

the injurious gas, and it was easily made, and the materials very cheap; the Government had plentifully supplied the African expedition with the materials necessary for the most perfect chlorine fumigations; and he had the pleasure of believing that his report, founded on the analysis of the waters submitted to him, and the precautions taken, had imparted confidence not only to the gallant men who composed that expedition, but also to those who had interested themselves in its welfare, and who had been actuated by the most Christian spirit. He hoped its success would be commensurate to its deserts.

### REMARKS ON THE "CASES"

RECENTLY

PUBLISHED BY DR. EPPS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Every individual who sends forth the speculations of his brain to the public, unless he have taken the precaution not only to divest them of every thing really or apparently crude, but also to express them sufficiently in detail, that conviction of their accuracy will, as it were, be at once carried home to the mind of the reader, must expect his remarks, before they pass on to be forgotten, to be subjected to a little wholesome criticism by those who are somewhat sceptical of the reality of modern-made miracles. That Dr. Epps, whose article on the "heal-all" properties of the *arnica montana* occupied so much space in the last Number of THE LANCET, did not employ, perhaps, that degree of judgment which he is wont to use before arriving at his apparently hasty conclusions of the powers of the remedy in the cases he has recorded, seems to me to be probable; I therefore purpose, with your permission, to notice his cases *seriatim*, somewhat after the manner of THE LANCET in the "olden time." It is unnecessary, of course, to apologise to Dr. Epps for doing so; he has published his cases, an act which of itself invites to criticism.

Case 1.—"Mrs. H. fried a pancake," and the result proved what a mess she made of it. "The fat spirted into her eye," and she had all the characteristics of intense inflammation. She applied to a surgeon, who ordered several remedial means, but it is not stated that the patient *used* them; at any rate, it is *certain* she did not use them for more than twenty-four hours, for Dr. Epps saw her about one, P.M., the following day. He gave her three "globules" of *aconite* "to subdue the fever;" four globules of *arnica* in divided doses; and a "liquid," with which the eye was to be kept constantly moist. On the following day (the second of *his* treatment, the Doctor's dates are a little

wrong), the eye was "much better." The day after "almost well;" and the day after that "quite well:" a result which, I doubt not, would just as quickly occur in another case, *cæteris paribus*, without the *arnica*, if the remedial means which a judicious surgeon would order were steadily persevered in. I must dissent altogether from the opinion that the *arnica* cured the patient in the case related, and ascribe the good that resulted jointly to the topical application of the water, and the beneficent aid of the *vis medicatrix*.

Cases 2 and 3 are very similar, being cases of injury to the head from a blow. The patients presented no unusual symptoms, the only thing uncommon being the treatment adopted. The chief point of interest which the cases appear to me to illustrate is the one well known to all physiologists, that our bodies *naturally* revert from a diseased to their normal state, and that they do so sometimes despite the follies of physicians—"the fallacies of the faculty"—and the most absurd or injurious treatment.

Case 4, in which the cornea was lacerated by the toe-nail of a child, is one in which clearly no credit is due to the treatment employed. The Doctor, I imagine, draws much too largely on the credulity of his brethren, in supposing they will believe that the laceration was cured by the administration of his "globules." Evidently, so far as my humble judgment goes, the credit of the cure should here again be ascribed not to the employment of the Doctor's globules, but to the topical application of the *water*, and the very kind assistance of the *vis naturæ*.

Case 5 is interesting, inasmuch as it shows there is danger in dancing even with those who are called "good society," for "Miss E. H. ran a splinter into her foot." The splinter went in at the bottom and came out at the side (pierced the foot), "and," says the Doctor, very gravely, "it was necessary to *remove* the *subjacent* soft parts to extract it." Dr. Epps immediately got astride his hobby, and, on reaching home, says, he gave the young lady his "globules;" bathed the foot in hot water, in which forty drops of the "tincture" had been previously introduced; and, after bathing for five to ten minutes, a poultice, on the surface of which about *ten drops* of the *arnica* tincture were dropped, was applied. On the Tuesday following the foot was well, and the cure most innocently ascribed to the *arnica*! Yes, no sooner had the Doctor's "globules" entered the young lady's system, than with as much activity as the "Wizard of the North," they immediately began to close or *renew* the "soft parts," which the Doctor had previously separated or "removed."

