

was made in its treatment was the repeated application of powerful caustics to the throat. And so it is with all nurses and amateur doctors, who, knowing as much of medical science as they do of Sanscrit, never dream of suggesting simple applications to their credulous friends, but prefer dealing with blisters, leeches, antimonial wine, blue pills and black draughts, and so forth.

Under the head of Abortion, Dr. Hodge strongly recommends the administration of narcotics when this accident is threatened. Unfortunately he says nothing as to the drug which should be selected, and the student would therefore infer that opium was the remedy. But in the majority of cases we believe that the action of this drug is most injurious, since it tends to produce the very condition we wish to avoid—viz., uterine contraction. The primary effect at least of opium is stimulating and not sedative, while it brings on muscular action. On the other hand, in belladonna we have a remedy which is highly serviceable, inasmuch as it relaxes the muscular system, and is a direct sedative.

Before concluding this notice, there is one important omission in the volume which ought to be pointed out. We find no section devoted to the consideration of the diseases of lying-in women. The exclusion of this subject seems much to mar the completeness of the work, and will probably be fatal to its extensive adoption as a text-book by students. There are no subjects in obstetric medicine more important and more deserving of the attention of different authorities than puerperal fever, phlegmasia dolens, puerperal mania, &c., and we should have been pleased to have had the large experience of Dr. Hodge on these matters fully detailed. However, while regretting this omission, we are glad to allow that the treatise as it stands is a valuable contribution to medical literature. It gives evidence of very hard work, and it shows that Dr. Hodge may say, in the words of Baudelocque, "though the reading of authors has been of great use to me, it will be found that the study of nature has been of much more."

### THE TREATMENT OF SYPHILIS BY THE "MERCURIAL VAPOUR-BATH."

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Your impression of the 30th ultimo contains a paper by Mr. Pollard, "On the Treatment of Syphilis by Mercurial Vapour." I believe I was the first to draw attention to the advantages to be derived from combining the vapour or fumes of various preparations of mercury with aqueous vapour, and to recommend a bath, which I denominated the "mercurial vapour-bath,"\* in which the patient was exposed to the influence of three agents—the vapour of some preparation of mercury, heated air, and common steam.

I recommended in the first instance the vapours of the bisulphuret of mercury, the grey oxide, the binocide or the iodide; and to these Mr. H. Lee has recently added calomel. The advantages to be derived from this mode of treatment can hardly be over-estimated; for there is no doubt about the fact, that the way to cure or eradicate syphilis is by remedies applied to the skin, and not taken by the mouth, and that the treatment by moist mercurial vapour is, in a vast majority of instances, the method to be preferred before all others. I have now personally superintended the treatment of many thousands of cases in this way, and I could record instances of success in many cases which really appeared hopeless. The preparations of mercury best suited for moist fumigations are, doubtless, calomel and the bisulphuret. In scaly diseases of the skin I generally use these combined. I have seen one case indeed of most extensive secondary ulceration, with disease of the bones of both legs, entirely cured by the vapour of the biniodide, used by mistake. Should this ever be employed, it should be used with extreme caution, and care should be taken that the vapour is not inhaled.

The mercurial vapour-bath is much more certain in its effects

\* The Treatment of Secondary, Constitutional, and Confirmed Syphilis by a Safe and Successful Method. By Langston Parker. Churchill. 1861.

upon some forms of syphilis than others, and is chiefly applicable in secondary or constitutional syphilis, and especially in the scaly forms of skin diseases. It finds its application, however, in a great number of other forms of disease besides those I have mentioned. In tubercles before they are softened, in secondary ulcers succeeding rupture of pustules, and in diseases of the testes, and many forms of affections of the bones, it is exceedingly useful. The moist mercurial vapour employed in the way I have recommended is a perfectly safe remedy; it does not depress or debilitate the patient, if properly used. The disease commonly disappears without any of the usual effects of mercury being evident, and I have no doubt this is due to the diaphoresis going on during the time that the patient is exposed to the action of the vapour, and it is from the same cause that ptyalism is rarely induced.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,  
LANGSTON PARKER, F.R.C.S.

Colmore-row, Birmingham, Aug. 1864.

### THE LATENT PERIOD OF SCARLET FEVER.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In your impression of last week Dr. Murchison, in his paper on Scarlet Fever, records several cases in which the duration of the latent period did not exceed six days, and expresses some doubt of its extension to a longer time. Satisfactory evidence of such extension is, doubtless, exceedingly difficult to obtain, but the following case, divested, as it seems to be, of extraneous sources of error, tends to prove that the latent period of scarlet fever may extend over three weeks:—

In October, 1862, an epidemic of scarlet fever visited the valley in which Betchworth is situated. At this time the grandchildren of the late Sir Benjamin Brodie were staying with their grandfather at Broome Park. On the 4th of October the coachman's little daughter, who went to school at Betchworth, and with whom the children had had communication, was seized with a severe sore-throat, which was followed on the 5th by the eruption of scarlet fever. This child, it may be mentioned, died of the fever. The other children were sent off to Oxford by the first train on the 6th. No symptoms of illness showed themselves until the 28th, when the eldest girl, thirteen years of age, was attacked with sore-throat, which was followed on the 30th by the eruption of scarlet fever. Another child also sickened of the fever on the 1st of November, but this latter case might be referred to the second source of infection. Desquamation subsequently took place in both instances, and in the latter case albuminuria followed. These, therefore, were undoubted cases of scarlet fever. No personal communication was held between Broome and Oxford during the interval, and these were the only instances (as I ascertained from Dr. Acland and Mr. Melvin) at that time in Oxford, nor had there been any cases of the kind for some time previous.

The question of the "poison lurking in the clothes" applies equally to all cases; but the practical bearing of the duration of the latent period will remain the same, and is of such vital importance that it would be well if other medical practitioners could bring forward any satisfactory instances of a similar nature.

I am, Sir, yours faithfully,  
REGINALD E. THOMPSON, M.D.

August 15th, 1864.

NEGLECT OF VACCINATION.—At a late sitting of the bench of magistrates at Merthyr, James Robinson was charged by the relieving officer with refusing to have a child vaccinated after due notice had been given him to do so. A mitigated penalty of one shilling, with costs, was imposed. A similar case is reported to have occurred at Kidderminster. In this instance two children in the family were already suffering from the effects of small-pox. A nominal fine was adjudged in this case also, the magistrates hoping it would act as a salutary warning to others.

GAS IN BELGRAVIA.—Dr. Aldis, the Medical Officer of Health for this district, has made a series of experiments during the last quarter on the six gases supplied to this locality. The following table gives the average light in sperm candles:—

	Chartered.	London.	Equitable.
Cannel coal ... ..	24 38	23 88	26 07
Common coal ... ..	14 31	14 31	14 55

All the gases were free from sulphuretted hydrogen, and were so free from ammonia that on only two occasions was any trace of it perceptible.