

the graduates should be alike consulted. Any other line of conduct must materially hinder the development of the University of London.

In investigating the immediate cause of the death of the noble lord, which occurred just a fortnight ago, under such remarkable circumstances, there is more than mere curiosity to be gratified, or even than that interest to be regarded, which many persons might naturally feel in an individual to whose person or character they had been attached. A man in the prime of life, and, as far as public information knows, in the full enjoyment of health, and in the pursuit of his ordinary occupation, is found dead by the wayside. The body of the deceased is examined by two medical men, who pronounce the death to have been caused by "spasm of the heart,"—a phrase which medical science at once repudiates, and calls for an explanation. It is more than curiosity which makes the demand. The pathologist is aroused to the declared existence of a new fact in his science; the attention of the clinical physician is claimed for the method of distinguishing the presence of this disease during life, and of ascertaining the means (if any) by which it might be relieved; whilst the public at large have a deeper, because more selfish, interest in being told, and thus learning how to avoid the probable exciting causes of a like fatal contingency.

Entirely disbelieving in the existence of such a thing as spasm of the heart, the tissue of the organ being healthy, we very willingly afforded Messrs. WARD and MILLS, the medical men who opened the body, an opportunity of explaining their views on the subject. Those gentlemen have not, however thought proper to comply with the request politely made to them, and the consequent inference must be, that they know nothing further on the subject, but that, in fact, finding the cause of death obscure, they made a statement "to the best of their knowledge."

In the absence of authentic and positive information on the subject, various rumours are heard as to the immediate cause of death. We can only say that the reports of the inquest, as published in the daily papers, do not convince us that "spasm of the heart" had existed, though a conscientious jury, guided by the evidence of medical men, who made their statement "to the best of their knowledge," pronounced such an affection to have been the fatal cause of the sad catastrophe.

At the first lecture of his course, on Monday last, Dr. WILLIAMS informed the members of his class in UNIVERSITY COLLEGE "that the present would probably be the last session during which he should have the pleasure of addressing them." This announcement was received with a feeling of inexpressible regret—a feeling in which all who wish well to the rising generation of practitioners will participate.

Dr. WILLIAMS has been a most successful teacher. In the class-room, he communicated to others, in a peculiarly clear and impressive style, the extended knowledge which he himself possessed. In the wards of University hospital he has been zealously followed and admired for his ready application in the diagnosis and treatment of disease, of the varied and valuable fund of information at his command. His loss will be severely felt at the College, for it does not possess his equal in merit or reputation. Dr. WILLIAMS taught by more than precept—he showed by example—that the pursuits of

the devoted cultivator of science were not only consistent with, but were ennobled by, the life and conduct of the gentleman and the scholar.

He stated that his increasing engagements were the immediate cause of his intended retirement; but we have reason to believe that his honourable feelings have had little sympathy with the past and recent proceedings at University College.

We are glad to perceive, from the report of the proceedings of the Commission of Sewers, that a *medical* officer of health will probably be appointed for the City of London, in anticipation of the advent of Asiatic cholera. It will be remembered that we alluded to the probability of this appointment several weeks ago. The matter will shortly be discussed by the Common Council, and we hope a satisfactory decision will be arrived at. The salary spoken of at the discussion in the Commission was £400 or £500 a-year. Such a sum would be inadequate, and it was so considered by the gentlemen present. It is still left as a question for decision, whether the medical officer should be permitted to engage in private practice, or not?—a point which we should say ought to be decided in the negative. One gentleman thought the officer of health need not be a medical man at all, but this proposition met with no support. The City authorities are evidently wiser on this subject than her Majesty's Ministers.

Correspondence.

"Audi alteram partem."

ON THE REVIVED PROPOSITION FOR PERFORMING TRACHEOTOMY IN HYDROPHOBIA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I find that in THE LANCET of this day (September 15th) Mr. James Turner expresses his belief, that he was "the first to suggest the operation of tracheotomy for hydrophobia, based upon the reasoning that every hydrophobic patient dies of suffocation arising from muscular constriction of the glottis."

Now, I can assure your readers that I heard the very same remedy proposed by Mr. Herbert Mayo, in his physiological lectures at King's College, in the year 1834, and the proposal was repeated by him in his "Outlines of Human Pathology," (page 172,) published in 1835. It has since been repeated in several books, amongst which I may mention the "Surgeon's Vade Mecum," 1st edition, published in 1839.

