

ERGOT OF RYE.

MR. WALFORD, MR. HAWKES, AND
MR. EVANS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—“ Full of vacuity, and replete with nothing,” Mr. Hawkes again devotes himself; and, as he seems to be in earnest, he may, perhaps, obtain some of the merit, with all the sufferings, of a martyr. He greatly wrongs me, by suspecting that I either hoped or apprehended a renewal of hostilities; to it, I was perfectly indifferent; and I should not now congratulate him on his re-appearance, but for the small injustice which he has done me, by misquoting what I said; and, by delivering *his* meaning for mine, reduced me to the necessity of disclaiming a responsibility I shall ever be unwilling to incur. In relating my experience, I was not unprepared for the opposition I have encountered; but, as I did not calculate upon misrepresentation, so I am not disposed to endure it. He says, I told him he neglected “ the advice of those reasoners who prefer analogy to proof.” I did no such thing: I told him he neglected “ the advice of those reasoners who resorted to analogy for illustration, rather than for proof.” This is upon record, so is his uncandid misrepresentation. Notwithstanding this injustice, I owe him no ill-will; in proof whereof, I advise him to beware of a contest, before he is perfectly acquainted

with the worth of the object in whose service he may volunteer; and to adopt another precaution of trifling importance; namely, to inform himself of the precise strength of the adversary he may be about to engage. The very plain proposition, above quoted, he says, is unintelligible. I hope he does not blame the composition for that which is justly chargeable to himself alone: however perspicuous I might be, I could not pledge myself to make him understand me. Neither was it alien to the occasion, for he greatly needed the reproof; and if any thing can heighten my regret that it was necessary, it is, that his second letter proves him to be one of a large class, who profit as little by experience, as they teach by example.

He disavows any intention of impressing your readers with a high opinion of his reasoning powers. Has it not, ere now, occurred to Mr. Hawkes, that such an assurance was superfluous? He is pleased to disapprove of my sometimes using the language of others. To quotations I confess my partiality, and his repugnance will not overcome my predilection. But even he will allow my integrity; the inverted commas proclaim my obligation, and prove, that if I occasionally borrow another's mode of expression, I never refuse to acknowledge it.

Mr. Hawkes says he will not be convinced of the necessity for craniotomy in my cases. I shall not attempt it: it would be like “ his own periods, labour without end.” Besides, I am not intolerant; I cordially hate all kinds of conversion; it is a task rarely repaid by the value of the proselyte.

I infer that he holds it essential to the conditions requiring the use of the secale, that the foetal head shall be *in* the pelvis; notwithstanding his ungracious reception of the only information I ever ventured to offer him, I forgive his ingratitude, and assure him that in this supposition he errs egregiously. I have elsewhere stated what I conceived to be requisite to *prove* the virtue of the ergot; and if I here admit that I may have required more than is absolutely necessary, its advocates must allow that it cannot be prejudiced by proofs more than enough. A great oversight is frequently committed by the believers in the efficacy of this medicine. They regard as a proof of its power, the termination of a labour *soon* after its exhibition; forgetting, that frequently, labour pains will cease, or diminish, they know not why; and be resumed, or increased, they know not wherefore. In such cases, after the exhibition of the secale, it is a very natural error for men, ignorant of the nature of *final causes*, to ascribe the event to the means employed; they seem to forget that the event would occur almost invariably; but *when*, they know not. A