

CASE OF  
**PSORIASIS PALMARIA,**  
 IN WHICH THE  
**ENTIRE LIVING BODY BECOMES**  
**LUMINOUS**  
 FROM A  
**PHOSPHORESCENT SECRETION.**

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I recollect reading in your Journal some years ago of a human body luminous after death. I offer to place on record the same extraordinary phenomenon in a living patient. Mr. S., ætat. 43, of tall stature, robust, of Herculean strength, active, capable of great mental and bodily exertion, has been for some time annoyed with psoriasis of the palms. He is a gross feeder, extremely fond of the fat of meat, in the use of which he indulges very extensively. I have known him a quarter of a century, and do not recollect to have seen any man of sedentary occupation habitually consuming so large a quantity of adipose food. Towards the end of this last winter he had severe catarrh, which brought on an extensive bronchial expectoration; but on his return from a tour of business on the continent this had entirely disappeared, his hands, however, becoming unusually troublesome. For several days prior to his skin becoming phosphorescent he had been indulging in the use of grossly fat food to an extent exceeding his usual habit, and had been taking large quantities of lemon-juice, his own remedy for psoriasis. I may here add, that he is very temperate in the use of fermented liquors, and seldom takes spirits. He had been reading late, as he is wont to do, and on retiring he had clothed the head of a chair with his shirt instead of throwing it over the chair-back. On getting into bed he saw to his surprise a blaze or halo of phosphorescent flame, representing the headless trunk of a human body, at the foot of the bed, where he had disposed his apparel. His curiosity being excited he got out of bed, and approaching and handling the shirt, he was induced to examine his own skin. He found his arms and his chest in the same luminous state. When the phosphorescence faded on the linen friction restored it. The phenomenon continued for several days, and has since recurred under the same error of diet. My patient is accessible to a further curious investigation of this interesting, and I believe, rare appearance, for although he is a disciple of Molière he is a scientific man.

I shall not trespass on your readers by offering a lengthened explanation of such an extraordinary secretion; that in this case the phosphorus is not duly united with oxygen is evident, and therefore the pathological condition would seem to be an imperfect intra-combustion. Phosphoric acid is

formed in the human body, and healthily eliminated through the ordinary channels, the kidneys, skin, intestinal canal, and in the female by menstruation. I can recognise that the defect leading to the phenomenon is the imperfect or loose combination of the phosphorus with oxygen. *The fact* justifies *the reasoning*, but the *reasoning* does not explain the *fact*, and that is precisely the condition of the aggregate facts and reasonings which constitute *animal chemistry*, so called.

Indulge me one moment, though I walk on the hot ashes of intra-combustion. *Chemistry*.—What is it? Part of the code inanimate. Physiology? The code animate. But what is *animal chemistry*? The code animate-inanimate? The phrase is utter nonsense. It is a solecism. As well might you talk of *animal mechanics*, for life is a state which holds the mastery over both codes; that is to say, the chemical and mechanical, and that is the most perfect condition of life in which such pre-eminence is most perfect. If too great or too languid then comes disease. This compound term is the cockney cant of English-Havannah's transferred to the language of science. If I use the term in publishing a series of facts and reasonings it is for the sake of conformity only. French law? Yes. English-law? Yes. English-French law? No. Who can imagine a nation governed by two codes of laws, antagonising each other, unless we presuppose a *tertium quid* harmonising the whole. The living principle is that *tertium quid*, and until we can arrive at a knowledge of it, the reciprocal laws of animate and inanimate bodies, like the international laws of the world, will remain vague and obscure. Yours obediently,

G. F. COLLIER.

Spring-gardens, June 1, 1843.

P. S.—If we admit the term *animal chemistry*, why not vegetable chemistry, animal mechanics, vegetable mechanics. If the laws of gravitation are more than healthily antagonised, as in catalepsy, or less, as in typhus, and other diseases of debility, do we not see that the same sort of balance of codes is essential to health? If we go on with these compound terms we shall next have animal arithmetic and vegetable arithmetic, for nature is a great arithmetician as she is a great chemist. In truth, animal chemistry is nothing but physiology.

THE ODDS AGAINST HIM.—Corvisart was deploring the death of Dr. B. "However (said he) it is a consolation to know that he was not sacrificed to want of attention. During his last days Hallé, Portal, and myself never left him!" "Alas!" said the abbe Sièyes, "what would you have had him do against three?"