In Case 6, Mrs. W. received, during pregnancy, a kick on the abdomen; the period ought to have been stated. She suffered much pain as the pregnancy advanced, and after delivery, also, there was considerable swelling and pain at the lower part of the belly. The Doctor hesitated in his diagnosis till he heard of the "kick," when his mind was made up, and he administered to the patient *three globules of aconite*; and, *after four hours, two globules of arnica*, continuing one globule of arnica every day, for five days, when the patient was well.

Case 7.—A little boy broke a lucifer-match in his ear, in attempting to remove some wax. Considerable inflammation followed, and the night before Dr. Epps was consulted was one to the patient of "continued agony." Three globules of arnica, however, in four spoonsful of water, giving two spoonsful immediately, and one every four hours, with a poultice, having five to ten drops of the tincture dropped on it, applied to the ear every eight hours, cured the child by the fourth day. Nothing is said about the broken portion of match being extracted; and whether the Doctor means it was left in, or extracted by himself, or by the arnica, we have no means of knowing.

Case 8.—Mrs. Ubsdile, *aged sixty*, jammed her fingers on *Saturday*, and she went to the Doctor in great agony. *An effusion of matter* appeared to surround the nails. Aconite and arnica were ordered as in the preceding cases, and on the *Monday* following the *pains* were gone, &c. Hitherto I have been accustomed to believe that inflammation could not, in a patient sixty years of age, go on to suppuration in the brief period of two or three hours; but if the Doctor have correctly reported the case, the inference to be drawn certainly is, that such a change does occur in the above brief period. The loose manner, however, in which this case, as well as the others, are recorded, will not justify me in coming to such a conclusion.

Case 9 was not treated by Dr. Epps with the arnica, and therefore ought not to be cited by him, on hearsay evidence, as a proof of the healing powers which arnica possesses.

But arnica, in the hands of Dr. Epps, seems to be an universal panacea for the ills of life, a sort of elixir vitæ, an absolute heal-all; for not only are we to believe it to be a certain remedy for local injuries and constitutional disease, curing, we are told, with equal facility broken heads, jammed fingers, small-pox, and corns, but it is also to become an indispensable article at the toilet.

The doctrine of *similia similibus*, of which Hahnemann is well known as the parent, as applied to disease, is either true or false. If true, it ought to be received and acted on, its author rewarded as a benefactor to

his species, and his name held in reverence by a grateful profession; but if false, let it, as it deserves, at once be scouted, and disease treated as it has hitherto been, on the seemingly sound basis of logical deduction. It is much, however, to be regretted, that amongst all our corporate medical institutions not one of them can come forward, when a question of this kind presents itself, to investigate philosophically the point at issue, and to direct the public in their dubious way. If the constitution of our corporations were ever so correct and just, their neglect of this, and similar questions of importance, would justify the placing the government of those bodies in other hands. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

WM. HEMPSON DENHAM.

June 6, 1841.

## INSTRUMENTS FOR THE EXTRACTION OF TEETH.

SUPERIORITY OF PROPERLY-CONSTRUCTED  
FORCEPS OVER THE KEY.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR:—Observing that in a recent Number\* you have given insertion to some remarks upon the key-instrument, I am induced to hope that your valuable columns may be equally open to the advocacy of the forceps.

By his own statement, your correspondent appears to have suffered fully enough from its effects, to have induced him to abandon the use of the key entirely, and yet he still recommends the employment of one which he considers to be of a peculiarly advantageous construction; and after detailing the mischievous results of misplacing the fulcrum, tells us, that when the points of the claw are nearly horizontally opposed to the fulcrum and its centre of motion, on turning the key the tooth is moved out in the direction of the socket, very little force being necessary, as the great lever power of the instrument is then at its best advantage. In this he is undoubtedly correct, provided that the position and shape of the fangs be favourable; or to write more plainly, provided that the fangs be quite straight, and that the spread of the fangs at their extreme points bear an exact proportion to the size of the tooth at its neck; otherwise, the movement in the proper direction of the socket, as shown by him in fig. 2, cannot be obtained. Now I would inquire, firstly, from what indications is the operator to ascertain that the tooth to be extracted is thus favourably shaped? And, secondly, will the number of teeth thus formed be found to bear any proportion whatever to