So much, Sir, for priority of claim. But let the operation have been originally proposed by whomsoever you will, the practical question arises—is it a feasible one? Do hydrophobic patients really die, to use Mr. Turner's words, "of suffocation arising from muscular constriction of the glottis"?

I think, Sir, that a careful study of any series of recorded cases will show, that however distressing the spasms of the glottis may be, they are not *the* cause of death in hydrophobia; quite the contrary. We see cases of death from suffocation in laryngitis, and in the spasm of the glottis of children; but death from hydrophobia has no analogy to such cases. Not unfrequently it happens that there is a period of calm before dissolution, in which most of the distressing symptoms have vanished. Death, in fact, as Dr. Watson says, comes through asthenia, not through apnoea.

In order to arrive at the true pathology of this disease, and, through pathology, at a rational plan of treatment, the effects of the hydrophobic virus on animals ought surely to be carefully studied, in order to determine what are the essential and universal effects of it, in contradistinction to those effects which are produced only in isolated species of animals—for instance, this poison is fatal to the entire range of the animal kingdom. But the effects that are so prominent in the human subject are not produced in the dog, nor are they present in the rodentia; yet they all die alike. There must be, there-

fore, in the poison some cause of mortality besides spasm of the glottis; and some cause, therefore, not to be combated by tracheotomy.

I hope, Sir, you will do me the favour of inserting this short letter, if only out of justice to Mr. Herbert Mayo, whose continued ill health has caused him to be absent from England for some years, but who is not forgotten by the numerous pupils that once attended his brilliant course of physiological lectures.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

ROBERT DRUITT, F.R.C.S.E.

Curzon-street, May-fair, September 15th, 1848

TEST FOR COD-LIVER OIL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Among the substances proposed for testing the purity of cod-liver oil, I believe it is not generally known that strong sulphuric acid is that on which reliance can be best placed. Mixing together, on a porcelain slab, four parts of genuine cod-liver oil and one part of strong sulphuric acid, and stirring with a glass rod, a beautiful and rich violet colour, similar to that of the fumes of iodine, is produced, which, in a few seconds, passes gradually into a dirty brown, the altered portion of the oil separating in irregularly shaped patches from that out of reach of the acid. This remarkable characteristic is not possessed by either olive, almond, seal, whale, or fine sperm oils, nor do I believe by any other fat oil. The reaction varies the appearance from a delicate fawn to dark caramel. The latter is produced with several samples of very light cod-liver oil which are found in the market—a circumstance that induces me to think they have been bleached with chromic acid, or other powerfully deoxidising agent, thus decomposing all the gelatinous matter so abundant in genuine cod-liver oil.

Apologizing for so far trespassing on your valuable space, I have the honour to remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Duke-st., Manchester-sq., Sept. 12th, 1848.

CHAS. HOCKIN.

SURGEON O'SHEA AND THE COUNTY COURT.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—One's patience is seldom so severely taxed as when persons representing themselves as medical men, insensible of their own abasement and degradation, embrace the lowest depths of sweepdom in justification of conduct which they cannot *materially* deny. To compromise the respectability of a practitioner undeservedly, is not only an injury to an individual, but a scandal to the profession at large. And on this ground alone I am sure you will allow me to vindicate myself and expose the misrepresentation of your correspondent, Wm. Smith, M.D.? surgeon? and apothecary. I plead guilty to the charge of practising respectably even "in Lambeth," where there is no paucity of persons whose palms itch for the one shilling "estimate," so "pretty near the rule of charges for the visits of a general practitioner in London." Bah! And your honourable consent is impudently asked to this monstrous libel on the medical men of the wealthiest city in the world; for if the rule be to decline attendance on the "poor," this scale must apply to richer folk.

As there is an imputation of doubt thrown on my sworn evidence, and the correctness of my report in THE LANCET of the 5th of August, I herewith send you some corroborative evidence of the truth of both. The £1 17s. mentioned in Mr. Evans's letter was for attendance and medicine for *one* day, and my patient residing next door to me. The person I sued was not an "Irish labourer."

[Mr. O'SHEA here informs us what the patient was, as stated in court, and he forwards attestations to show what his ordinary charges were for medical attendance.]

