

attend on either of those days, to which I have replied in the affirmative.

Inquiry was made if I had published anything recently bearing on the case of Poor-law medical officers, and, if so, requesting copies. To this question I replied in the negative, and I might have given as a reason that, although I had the materials in manuscript for a goodly-sized volume, the Poor-law medical officers, though formerly liberal, had latterly become so parsimonious that I did not consider it prudent to set the printers at work, particularly as the last bill was only partially liquidated. I regret this excessive economy on the part of my brethren, as I have a series of tables prepared which, if printed, would enable those gentlemen about to give evidence to do so on a reliable basis.

On the 10th of this month was issued a Return to an Order of the House of Commons, entitled Poor-law (Medical Relief), which was moved for by Mr. Abel Smith. This document contains the name of every union, the districts in which divided, population (census 1851), acres in each district, number of medical officers, and the amount of salary and per-case payment, the total amount of which is £184,184. In 1857 it was £177,269, showing an increase of £6915 in the four years. A large proportion of this increase I attribute to our agitation; the statistics furnished by the Association having been to my knowledge used to effect an increase in the salaries of some of the officers. I congratulate the gentlemen who have obtained an instalment of their dues; but as there are a great many who have as yet received no benefit from our efforts on their behalf, I think it but fair that those who have should contribute a something to assist their less fortunate brethren.

The report from the Select Committee of the House of Commons will, I trust, be favourable; but the Association ought to have ample funds at command, as considerable opposition may be offered by the Guardians to any ulterior measures, which can only be met by extensive printing. As the question of payment will necessarily occupy a prominent part in this inquiry, permit me to say that my Tables are against payment in proportion to population, acreage, or pauperism, and that nothing but a per-case payment, *well guarded* by defining the class of persons to be entitled to medical relief, with mileage, will meet the true requirements of the poor, the ratepayers, and the medical officers.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

12, Royal-terrace, Weymouth,  
June 29th, 1861.

RICHARD GRIFFIN.

P.S.—Those Poor-law medical officers who desire to give evidence had better write to the President of the Poor-law Board speedily.

## WHAT INFLUENCE HAS CONTRACTION IN STOPPING UTERINE HÆMORRHAGE?

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am induced to write to you on this subject by the opinion expressed by Dr. Barnes in his lecture on Placenta Prævia, which opinion I believe to be generally held by medical men—namely, that the hæmorrhage which follows the separation of the placenta is stopped by the contraction of the uterus, causing compression of the vessels, and thus preventing the escape of blood. This contraction has without doubt great influence, but I do not think that it entirely accounts for the phenomena. I have found in more than one case that on adopting Dr. Barnes' plan of partially separating the placenta the hæmorrhage has ceased, although the bulk of the uterus has not materially diminished. For the contraction to be so perfect as to close the vessels, the circulation would be so arrested in the attached portion—a part of the supply being already cut off—as to render the birth of a living child utterly impossible. In Dr. Barnes' second case the child was born alive several hours after the partial separation of the placenta, and consequent arrest of flooding. In this case the liquor amnii was discharged, and the uterus contracted on the child; but still the size of the uterus was very great, and the contraction was not permanent, but followed by relaxation. What is to prevent the flow of blood during the relaxation? The vessels would still be very large, and the pressure of the child's head could not act altogether as a compress, as a portion of the placenta was interposed between the head and the surface of the uterus.

A more reasonable explanation of the arrest of hæmorrhage appears to me to be that there exists in the uterine vessels, as in arteries generally, a power of contraction and retraction; for we find that the flooding ceases at once on the violent separation of the placenta, but not when it is gradually and gently separated, either by the enlargement of the uterus and disappearance of the neck, or by uterine contraction, as in cases where labour has begun and the os is somewhat dilated. Two cases of this nature have fallen under my notice, the arrest of hæmorrhage having been effected in one by the manual separation of the placenta, and in the other by turning and delivery. That the power of contraction and retraction does exist in the vessels of the uterus is certain, or how would they become lessened with the diminished size of the uterus as labour becomes completed? They would in such a case become folded upon themselves. If they possess the power of contraction and retraction, why should it not be exerted for the purpose of stopping hæmorrhage? That Nature should have endowed them with inherent power for effecting so important a purpose is only what we should expect, considering how beautifully perfect she is in all her operations.

I remain, Sir, yours very faithfully,

Great Wakering, Essex, June, 1861.

JAMES ADAMS, M.D.

## PARISIAN MEDICAL INTELLIGENCE.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL CORRESPONDENT.)

THERE still exist in many parts of France (and more especially in the remote provinces) the strangest superstitions, which, despite the progress of civilization and the gradual spread of mental culture, retain a far firmer hold in the popular code of faith than does either the utility of the mysteries of orthography or the taste for the intricacies of syntax. The farmer who, feigning disbelief in the powers of the evil eye, should neglect either to divert or propitiate, on occasion, the deadly glance leveled at his prize heifer, would still in certain agricultural districts be treated as a fool. The waggoner who, having sprained a wrist or wrenched an ankle in "putting his shoulder to the wheel," should refuse the proffered aid of the "*rébouteux*," or inspired bone-setter, would scarce be accounted less unreasonable. The girl crossed in love, the jilted swain, the idiot, the dropsical man, the epileptic, &c., all have consulted in turn the knowing old woman of the village, and all have swallowed with more or less gusto her beastly stercoraceous preparations, to the infinite consolation of their respective nearest and dearest. And so on through phases of rural credulity too numerous for recital. An old and celebrated surgeon of Lyons, who died a few weeks back, but whose name escapes me, used to tell with great unction a story in connexion with his experience of provincial character, which demonstrates the implicit faith placed by the French peasant in the powers of the quack bone-setter. Our *compère* had retired from practice, and resided on an estate which he had purchased in the department of the Upper Rhone. Early one morning a tenant-farmer came in great haste to inform him that his son, when at work, had fallen down and broken his leg. "Dear me!" said the old surgeon, "let us go to the poor fellow at once and set it for him." "Oh, sir," replied the father, "that is not what I came for; I wanted the loan of your carriage to take my son to — (naming the next village), to the '*rébouteux*;' he will cure him at once." He then added, "Tell me, sir, how is it that at your hospital at Lyons, where you have so many conveniences for the sick, you have no '*rébouteux*?'"

The particular superstition, however, to which I referred in commencing is one which would go far to prove that the cure by touching of king's evil and divers other maladies is not one of exclusively royal prerogative. It would appear that a rival has long been in the field. In the northern provinces of France it is held that a person who having been struck by lightning is not killed, is then and there endowed with the miraculous power of curing by touch, for the space of forty days. An example of the case in point occurred last week near Douai. A little girl, eight years of age, was struck by lightning at the village of Aubigny-au-Bac, situate on the road between Cambrai and Douai: the child escaped with some trifling burns on the abdomen and legs. No sooner did the news of the fortunate escape get wind in the district, than crowds of halt, lame, and blind, of people afflicted with scrofula, phthisis, fever, and every imaginable disease, flocked to the village of Aubigny in order to be touched. The results of the treatment are not mentioned, so far at least as the patients themselves were con-