

haps the urea would have been discharged by the skin. However, it is a sufficiently curious instance of nature's provision in extremity, for the salivation to continue so long as the function of the kidneys was dormant, and gradually to cease as that function became restored.

It is remarkable that, with the amount of inflammatory action in the peritoneum, there should have been no tenderness of the abdomen; and that with the great distention from fluid in the peritoneal cavity, and consequent pressure upon the venous circulation in the abdomen from this source, and from the enlarged uterus, there should have been so little swelling of the legs.

The pain in the kidneys I was never able to account for. Its relief by leeching would appear to indicate inflammation or congestion, yet there was no evidence of either after death, and the abscess in the right kidney had no doubt been in existence for a long time: the alleviation of pain, and increased secretion after tapping, would refer the uneasiness to pressure from the accumulated fluid; yet the secretion ceased altogether, and the pain became greatly augmented before the fluid had re-collected in any quantity.

Great Charles-street, Birmingham,
Feb. 10, 1842.

POISONING WITH A MINIM AND A HALF OF LAUDANUM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On Monday, February 14, I delivered a poor woman of a fine female child, and before leaving her prescribed a draught, containing twelve minims of tincture of opium, in an ounce of pimento-water, with a view of relieving the after-pains. Both mother and child went on favourably until Wednesday, when, on making my morning call, I was informed by the nurse that she had given the child half a teaspoonful of the draught prescribed for the mother, in order to compose it, and prevent its crying. I immediately directed my attention to the child, and discovered it to be labouring under all the symptoms of poisoning by opium. The infant was lying motionless, in a state of profound coma, with closed eyes, pale face, stertorous breathing, cold skin, and very contracted pupils. Occasionally there was such an impediment in the respiration that the face became livid, and the child apparently dead. The pulse could not be felt; but on applying the ear to the chest the

the saliva, except by salivating the animals. In the latter instance I have twice succeeded in detecting urea in the saliva. I shall shortly give a detailed account of the experiments in *THE LANCET*.

heart's action was quite perceptible. The symptoms were so far advanced, that the administration of an emetic was impossible, and even if possible would, doubtless, have been useless. Accordingly the only means to be relied upon were the use of stimulants, and the employment of artificial respiration; I therefore moistened the lips and tip of the tongue with some brandy, and rubbed a portion of the same spirit on the chest. Artificial respiration was then commenced, and persevered in, until the child was considerably revived. I then ceased, but observing that the symptoms of intense narcotism were again becoming manifest, I again resorted to the same means, and was rewarded by the same success. No sooner, however, did I stop, than the coma again supervened, and once more compelled me to employ artificial respiration. Notwithstanding the persevering use of these means for the space of four hours, the child gradually sunk, and at length died. The period between the receipt of the poison and the occurrence of death was fourteen hours. If the statement made by the nurse can be relied upon, then this child, an infant two days old, was poisoned by a minim and a half of laudanum. That the child obtained no opium from its mother's system is very evident, from the circumstance of its never having suckled. The example given by Christison of the smallest fatal dose in children, occurred in an infant three days old, who took by mistake about the fourth part of a mixture containing ten drops of laudanum. These facts fully prove that very young children cannot take the most insignificant doses of opium, without running the greatest risk of being poisoned. With this remark I remain, yours very truly,

GEORGE EVEREST, Studens.
London Hospital, Feb. 19, 1842.

UNDILUTED CREOSOTE IN SCALDS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—On the evening of Saturday, the 12th ult., I was called to see a lady who had a short time previously scalded her hand and forearm, whilst making tea, portions of which adhered to the parts. I found her in a highly-excited state, and appearing to suffer most excruciating agony, which, owing to her being of a peculiarly irritable temperament, and being pregnant, it was of importance to allay as soon as possible, especially as she had had two miscarriages a short time previously.

The usual remedies were applied, such as cotton, to keep it from the air, oil and lime-water, turpentine, liquor of lead, &c., without the slightest alleviation of the pain; when, finding that every fresh application

was useless, I was induced to apply creosote in its *concentrated* state, by painting it over the burnt surface with a camel-hair pencil. The first effect produced was described as that of intense heat, which soon subsided, and in less than a quarter of an hour *all* pain had ceased. The redness and swelling quickly disappeared, and on the following morning there was no appearance of injury, with the exception of the dried-up vesicles.

