

Chairman, Mr. Pease, M.P., put the following question to me; I give it as nearly as my memory permits. "Dr. Clanny, do you consider your safety-lamp as not having been tried, as it was not properly trimmed?" The impressive manner in which this question was put, called me from my seat to the table, when I firmly replied, "I do so consider it." No wonder, knowing what I knew and seeing what I saw, that, to use the words of Dr. Birkbeck, "I intemperately adhered to my decision, and refused further examination of my lamp." I have a letter from Mr. Pease, dated House of Commons, Sept. 5th, at the end of which that gentleman says, "Upton and Roberts asked me whether I had any objection to state my opinion that the mismanagement of the lamp was accidental. I had no hesitation to go so far, but I stated to them that your lamp had not been tried, because it was not trimmed as directed."

As to the "Medical Gazette," I shall not henceforth read one word in that periodical, even if it ever be edited by a gentleman.

Before I lay down my pen, I beg to make an observation on the subject of experimenting upon carburetted hydrogen, or, as it is now called, "bi-hydruct of carbon," which may be of service to those who may be inclined to follow up such experiments, and which I intended to have appended to my communication, inserted in *THE LANCET* of the 19th of this month. The graduated glass-tube, containing bi-hydruct of carbon and of chlorine in noted proportions, is to be placed upon the shelf of the pneumatic trough containing water, and the whole of the tube must be covered with a cap of pasteboard, or some such substance, so as to keep out the light effectually; but if the experiments be performed in artificial light, no such precaution will be needed. The mixture of gases must be left in a tranquil state for ten minutes, which will be a sufficient time for all the chloride of hydrocarbon, or oil-like fluid, to be formed. When we perform these experiments in open day-light, it (*viz.* the light) will accomplish the condensation of the olefant gas, with the formation of carbonic acid gas and hydrochloric acid gas. This experiment appears to be an easy one, but it presents difficulties in the execution which require particular exactness. Thus it is, that if the experiment be performed over pure unmixed water, a certain portion of chlorine gas will be absorbed, which will detract from the quantity of the chloride of hydrocarbon; and if we employ water saturated with chlorine gas, the olefant gas, in its passage, will produce a quantity of chloride of hydrocarbon, which ought not to be the case.

Last spring I printed a few copies of a small tract for private circulation amongst

my friends, containing some "new researches upon flame;" and since my return from London I have most diligently prosecuted the subject, and find that in respect to yellow or light-giving flame I was correct, but in other respects, having since had time to correct one or two passages, I now find no difficulty in making public my discoveries thereon. I hope in a few days to have the pleasure of transmitting to you an account of those original experiments; and am, Sir, your obedient humble servant,

W. REID CLANNY.

Sunderland, Sept. 26, 1835.

## MALIGNANT CHOLERA.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In the summer of 1832, when the cholera was devastating the Canadas, a tattered old man appeared in Montreal, whom the Catholic populace were induced speedily to canonize for his successful treatment of this disease, which was at that time almost as mysterious to the population as the stranger himself. To this modern saint vast numbers of the infected were brought, who were restored to health from the most violent attacks of the inflammatory stage, as well as the worst possible collapse, even after the duly authorized medical practitioner had exhausted and relaxed his efforts. The remedy consisted of a due admixture of maple-sugar, charcoal, and lard, which *melange* was given to his patients in large quantities after every ejection. The results were astonishing, and could be indicated in the speedy alteration of the countenances of the sufferers, and the early subsidence of vomiting and purging.

We must not cry down this remedy as empirical, inasmuch as its merits appear to be effectually borne out by the employment of these agents, homely and cheap as they are.

It is obviously improper to permit a patient to continue retching when his stomach is in a state of violent inflammation, as in cholera, without a fluid or unctuous substance being interposed between the sides of the villous coat, to prevent attrition, and afford matter for expulsion upon which the antiperistaltic action of the stomach shall expend itself rather than upon its own substance. Unfortunate in the extreme was it for the patients of those who permitted not the use of any liquid but that spirituous poison which added fuel to the flame. Thus lard was combined in this remedy, not because it was the best, but the most common lubricating agent.

Mortification and gangrene are the consecutives of inflammation; hence it was thought necessary, in a disease which so

quickly displayed these phenomena, to apply a substance which should afford the best and most common antiseptic capable of being administered in bulk without the influence of any other qualities. This was supplied by charcoal.

