

from the same source. I have no doubt that many other manufacturing chemists make it equally well, but the costliness of the drug tempts others to produce it by more economical processes, the result of which is not thoroughly stable, especially if exposed to light, air, and variations of temperature.

When I was house-surgeon to Guy's, during the first six months of the year 1861, it was one of my duties to administer chloroform. I observed that different samples acted differently, not only in the rapidity of the anæsthetic effect produced, but that after the use of one sample of the drug secondary sickness would be rare, but after another sample it would be common.

My object in writing is to suggest that everyone who is about to administer chloroform should, if possible, carefully examine the fluid before using it. I venture to say that if those of your readers who have chloroform in their possession will apply the Pharmacopœia tests to it, a large proportion will find that their specimen is impure, and therefore, I believe, dangerous.

Permit me to say, in conclusion, that I think that we ought not to assume that every death occurring during the administration of chloroform is due to that agent. I myself saw a patient die on the table during amputation of the thigh, and another whose arm was amputated nearly met with the same fate, but was resuscitated with extreme difficulty, and suffered from collapse and sickness for some days afterwards. These cases occurred more than twenty years since, before anæsthetics were so universally employed. It was decided in consultation not to give chloroform to either of these patients; if it had been given the anæsthetic would, as usual, have borne the blame.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,
Seaford, Sussex, January 2nd, 1875.

B. J. TUCK.

"STRANGE OBSTETRIC PRACTICE."

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—In a paragraph in this week's LANCET under the above heading, wherein a case related by M. Blondeau is reported, where the placenta was allowed to remain in utero for a whole week for fear of hæmorrhage, you "leave obstetricians to think about this case," very properly adding "that in general the removal of the placenta arrests hæmorrhage, rather than favours it, even in a six months' case"; still the rule does not invariably hold good. Dr. Leishman remarks that "after expulsion of the fœtus, instead of a speedy recurrence of the pains, and a natural and unaided expulsion of the placenta, the uterus remains quiescent, the os closes, and the placenta, with the membranes, is retained, sometimes for hours only, but often for a much longer period, extending to eight or ten days, or even more" ("System of Midwifery," pp. 418-19). It is well known that "in all cases the placenta is retained much longer after the expulsion of the child in abortion than in labour at the full time" (Burns), owing to the more intimate anatomical connexion between the uterine sinuses and the placental tufts at this period; and it must be in the experience of many obstetricians to have witnessed cases of severe flooding, where the patient's strength had been so reduced that the mere effort to remove the retained placenta would, by the shock produced, have determined the issue we were so anxious to avoid.

In such a severe case of hæmorrhage as the one reported by M. Blondeau, where transfusion had been had recourse to, and where "the patient progressed favourably," I think he was fully justified in waiting and watching. Fever and tympanites set in immediately after the spontaneous expulsion of the placenta, not apparently due to its long retention, but to the admission of air into the relaxed uterine cavity.

I am, Sir, yours, &c.,
Wimpole-street, W., Jan. 11th, 1875. ARTHUR W. EDIS, M.D.

EPILEPSY: ANÆMIC OR CONGESTIVE BRAIN?

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I believed for many years that in epilepsy the brain was invariably in an anæmic condition, with the rare exceptions where congestion of the face was present, until

the discovery that bromide of potassium, which has been shown to lessen the amount of blood circulating in the brain, was of considerable benefit in epileptic seizures, particularly in the petit mal variety. A paper in last week's LANCET by Surgeon-Major Chapple, in which an epileptic attack supervened in a cataleptic patient when placed in a recumbent position, when more blood passed to the brain than previously, is an important fact; and this incident, and the known therapeutical action of the bromide of potassium, the most successful remedy we possess for epilepsy, lead me to suppose that the anæmic theory of the latter disease is a mistaken one.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

CHARLES H. ROBINSON, F.R.C.S.I.

Dublin, 11th January, 1875.

Medical News.

APOTHECARIES' HALL.—The following gentleman passed his examination in the Science and Practice of Medicine and received a certificate to practise on Jan. 7th:—

Catford, John Pine, Pemberly, Bedford.

THE will of Dr. John Watts, of Shrewsbury, has been proved under £18,000.

DR. THOMAS T. PYLE has been placed on the Commission of the Peace for Sunderland.

DR. UNDERHILL, of Summerfield House, West Bromwich, has qualified as a magistrate for the county of Stafford.

BY the quarterly returns, the death-rate of the township of Hexham is shown to be about 33 per thousand.

IN Belfast, for the week ending the 2nd inst., 34 deaths were caused by scarlet fever, being an increase of 12 over that of the preceding week.

DR. CAMERON's report for last month shows that 21,000lb. of unsound meat were condemned as being unfit for food, during that period, in Dublin.

DR. EDWARD YOUNG, being about to leave Salisbury, has resigned the coronership of the city and borough, and Mr. George Smith has been elected his successor.

SIR WILLIAM STIRLING MAXWELL will be brought forward by the Conservatives for the Chancellorship of Glasgow University, and Lord Moncrieff by the Liberals.

AT the monthly meeting of the Wallsend Local Board on Monday afternoon, it was resolved to appoint a committee to act in unison with the joint committee formed for the purpose of securing a better water-supply, the meetings of which have been held at Gateshead.

ARTS EXAMINATION.—The result of the examination in arts, &c., for the diploma of Fellow or Member of the Royal College of Surgeons, held on the 22nd, 23rd, and 24th of December last, will be made known to the candidates in the course of a few days.

LIVERPOOL MEDICAL INSTITUTION.—Office-bearers and Council, 1875:—President: Mr. McCheane. Vice-Presidents: Mr. T. S. Walker, Dr. Davidson, Dr. Steele, and Dr. Desmond. Treasurer: Dr. Oxley. Honorary Secretaries: Dr. Lyster and Dr. Glynn. Honorary Librarian: Dr. W. Carter. Council: Dr. J. Bligh, Mr. E. A. Browne, Dr. W. M. Campbell, Dr. Caton, Dr. Dickinson, Dr. Grimsdale, Mr. Harrison, Mr. Newton, Mr. Rushton Parker, Mr. Puzey, Dr. Turnbull, and Dr. Waters.

ROYAL NATIONAL LIFE-BOAT INSTITUTION.—At a meeting of this excellent and deserving institution held last week, under the presidency of Mr. Thomas Chapman, F.R.S., it was stated that nearly £800 had been granted to the crews of life-boats for services rendered during the severe storms of the past month. In that period the life-boats had saved 134 lives. The clasp of the institution was voted to Captain C. Gray Jones, R.N., in recognition of distinguished efforts to save human life.