I am not aware that any author has ever mentioned that creosote possessed any great sedative power when used externally in a *concentrated* form; and notwithstanding the allusion to its use (in the excellent treatise of Mr. Cormack), by Reichenbach and Berthelot, in cases of scalds and burns, for the twofold purpose of preventing the contractions of the cicatrices, and checking the excessive suppuration attendant upon them, I find, on referring to the "*Bulletin Général de Thérapeutique*," for 1833, that they made use of it in a diluted state.

Perhaps some of your numerous readers may have tried it undiluted; if so, it might be advantageous were they to communicate in what kinds of scalds and burns they have found it efficacious. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

THOS. R. MITCHELL, M.D., L.R.C.S.I.,
Prof. of Chemistry to the Coll. of Civil
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Nat. Hist. in the Dublin School of
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Peter-street, Dublin,
Feb. 17, 1842.

ALTERATION OF CATHETERS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It has long struck me that the ordinary catheter, whatever its curve may be, is an unsatisfactory instrument for introduction to the bladder in any case, whether of stricture, or more particularly spasm. In the latter instance it is very (I think) objectionable, having a beaked end, and presenting throughout its course a surface at all times nearly, if not quite, equal to the calibre of the urethra, and necessarily in course resisted through the entire canal. Now, would not a spherical top to a catheter, of half the diameter of the sphere, be a far superior instrument, from its having only that globular termination, to which resistance would be offered, and never, from its formation, abutting upon sacculated points, the middle lobe of the prostate, or any normal narrowing of the passage.

I remember using, many years since, the instruments for examining strictures suggested by Mr. Bell, and with what facility they were passed, and simply from the spherical character of their ends. It appears to me to be a mode of improving a very important instrument, and I beg to call the attention of the profession to the suggestion I

offer, assured that, although the art of catheterism is in the hands of scientific men, acquainted with every liability of the general structure of the urethral channel, comparatively easy, yet that even in their hands the modern and common catheter is not a perfect instrument, as it involves the whole passage; whilst the spherical-topped one that I propose, having but a limited surface for resistance, would glide much more easily into the bladder. I am, Sir, yours truly,

GEORGE ROGERS.

Brighton, Feb. 13, 1842.

HUSBANDS AT ACCOUCHEMENTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As a non-professional reader, I presume that it will not be quite uninteresting to give you my views of a question recently discussed in your pages, namely, "*The presence of husbands at accouchements*." I believe there are few men but are annoyed, and there are many who consider themselves to be degraded and insulted, by the exclusion which the tyrant "*custom*" seems to sanction on these occasions. The moment is an anxious and depressing one, and few have the moral courage to brave the temporary odium which attaches to the disturbance of so delicate a question; but the question must arise, "*Why am I to be so delicate as to absent myself at such a time, when so many others, even of the modest sex, whom necessity and curiosity bring to the room, claim to dispense with this feeling?*" And it may be argued thus, "*Does not my wife feel confidence enough in me to believe that any supposed indelicacy to which she is obliged to submit, would never lower the standard of my feelings with respect either to her person or her morals?*" Which is most likely to affect a man's feelings; to exaggerate the proceedings of the lying-in chamber into something that is revolting even to the imagination; or, his presence and knowledge of what is really necessary to be done there, leaving nothing for the mind to dwell on afterwards? May these duties be performed by a man to a woman whom he has perhaps never before seen,—can they be witnessed by other women who have not the excuse of absolute necessity for their attendance, and yet a father and a husband is forbid by delicacy to be present at the birth of his own child? It would seem preposterous, but that a clue to the inconsistency is obtained in the fact that it is not the wife's feelings or decency that is consulted, but the objecting accoucheur, and the gossips who surround him. The idea of a woman's submitting, in the presence of persons of both sexes, to what she would not submit to before her husband, is to place a wife's confidence and affection in a very false view. Husbands may appear *voluntarily* to withdraw them-