

infection" (whatever the phrase stands for) being derivable from this patient, as she was septicæmic from decomposition of the placenta before its entire separation from the sac.

The next point is, that at one of the dressings, after separation had fairly begun, I removed, partly with dressing forceps partly with my fingers, a considerable piece of the decomposing placenta. My fingers were malodorous, showing their skin to have been soaked with micro-organism excrement and decomposition products, even after washing with a solution of perchloride of mercury, of moderate strength, in the room.

On going home I found a message from a midwife, asking me to help a case over for her with the forceps. I purified my hands in the course of about three minutes by using (1) soap and warm water with the nail-brush; (2) remembering how the stench of uterine cervical cancer is got rid of from the examining finger by turpentine, I washed my hands with turpentine, using the saturated nail-brush, then more soap and water, and finally rinsing in a solution of iodine. I washed my hands and instruments at the patient's in iodised hot water, and used fresh carbolic oil for lubrication. The patient, a multipara, got up, I am informed, as I did not require to see her after delivery, on the celebrated "ninth day," and made a perfectly good recovery, being now quite well.

A case of this kind (my own cases also at the time were non-septicæmic), where a good deal of vaginal manipulation took place, and where the fingers were, not half an hour before, in a septic state, answers various questions. It is not a merely providential escape from the production of what is pedantically and euphemistically termed "heterogenetic" septicæmia. "Rash!" some who have been wittily described as having "passed the climacteric," and so are unchanging in their views, will exclaim. I reject the imputation, for I have faith founded on fact in appropriate antisepticism properly performed.

I am, Sirs, your obedient servant,

ARCHIBALD D. MACDONALD, M.D. Edin.

Liverpool, Nov. 26th, 1887.

ELECTION OF ASSESSOR IN THE UNIVERSITY OF ST. ANDREWS.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I trust you will permit me to appeal to my fellow-graduates of this University in support of the candidature of Dr. John Duncan as the Assessor in the contest now going on. The high position which this gentleman holds, whether regard be had for his professional or his academic distinction, eminently qualifies him for the post, added to which, being on the spot, he will be enabled to attend all the University court meetings, which it will be wholly out of the power of his opponent, Viscount Cross, to do, as must be well known.

I am, Sirs, yours obediently,

JOSEPH ROGERS.

Montague-place, Russell-square, London, Nov. 30th, 1887.

"IS CANCER CONTAGIOUS?"

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I have been looking over my "Cause of Death Certificates" from March, 1883, to present date, and if you think the following cases, which have happened in my own practice, worth a corner in your valuable journal, I should like to bring them before the notice of the profession, as I think they might perhaps interest some of your many readers:—

E. G., aged 51	...	Cancer of breast	...	March, 1883.
H. H., aged 58	...	Cancer of breast	...	July, 1883.
J. D., aged 54	...	{ Cancer of testicle and stomach }	...	Oct., 1884.
H. C., aged 56	...	Cancer of uterus	...	March, 1885.
G. W. B., aged 66	...	Cancer of rectum	...	Oct., 1885.
M. D., aged 55	...	Cancer of uterus	...	Jan., 1886.
T. C., aged 48	...	Cancer of tongue	...	Aug., 1886.
G. T., aged 74	...	Cancer of rectum	...	March, 1887.
E. C., aged 31	...	{ Cancer of vagina and uterus }	...	April, 1887.
E. J., aged 58	...	Cancer of breast	...	May, 1887.
S. P., aged 65	...	Cancer of stomach	...	Sept., 1887.

The discharges from some of these cases were incessant and extremely offensive, in spite of the utmost cleanliness,

and not only the rags, but the houses were saturated with what I may perhaps be allowed to call "cancer smell," strong carbolic acid lotion and other disinfectants being constantly necessary to enable the inmates to remain with the patient. In each of my cases, husbands, relatives, and nurses are all at the present time in perfect health. Some of them certainly complained occasionally of the smell going down their throats and "settling on their stomachs," as they called it, which was not surprising; but these symptoms readily yielded, at my suggestion, to a strong glass of brandy-and-water.

As there are always two sides to every question, would it not be well to collect evidence if we can, and see on which side the balance in favour of or against the contagion theory lies?

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

L. NICHOLLS, M.R.C.S. Eng., L.S.A. Lond.

Bury St. Edmunds, Nov. 28th, 1887.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In a thesis written for the M.D. (Camb.) degree in June last, I made reference to the above subject; and, in support of my belief that malignant diseases are contagious, not only by immediate contact as mentioned by Sir Peter Eade, but also in a wider sense, I ventured to record the following, which occurred in my practice about two years ago: In a fen district, nine miles from any town or railway, and three from the nearest village, and with very few dwellings in it, three labouring men, all beyond middle age, living at separate houses and working together on the same farm, were each the subject of malignant disease within a comparatively few weeks of one another. Two of them had malignant disease of the stomach, and died at their own homes, the third had malignant disease of the oesophagus, and died at University College Hospital, where he was sent for surgical treatment. In the same thesis I wrote of the possible part played by the lymphatic system in the reception and ultimate development of the particular cell or cell products, which probably is the form the contagious material takes.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

WM. GROOM, M.D. Cantab., &c.

Wisbech, Nov. 17th, 1887.

NORTHERN COUNTIES NOTES.

(From our own Correspondent.)

A MEDICAL MAYOR FOR DURHAM.

MR. W. C. BLACKETT, a general practitioner in the ancient and cathedral city of Durham, has been elected Mayor. Mr. Blackett was apprenticed to the late Dr. Green of Durham, and is an old pupil at St. Thomas's. While assistant to Dr. Green, in 1849, during the cholera epidemic he rendered exceptional services in many places in the county of Durham. He afterwards settled in practice in Durham, and entered the municipal body, having previously pledged himself to keep aloof from all cliques and parties. After twelve years' service he left the Council, and at the end of nine years went back again. Then he retired to avoid the turmoil of a contest at a time when small-pox was prevalent, in order to prevent the spread of the disease. Mr. Blackett, who is in the prime of life, has reached now every honour in the power of his city to bestow, being Alderman, Justice of the Peace, as well as honorary Surgeon-Major to the 4th Durham Rifles. He is a keen sportsman and supporter of all manly games, such as cricket, quoits, football, boating, and swimming, as well as a benefactor to all local friendly societies.

FEBRILE EPIDEMIC IN THE NORTH.

For the last month an epidemic of a peculiar nature, whether as regards its frequency or some of its symptoms, has prevailed here. The patients are generally adults, taken ill, as a rule, with a rigor or slight chill; this is followed by feverishness and headache (the latter often severe), suggesting typhus. There is very little cough, and but trifling mucous irritation. Constipation is always present, and the high temperature continues for nearly a week. Muscular pains are complained of, and the head symptoms often include transient delirium. While the practitioner is perhaps considering what form of fever he has to deal with, the symptoms rather suddenly subside, but the convalescence is