Sugar, in common with lard and charcoal, possesses powerful antiseptic qualities, combined with a stimulating property; and in the addition of this constituent the necessity of a stimulus was acknowledged by the old man, in common with the medical profession at large, who have almost universally admitted that principle; but unfortunately the mass of the profession (at least in North America) could not admit the axiom without taking leave of their judgment, and administering spirituous liquors to excess, and, in consequence, many hundreds, to my knowledge, died in the same condition as they had lived,—namely, drunk. I must remark, in passing, that I consider the brandy and landanum treatment, the unnatural combination of a narcotic and an inflammatory stimulant, to have been a stain on the intelligence of the profession,—a practice conceived in gross ignorance of the disease if not of the agents themselves. The main feature of cholera is inflammation of the stomach, for instance. I have seen no case in which congestion and inflammation of that organ have not existed. What, then, are the most proper applications to be made to it? for the stomach is in nearly the same circumstances as those of a limb suffering from phlegmonous inflammation. Administer substances which shall serve the offices of fomentations, poultices, and ointments. This may be decried as quackery, but we are bound in this disease to try every expedient which bears the remotest feature of a rational principle, or is founded upon any recognizable maxim.

I am bound also to state that *at the instant of attack*, a liberal bleeding, *hot fomentations*, and the administration of ipecacuanha and antimony, have been successful with my own patients. I have, ever since I lost my first case (that of a companion and friend, by the abuse of laudanum and brandy), invariably used the hot fomentation, and no circumstance has occurred to stagger my faith in its efficacy.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,

W. H. THOMAS.

Bristol, Sept. 16, 1835.

## SAFETY-LAMPS AND FIRE-DAMP.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—As some parts of Dr. Clanny's letters, which are not altogether personal, relate to his own opinion of the explosive quality of the fire-damp of coal-mines, and to the requisite power of safety-lamps to

prevent the ignition of that gas, I trust you will allow me, through the pages of your scientific and much-read publication, to point out some dangerous errors into which, I conceive, he has fallen. The subject is one of great interest to all well-disposed persons, and of immense importance to those who are engaged in coal mining—much valuable property having been destroyed, and hundreds of lives lost, even within the last two years, in all probability by the prevalence of erroneous notions on the subject. I certainly do not think that the tests to which the safety-lamps in the late trial were put were too severe. No test ought to be considered too severe that could be met by any lamp then produced. One of the objects of the Committee was to obtain the highest security for the miner that could be obtained in a lamp. Were they then to take lamps that were not even safe to the test of common coal-gas, when one could be found that would bear the test of hydrogen and atmospheric air?

Amongst other observations of Dr. Clanny is the following:—"Had Sir H. Davy, in his admirable experiments on the inflammable gases of coal-mines, found any gases stronger than the fire-damp or light carburetted hydrogen, he would have no doubt so modified his wire-gauze (without using the *objectional* medium of *glass*), that even jets of coal-gas could not by any chance be driven through it." \* \* \* "All these experiments of Mr. Pereira (therefore) go for nothing, as our pitman can testify." Now, with respect to this modification of the wire-gauze in the Davy-lamp, or in any lamp on its construction, any pitman will readily testify, and with good reason, that this modification of the wire-gauze has been carried to the full extent in all such lamps, which will leave them in any degree useful as a means of affording light. And in Sir H. Davy's own pamphlet on flame, &c., page 15, it will be found that Sir H. Davy was not so ill informed on this subject as has been represented. Sir H. Davy there says, "Some phenomena that I observed in the combustion of a blower, induced me to believe that small quantities of olefiant gas might sometimes be evolved in coal-mines with the carburetted hydrogen; I therefore resolved to make all lamps safe to the test of *gas produced by the distillation of coal*." Sir H. Davy even goes further on this most important point. At page 144 of the same pamphlet, Sir H. Davy says, "If pure hydrogen should be disengaged in any mines, the improbability of which is, however, very great, wire of a finer texture must be employed." Dr. C. says that while in town he made a promise to Mr. Pease and to Mr. Nicholas Wood, who is described by him as not only "an *experienced*," but as an "*accomplished* viewer," to analyse some of the most explosive fire-damp of coal-mines in