

venereal than any of the rest, where the Distemper especially had been overlook'd and the Body before unacquainted with the antidote, I mean any mercurial preparation ..... Where one Person is carried off by a pocky Hectick ..... we have twenty, I might say forty, melted down or dry'd away by those of another nature."<sup>14</sup> The celebrated Astruc,<sup>15</sup> Turner's contemporary, noted "intermitting and slow Fevers among the Disorders of the general Functions in Pocky Persons. .... Slow fevers most commonly arise from violent Pains, from Ulcers of various Parts, from Gummata, from the Putrefaction of Nodes or Exostoses, from internal Abscesses, &c.; all of which constantly happen in an inveterate Pox." Of writers later than John Hunter but prior to Wunderlich, Swediaur<sup>16</sup> and Bassereau<sup>17</sup> in France and Erasmus Wilson<sup>18</sup> in this country should be mentioned. Swediaur states that a kind of slow fever with a weak and accelerated pulse often precedes the appearance of ulcers in the throat and the cutaneous eruption. He also deals with syphilitic phthisis, in which he says the emaciation is generally unaccompanied by fever, but hectic fever is sometimes present. Bassereau had frequently seen febrile attacks in the syphilitic closely resembling a double tertian.

Whether the early writers were correct in attributing fever in each case to syphilis is a matter now impossible to decide. Fournier,<sup>19</sup> though justly appreciative of their work, admits that they were often unduly credulous and attributed certain morbid states to venereal infection on most inadequate and puerile grounds. Enough, however, has been said to show that the occurrence of fever in syphilis, both at an early and late stage of the disease, and the resemblance of the fever to that of tuberculosis or malaria were recognised long before the introduction of the clinical thermometer.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

J. D. ROLLESTON.

Grove Fever Hospital, S.W., March 16th, 1907.

## THE DETECTION OF ACETONE IN THE URINE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—A ring test, essentially the same as that described in THE LANCET of March 23rd, 1907, p. 805, and on which you comment with approval in an annotation on p. 824 of the same issue, was published by Von F. Lange in the *Münchener Medizinische Wochenschrift*, No. 36, 1906. In Lange's method 15 cubic centimetres of the urine to be tested are mixed with 0.5 to 1.0 cubic centimetre of glacial acetic acid and a drop of freshly prepared sodium-nitroprusside solution. A cubic centimetre of strong ammonia is then run on to the surface and in the presence of acetone a more or less intense violet ring appears at the line of contact, the depth of the colour and the width of the ring varying with the quantity of acetone present in the urine. By this method it is said that  $\frac{1}{400}$ th per cent. of acetone can be detected, and it has certainly proved in my hands a most delicate and reliable test.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Beaumont-street, W., March 22nd, 1907.

P. J. CAMMIDGE.

## CENTRES OF MORAL INFECTION.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—From time to time I, and I have no doubt you, Sirs, and others have been appalled at the filthiness of writings and scratchings in the old-fashioned public conveniences for men. I write with, fresh in my mind, a horrible—shall I term it Ottoman?—sketch which I have just seen, and which everybody visiting the place had to see, in a convenience near the north-west corner of the Kensington Gardens. This is a place which must be constantly visited by boys and lads playing in the gardens. It is impossible to over-estimate the harm which may be done to them by such designs. Now, the modern County Council conveniences provided at centres of traffic are gradually rendering these old iron plague spots in isolated places unnecessary, and it is greatly to be hoped, for the moral welfare of the people, that as they become unnecessary they may be abolished. At the

best they are abominations. At the present time a new convenience is, I believe, being provided in the Bayswater-road a couple of hundred yards to the east of the filthy place which I have more specially indicated, and it is greatly to be hoped that H.M. Park Commissioners will at the earliest moment abolish the old iron filth disseminator and plant decent grass on its site.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

A MEMBER OF TWO HOSPITAL COMMITTEES.

London, March 21st, 1907.

## THE ORGANISATION OF THE MEDICAL PROFESSION IN FRANCE.

(FROM OUR SPECIAL COMMISSIONER.)

*The Twenty-fifth Anniversary of the First French Medical Union.—8000 out of 20,000 Medical Men in Union.—The Parliamentary Medical Group.—£20,000 Saved in Paris Alone.*

Paris, March 15th.

THE medical unions of France have now been in existence over a quarter of a century. Last year a festival was held to celebrate what was called the "silver wedding" of the union of medical men. Strange to say, this movement did not originate in Paris or one of the great progressive centres, but on the contrary in one of the most reactionary and least enlightened parts of France—namely, La Vendée. It is true that so far back as the year 1879 a medical practitioner of Havre, Dr. Margueritte, wrote to the late Dr. Auguste Cézilly, who had just founded the *Concours Médical*, protesting that barristers, solicitors, and others were forming unions to defend their professional interests, but that medical men remained listless and disorganised. This letter was the beginning of a prolonged discussion. Many different opinions were expressed and several medical men wrote in opposition, saying that a medical union, if formed, would soon become the instrument of some coterie or party and would promote the interests of a selected group to the disadvantage of all the other practitioners. At last the *Concours Médical* appointed a special committee to investigate the whole question. While these debates and discussions were proceeding, in the far-off country district of the Vendée a few practical men actually did what others were merely talking about. It was on March 6th, 1881, that the rules of the Medical Syndicate of Montaigu were definitely adopted and thus the first union of French medical men came into existence. On May 16th following this syndicate held its first official meeting.

Montaigu is a little town of only about 1800 inhabitants and is situated on the banks of the Maine, which is an affluent of the Sèvre-Nantaise in the Bocage Vendéen. This town, though small, has a history. It was strongly fortified by Louis XI. It has often been besieged and sacked in turn by the Protestant and by the Roman Catholic armies during the wars of religion. Then more recently it was again taken and retaken by the Republicans and the Royalists during the insurrection of the Vendée. Now there remain but a portion of the dungeon and deep trenches where the walls overlooked the moat. Yet the fighting instinct of the place is not extinct. There is no longer war between rival creeds or rival political systems, but here medical men were first brigaded to undertake an economic war in defence of the professional dignity and their material well-being. Dr. Gustave Mignen was their leader and he contrived to gather together in this small place no less than 40 practitioners, some of them coming from the neighbouring department of the Loire-Inférieure. Dr. Mignen was born in this little place on Dec. 8th, 1848, and belongs to a well-known family of La Vendée. He received his medical education at Nantes and at Paris, terminating his studies in 1873. He at once went to practise in his native town. Before the great Revolution the Faculty of Medicine was a very close corporation, of very jealous disposition, and not well disposed towards innovations; but all ideas of monopoly were swept away by the Revolution. The Empire reorganised the schools of medicine, though it was as opposed to the formation of unions among medical men as it was to all forms of independent organisation. Therefore, when Dr. Mignen began to practise he found the medical profession in a very anarchical condition. There was no rule of conduct, no government within the ranks of the profession, everyone was for himself "and the devil

<sup>14</sup> Ibid., pp. 120-121.

<sup>15</sup> Treatise of the Venereal Disease, English Translation, 1754, vol. ii., p. 30.

<sup>16</sup> *Traité des Maladies Syphilitiques*, 1801, pp. 102 and 168.

<sup>17</sup> *Affections Syphilitiques de la Peau*, 1852, p. 166.

<sup>18</sup> *Diseases of the Skin*, fifth edition, 1863, p. 416.

<sup>19</sup> *Gazette Hebdomadaire*, 1875, p. 758.