

one of them approached the matron's room, she was called into it by the deceased, who said, "take that poison away, I will not have it." A light was obtained, and then it was found that the deceased was violently convulsed. She complained of being in great agony, and asked the servants to sit upon her legs, to keep them down. In a few minutes she was attended by Mr. Skaife, the house-surgeon, who thus described her symptoms at the inquest:—

"I found her in bed, suffering from a convulsive attack. She complained of severe pain in her head, and she was perspiring freely. I found her pulse very flaccid and feeble. The pain appeared to be continuous, but the paroxysms came on about every three minutes. When the paroxysms came on severely, she cried to be kept down; the teeth were locked tightly together, and during the paroxysms the body became rigid. The symptoms appeared to resemble those of tetanus. She had intervals of tolerable tranquility, and at those times she appeared to be free from pain; but the intervals were very short, and the paroxysms came on again at the slightest disturbance, as when she was touched. When I attempted to give her some brandy-and-water, and touched the lip, it brought on a paroxysm, which consisted of an arching of the body forward, and a clenching of the teeth, whilst the features became fixed, and the eyes staring."

Death took place in an hour and a half after she was first seen.

Dr. Ranking was present at the post-mortem examination of the body, and, having heard the evidence given at the inquest, he concluded that the woman had not died from natural causes, but from the effects of *nux vomica* or strychnia. He therefore considered it necessary to have a chemical analyses of the stomach and its contents, for without that, as he said, the whole case was in obscurity. Dr. Copeman, and Mr. Norgate, his colleague, were of the same opinion. Accordingly a chemical examination was made, and Dr. Ranking found strychnia in the contents of the stomach; but wishing to have his results confirmed, he sent me a part of the stomach, the intestines, a piece of liver, and the kidneys, *all in one jar*. He also forwarded me about two fluid drachms of the contents of the stomach, and a quantity of liquid that had been removed from the left pleura. All of these were examined independently of any knowledge that Dr. Ranking had already made his investigations, and strychnia was discovered in them. So that in this case, as in the last, the cutting open of the stomach, and the tossing of it about in the same jar with the intestines and other viscera, had no effect upon the results of the analysis. In fact, chemistry would be but a poor aid to medical jurisprudence if it were so, and then perhaps it might be necessary to get our knowledge of a doubtful case from the gossipings at a country tavern, or the imperfect accounts of ignorant witnesses. But happily for us the science of the present day is not in such a pitiful condition. Chemistry has made such advances into the domain of toxicology as to furnish us in most cases, and always in this, with a certain means of discovering poison; and so therefore to come back to the question at issue—*If Cook died from the effects of strychnia, the poison could, and ought to have been discovered in the dead body, for assuredly it was there.*

I will not now enter upon the second part of my subject—namely, as to whether Dr. Taylor was or was not able to find it, for that will demand a little more space than you can afford me in this number of the journal; but I will, with your permission, proceed with it next week.

I remain, Sir, yours truly,

H. LETHEBY, M.B.,

Professor of Chemistry and Toxicology in the  
Medical College of the London Hospital.

King-street, Finsbury-square, Nov. 1857.

## THE CHOLERA.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Will you allow me to say that I do not hold the opinion that cholera can be produced by water which has been boiled after receiving the cholera poison, and that I know of no case which requires to be explained by boiled water; also, that there is no necessity for supposing that the morbid matter producing cholera had to pass through seventy feet of gravel at Abbey-row, since the pump-well is only two or three feet from the tidal sewer by which it was polluted. These remarks have reference to a leading article in the last number of THE LANCET.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Sackville-street, Nov. 9th, 1857.

JOHN SNOW, M.D.

## DR. FELL'S TREATMENT OF CANCER.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In the review of the "Report of the Surgical Staff of the Middlesex Hospital," in your journal of October 24th, I find the following: "Let Dr. Fell come forward, and tell us frankly that he never penetrated either the walls of the abdomen or the thorax, or penetrated into a great bloodvessel; let him tell us that he never saw a peritonitis or a pleurisy excited by the external application of his caustics; and let him tell us the per-centage of recurrences. The facts which he must be able to tell if he chooses to give us the whole of his experience, are worth twenty such reports as the one before us. And why, we ask, has Dr. Fell given us so meagre an account of cases in his own book?"

In answer to these queries, permit me to say,

1st, That *I never have* penetrated the walls of the abdomen, nor have I ever seen a peritonitis excited by my paste.

2nd. I have exposed the pleura in *three* cases,—viz., *First*, in the case of a Mrs. B—, aged sixty years, "with the whole breast involved in the disease, and the general health much impaired." I removed the disease, with entire portions of two ribs. The wound healed perfectly. There were no symptoms of pleurisy, and the patient was up and about the house during the whole treatment. A number of medical gentlemen saw this patient during the progress of the treatment. I may also add that Mr. Fergusson and Sir Benjamin Brodie saw this case, and pronounced it unfit for an operation. *Second*, in the case of Mrs. L—, aged sixty-nine years, very feeble and emaciated, from whom I removed a large encephaloid tumour that was firmly attached to the ribs, exposing the pleura pulmonalis, and removing also entire portions of four ribs. The wound was over three inches in diameter, and gradually cicatrized until it was reduced to about one inch, when she sank from exhaustion. The pleuritis being *only* sufficient to produce adhesion of the pleura costalis with the pleura pulmonalis, and thus preventing collapse of the lung, death took place twenty-four days after the exposure of the pleura. The *third* was in a patient in the hospital, aged fifty-nine years, whose case is given on page 72 of the Report of the Surgical Staff. There was no pleuritis, the patient being about during the whole of the treatment. She was discharged cured.

3rd. I have *never* "penetrated into a great bloodvessel," nor have I ever seen any hæmorrhage that was not readily controlled by slight pressure or by ordinary styptics.

4th. I have given the results of my experience with regard to the recurrence of the disease at page 63 of my book, when comparing the results of the removal by the knife with my treatment: "that from eight to eight and a fraction out of every ten cases operated upon return within two years; whereas it is found that out of every ten cases treated by the puccon, only about three return in the same time." But of about 700 cases seen by me in England, 453 have been treated with the paste, a majority of these being in such a state that few surgeons would think of performing a cutting operation upon; indeed, most of them had been declared unsuitable for such an operation. Of these, 89 have returned for treatment and 36 have died; thus making the recurrences  $2\frac{2}{3}$  in every 10 cases treated. But if only those cases that would have been deemed fair ones for a cutting operation are taken into account, it will be as follows,—viz., 198 cases; 29 returns and 4 deaths; making the returns  $1\frac{2}{3}$  in every 10 cases. In most of these, however, two years have not elapsed since the removal of the tumours.

5th. The cases published in my book were "selected for the purpose of illustrating the mode of treating the different forms of the disease in their various stages," and *not* for the purpose of displaying the treatment in its most favourable light.

I am, Sir, yours obediently,

Warwick-square, Nov. 1857.

J. WELDON FELL, M.D.

## ROYAL MEDICAL BENEVOLENT COLLEGE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As you have always been the constant friend of the College, pray oblige me by inserting the enclosed, as one of many I have received since the publication of the pamphlet by the self-constituted sub-committee.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

New Cavendish-street, Nov. 1857.

JOHN PROPERT.

Cheltenham, Nov. 1857.

MY DEAR SIR,—I am sorry to find, by a pamphlet issued by a sub-committee (?) of the Royal Medical Benevolent College,