

could see at once that nothing truly constitutional occurred, and that if I had used the contents of the pustule—for it was never a vesicle—I should simply have inoculated the child with small-pox and thus have repeated the experiments which alarmed my uncle, the late Dr. G. G. Macpherson, some fifty years before in Bengal, when, as he told me in 1873, the most alarming results followed what he hoped would be simple vaccination. There is much that needs clearing up in Surgeon-Major King's case, and if Mr. Russell said, "Surgeon-Major King was censured and transferred from civil to military duty for having used, without authority from the Government of India, a form of lymph not sanctioned by the Government for use amongst the native population," all I can say is that something has occurred in the Indian vaccine department since I retired in 1884 which to me is absolutely inexplicable, and I wonder what it must be to many others. During my thirty years' service in India from 1854 I think I have seen as much vaccination and studied inoculation as closely as any medical officer in the Indian army, and yet I repeat that I cannot understand why Surgeon-Major King has been punished.—I am, Sirs, yours truly,

ROBT. PRINGLE, M.D. Edin., Brigade-Surgeon.
Blackheath, Kent, July 10th, 1893.

"NEW REMEDIES": "HOS EGO VERSICULOS FECI; TULIT ALTER HONORES."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—Under "New Remedies" in Wright's *Medical Annual* I find it stated that Dr. E. S. Stuver, having remarked on the great value as a germicidal agent and deodoriser of peroxide of hydrogen, considers that its most characteristic property is the extreme avidity with which it combines with and decomposes pus. In my *brochure* on "Therapeutics and Disease," published in 1870, I advocated the application of oxidising agents to all suppurating surfaces, and for the purpose of preventing putrefaction. I pointed out that in such cases, as for example in diphtheria, malignant scarlet fever, cancrum oris, hospital gangrene &c., these surfaces react on the system by auto-inoculation. I believed then, as I do now, that the specificity of many constitutional diseases and of their local manifestations is due to the formation of intermediate compounds or leucomaines, and that these are rendered innocuous by speedy oxidation, whereby they are reduced to ultimate binary compounds (*vide* my work on "Kochspiel"). The persistence of suppuration of a destructive character often is thus not due to spores, which are concomitant, accidental or consequential, but to intermediate alkaloidal bodies; and wounds are thus deodorised and rendered healthy by the application of oxidising agents, oxygen being nature's deodorant *par excellence*. This practice rests on a scientific basis and not on a visionary and delusive theory such as the germ theory, which has done so much to bring ridicule and contempt on medical science. Oxygenated water is now largely used in France as an application to wounds, and it is for the reasons above stated that permanganate of potash and like agents are so efficacious in the treatment of putrid wounds or fetid suppurating surfaces. I find also in the *Medical Annual* that Guyon recommends a solution of perchloride of mercury in cases of cystitis and that his patients were greatly benefited thereby. I used perchloride of mercury solution in the treatment of cystitis over twenty years ago, and in my work on "The Functional Diseases of the Urinary and Reproductive Organs" I have described how salivation was thus accidentally caused. From the same work I gather that Dr. Stuver uses bichloride of mercury in gonorrhoea. In a paper on the treatment of this affection¹ I recommended bichloride of mercury solution (1 gr. to 8 oz.). Dr. Stuver uses 1 gr. to 6 oz. I have no hesitation in saying that this strength is excessive; the solution employed should be much weaker.—I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

D. CAMPBELL BLACK, M.D.,
Professor of Physiology in Anderson's College Medical School.
Glasgow, July 15th, 1893.

"THE RAMSGATE MYSTERY."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In THE LANCET of the 15th inst. I think you are hardly fair in your comment on the Ramsgate murder case to the medical men first called in. In the first place,

you say we (Dr. Fox and Mr. Cotton) formed our opinions as to the time of death by the coldness of the deceased's hands, neglecting to mention the face, neck, ears and nose. As a matter of fact, we laid no weight at all on the temperature of the hands. In the next place, all the experiments (thermometric) that have been made on dead bodies with a view of ascertaining the rate of cooling, have been made on subjects who have died natural deaths in hospitals and been removed from there to a cold dead-house, covered only by a sheet. Now I ask in all fairness could you compare thermometric experiments made in such cases with those made on a person killed suddenly, fully clothed, in a very small room (ten feet by six), on an excessively hot day, door and windows being closed? The deceased could only have been dead two hours and twenty minutes when I saw her, and under the above circumstances I do not see where the difficulty of approximately fixing the time of death lies. The defence sought to prove that death took place at 2.45. In that case I was only fifteen minutes out. Hoping you will be kind enough to publish this, I remain, Sirs, yours truly,

Vale-road, Ramsgate, July 16th, 1893.

C. N. FOX.

* * * Our annotation was written upon the facts as published in daily contemporaries. We agree with our correspondents that too much reliance should not be placed on thermometric registers; at the same time when such are taken as bases on which to found hypotheses the best obtainable evidence should be secured. What we wrote respecting the hands would apply with equal force to the face, neck, ears and nose. We did not question the *bona fides* of the medical witnesses on either side, nor did we attempt to compare the relative value of their opinions. Our contention was that in a criminal case the same latitude should be extended to witnesses for the defence as to those engaged by the prosecution.—ED. L.

FIFTEEN TIMES TWINS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In the course of insurance work I have lately met with some details of family history which, I think, may interest and perhaps surprise some of your readers. The proposer stated that her father died at the age of eighty; that her mother was alive at the age of seventy-nine; that she had four brothers and four sisters alive and in good health; that her mother had "had thirty-three children, fifteen times twins," and that "twenty-four died under six months old." From personal knowledge I cannot vouch for the truth of the above statements, but they came to my notice on a serious business form, which was signed by the proposer and contained a solemn declaration that she believed in the truth of her statements and agreed that they should form part of the basis of contract. I may also add that none of the accompanying documents threw any doubt upon the genuine nature of the proposal, although my first impression was that the story of "fifteen times twins" might be a poor attempt at a joke.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

NESTOR TIBARD.

Weymouth-street, Portland-place, July 17th, 1893.

SO-CALLED "VILLOUS CANCER OF THE BREAST."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—My attention has lately been called to a paper on this subject by Mr. Bowlby in THE LANCET of June 10th which appears to require brief notice from me. It is a repetition of an essay published in 1888, with some trifling additions. Mr. Bowlby says that at that time only six isolated examples of this disease had been recorded in English literature. Herein he is certainly in error, for Mr. Bryant's book on Diseases of the Breast, published in 1887, contains this number, and I can cite over a dozen different cases from other sources, while from French and German literature I have gleaned more than another dozen, all published prior to 1888. My attention was first specially directed to the subject in 1883, when I met with two instances of the disease—one in a male, the other in a female—of which I published an account in the Middlesex Hospital Reports for 1883, and subsequently I met with a third case, an account

¹ Brit. Med. Jour., April 23rd, 1870.