As to the sneer at Mount-street, Lambeth, I have reconnoitred Wells-street, St. James's—a little hole eleven feet from kerb to kerb, leading from Jermyn-street on the left to some stables. It consists of six or seven houses, either of which is occupied by a baker, a greengrocer, a small dairyman, an humble tailor; one is a public-house, and another a nondescript establishment with "Apartments for Single Men" pasted on the door-post. Not pretending to so adventurous a spirit as a Scotchman's, I did not explore farther; but verily a great gun has been let off at me. *There is not a medical man of any description in the street.*

I regret, Mr. Editor, to be forced, in a seemingly personal matter, thus to occupy your time, but your respectable journal has been unconsciously made the trumpet for this man to blow through against my sworn evidence, and the character of my practice.

Having with some difficulty supplied myself with all the unrepealed statutes of Henry VIII. and George II., relating to surgeons and their practice, I am in a position to prove that surgeons have not only a right to dispense and practise medicine, but that they are the only *legally* qualified general practitioners, since it is contrary to law for any other to practise surgery, except "Fellows or Licentiates of the London College of Physicians," and that they are possessed of privileges few are aware of. Should you think an exposition of them, with extracts from the statutes, desirable for the pages of THE LANCET, I shall feel happy in supplying them.

I remain, Sir, your much obliged,

M. K. O'SHEA, M.R.C.S., England.

Mount-street, Lambeth, Sept. 11th, 1848.

P.S.—Wm. Smith, M.D., Surgeon and Apothecary, does not appear in the *Medical Directory*. The gentleman has it now in notification from me to remove my name from the list of his acquaintance, new or old: under any circumstances, I can take no further notice of him.

UNIVERSITY COLLEGE.—WHAT HAS BECOME OF DR. HULME'S BEQUEST?

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I observe in the recent statement of doings at University College, that no mention is made of Dr. Hulme's splendid bequest. So much back-stairs work has occurred there of late, that one cannot help fearing that this bequest has been absorbed in some of the arrangements.

The profession would have a great right to complain if a legacy left by a medical man should be used in such a manner as not really to advance medical science. I very much wish that Dr. Hulme had required the appropriation of his legacy in some specific manner, so as to preserve it from being employed merely to augment the salary of Dr. This or Professor That. It would be especially gross if it should turn out that it has been used in endowing such professorships as are generally expected to "pay," while such professorships—comparative anatomy, for instance—as cannot be expected to remunerate those who give their talents to them, are left unendowed.

I hope the profession—and you, as its leading organ—will look after this matter, and see that the whole advantage of this legacy be given to the pupils, either in scholarships or in the still better form of endowments for special professorships, of which several (such as ophthalmic surgery, mental diseases, diseases of children, skin diseases, physiological chemistry, tropical medicine,* &c.) are much wanted by students.

I hope you will take up this matter and watch the council as closely as you have done the council of another institution, and I have no doubt you will, as you have done there, put another job to flight.—I remain, yours, much obliged,

F. R. S.

A PARAGRAPH AND A PROPOSITION.

"CLOSING SURGEONS' SHOPS ON SUNDAYS.—Sunday 150 surgeons and chemists residing in that district of the metropolis between Bishopsgate-street and Hackney, closed their shops from eleven in the morning till six in the evening, and no cases except of urgent necessity were attended to during that interval."

To Surgeons between Bishopsgate and Hackney.

GENTLEMEN,—A feeling of melancholy, which I feel it not my duty to disguise, has pressed sore upon me ever since the above paragraph met my unwilling eye. A surgeon's shop! Incongruous incongruity! Surgeons' and chemists' shops, forsooth! suggestive of "iles for father's rheumatiz and pen'north of all sorts for baby!" Ye surgeons between Bishopsgate and Hackney, I call upon ye, in the name and for the honour of our profession, to close your "shops" for ever! This seeming fraternity with druggists, believe me, becomes ye not. Encourage and exhibit this Christian feeling more among yourselves. Maintain with honest dignity your professional honour and your rights, and let "chemists and druggists" enjoy theirs.

Through the liberality of the editor of THE LANCET I am enabled thus publicly to call upon ye. Surgeons! loose without delay your trading apron-strings, and come forth in the honourable garb befitting members of a profession.—I have the honour, Gentlemen, to subscribe myself,

London, Sept. 1848.

A SURGEON.

* A chair exceedingly needed.