

fœtus of from fifteen to sixteen weeks was expelled enclosed in an unruptured amniotic sac (with liquor amnii) forming a perfectly transparent envelope without any chorionic or placental tissue. The cord was torn through at the placental insertion and the torn end appeared at the bottom of a depression in the amniotic sac. The placenta was partly adherent to the uterine wall and had to be removed by the finger. During the pregnancy there had been periodic losses of blood. As this was an unusual condition I preserved the specimen with a view to sending it later to a museum. I find now that it agrees with the description in Dr. Purslow's note in THE LANCET of Feb. 13th.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Appledore, Devon.

ALLAN MAHOOD.

"SHOULD EPILEPTICS MARRY?"

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. Gowers sees no reason to believe that accidental lesions are transmitted and asks me to quote instances. 1. A. B., aged ten years, had one eye destroyed by the lace of a football. His children all had that eye smaller and weaker than the other. 2. C. D. asked me to look at the eyes of his children. He thought they all squinted. The right eye in each case was measurably smaller than the left. C. D., when eight years of age, had his right eye rendered sightless by a needle in a dart thrown by a playfellow. 3. E. F. lost an eye in childhood. His daughter had defective sight; his grandchild is blind. 4. G. H. had his right little finger entangled in a rope when seven years of age and permanently deformed. His children all inherit the deformity.

These cases, amongst others, came under my own observation. I would also refer those who are interested in this subject to an article by Dr. Brown-Séquard,¹ in which he gives many instances as the result of experiment and remarks: "I have never seen epilepsy (in guinea-pigs) except in those having had certain injuries able to produce that nervous complaint, or in the young born of those injured and therefore epileptic animals." As a result of his observation and experiments he concludes: "These facts, added to others mentioned by P. Lucas and Darwin, clearly prove the possibility of hereditary transmission of effects of mere accidental injuries."

The case quoted by Dr. Langworthy² is remarkable. He delivered a child whose right eye and right arm were wanting. The father had lost his right eye and had been wounded in the right arm. Dr. Clark³ attended a child with a stiff knee-joint bent exactly in the same position as the father's, which was also stiff. But it is unnecessary to multiply instances, which abound in the writings of Darwin, the late Professor Rolleston, and others whose observation was keen enough to detect them. If any meaning is to be attached to the term "heredity" it is difficult to exclude the operation of accidental causes or we should be almost driven into the belief that hereditary qualities have always been the "property" of the family in which they occur and have never had an origin. With all due deference, therefore, to Dr. Gowers I consider that a physician is not justified in advising an accidental epileptic to marry or in offering him any prospect of immunity for his possible offspring. I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Feb. 22nd, 1897.

WILLIAM G. THISTLE.

THE LATE MR. GEORGE POLLOCK.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—It may be of interest to record that Mr. George Pollock was in his youth a pupil of the Rev. W. C. Twiss at Wrestlingworth, Beds. The Rev. Mr. Twiss was a man of great originality and humour, and he loved to recount with gusto the escapades of his brilliant pupil. The attachment between the two was very great, and during the last illness of Mr. Twiss, who died in 1888, at the age of ninety years, Mr. Pollock made a special journey down to see him—forty-one miles by rail and seven by road—when himself at the age of seventy-one years. The meeting was not without its pathetic side, and Mr. Pollock afterwards contributed a most touching

and affectionate account of the life of his old friend to the *Bedfordshire Press*.

Biggleswade, Feb. 2nd, 1897.

I am, Sirs, your truly,

J. B. EMMERSON.

THE NEW THEORY OF MALARIA.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Dr. Bignami, in his most interesting article summarising the different hypotheses to account for the infection of human beings by the malarial organisms, including the comparatively new theory of inoculation by mosquitos, gives facts which appear to militate against the ground air theory. My object in writing is to ask for a little more light on one of the facts. Great stress is laid upon the experiments showing that it is impossible to pass organisms contained in air through earth, and especially is it difficult to do so when the earth is saturated with water. It seems to me possible to hold that the rainfall increases malaria by raising the subsoil water and so the malarial organisms are forced out of the damp soil where they are produced to the surface in water, and when the water subsides the organisms are retained at the surface. Buchner's theory of the breaking up of the liquid lamellæ scattering the organisms into the ground air would explain, as pointed out by the writer, the passage of the organisms from the surface into the air. Can facts be given disproving the theory of the forcing upwards through the soil of malarial organisms contained in water? I have never heard of earth-worms being considered as vehicles for the passage of malarial organisms to the surface, and yet I see no reason for ignoring them.

Malaria was at one time prevalent in certain parts of England. Were mosquitos to be found in England then? Even now occasional cases of ague are to be found in Kent, Essex, Suffolk, and Lincolnshire. At the great outbreak of malarial disease at Paris, when the Canal St. Martin was excavated, were mosquitos concerned in spreading the malarial organisms?

In 1885 I suggested that the immunity to yellow fever noticed among the negro race and acclimatised Europeans was probably due to a state of the blood the result of malarial poisoning, and in a paper on Immunity which I read to a medical association I suggested that the serum from persons suffering from malaria should be tried in yellow fever. I have since thought that the serum of pigeons affected with the malarial parasites would be more suitable for experimental purposes.—I am, Sirs, yours truly,

HENRY ALSTON,

Trinidad Medical Service.

Feb. 3rd, 1897.

THE CONTAGIOUS DISEASES ACTS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the present state of agitation for the resumption of these Acts in India and the East it may help to strengthen the hands of those interested in this subject if I give, as shortly as possible, the result of my experience of their action during my tenure of office of colonial surgeon and inspector of hospitals in Hong-Kong from 1858 to 1871, during which time they were carried out under my immediate superintendence. The principal medical officers of both navy and army loyally supported me in the matter, and had it been the duty of the health officer of the port to inspect all merchant seamen venereal disease might have been nearly stamped out. No leave was granted to seamen of the Royal Navy without previous medical inspection and detention in hospital if found diseased. The soldiers were carefully watched by their own medical officers, and the whole of the police force underwent a special medical examination once a month. All merchant seamen known to be diseased residing in any boarding-house were obliged under a heavy penalty to be reported to the harbour master and transferred to hospital. All known prostitutes, with the exception of a few Europeans and some half-caste Portuguese who ought not to have been exempted, were examined on an average once a week and if found diseased were detained in hospital; and very few, once I had got the system in proper working order, made any objection, soon being satisfied that it was for their advantage to be so dealt by.

Now what was the sanitary result of all this elaborate machinery? In 1859 both among naval and military invalids the syphilitic amounted to nearly 25 per cent. of the whole,

¹ THE LANCET, Jan. 2nd, 1875.

² THE LANCET, Jan. 26th, 1850.

³ Medical Times and Gazette, Sept. 5th, 1857.