

difficulty. When I came to examine the vitals of the ether inhaler the mystery was cleared up. The marks on the box were liars; when the indicator was at "0" the patient was receiving the full blast of ether, and when it was at "Full" he was receiving back from the bag nothing more than his own breath. But this was not simply the fault of the engraver, for the "0" is where it is usually placed in the instrument made by Messrs. —, beneath the side-tube through which the ether is poured into the box. The inhaler itself is at fault—a case of "transposed viscera." The inhaler was made by one of the best-known firms in London. I am not desirous of publishing the name of the makers, for this incident has not shaken my confidence in the quality of their goods; but I shall write privately to inform them of the practical joke they have played on me. Perhaps the most remarkable fact about the whole experience is that the patient did not cough at the outset of the administration, when, with the index at "0," he was receiving the full blast of ether. I have since tried it myself and find the effect of this strength of ether vapour on a membrane not yet dulled by commencing anaesthesia extremely irritating.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,
Nagasaki, Japan, Feb. 6th, 1896.

MAURICE EDEN PAUL.

EUPHORBIIUM AS A CAUSTIC.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—The following particulars may be of interest to some of your readers. I was staying in the country in Normandy last year and was asked one day, in an unofficial way, what was a good thing for "warts." The mention of the different "folk," magical, and cabalistic methods led to a general discussion of the subject, and at last the proprietor of the hotel related the case of a child who had been treated for months without any benefit by the leading skin specialists for innumerable warts on the face, and who had been cured in a few days by a local sorceress. The remedy used was the fresh milky juice from the stems of the common garden euphorbium, a weed that is plentiful in those parts. It so happened that one of the kitchenmaids at the hotel had recently developed a crop of warts on the hands and she very willingly consented to become the subject of an experiment, which was entirely successful. The application of the juice leads to the formation of a blister under the wart, which falls off in due time. According to Dorvault, a French text-book on pharmacy, exotic euphorbium enters into the composition of an "everlasting blister" into some topical applications for cancer in veterinary remedies, and the "Aveloz nült," a cancer specialty, consists also of it. The dried gum resin requires the greatest caution in manipulation on account of the irritating nature of the powder. Folkard¹ says that a variety is cultivated in India as a sacred plant, prayers being addressed and hogs sacrificed to it.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Rue Vernet, Paris, May 14th, 1896.

OSCAR JENNINGS.

FIG v. OX BILE TABLOIDS IN JAUNDICE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—As success in treatment sometimes depends more on the kind and mode of preparation of the remedy employed than anything else, from having noticed the remarks in the Laboratory Record of THE LANCET of May 16th on the advantages of coating bile tabloids with keratin to enable them to pass through the stomach undissolved into the intestines, where alone they are of therapeutic value in cases of jaundice, I desire to supplement those judicious remarks by what appears to me would be a useful hint to manufacturing pharmacians from a therapeutic point of view, and that is to employ in their preparation pig's instead of ox bile, for the important reason I pointed out in a work on the various forms and treatments of jaundice some thirty years ago, that from the ox being a herbivorous animal its bile is but ill suited for the purposes it is intended in a flesh-eating animal such as man is; whereas the pig being omnivorous like the human being, its bile contains exactly the ingredients necessary to supply the place of those that are absent from the digestive canal in cases of jaundice in the human being, which ox bile does not. Why, then, one naturally asks, should our pharmacians put ox bile into their tabloids when it is quite as easy for them

to obtain and use pig's bile—seeing that the object in view in prescribing another animal's bile is to prevent the patient from emaciating and dying from inanition in consequence of his food not being properly digested and prepared in the intestinal canal for the purposes of absorption and assimilation? For if the food be not rendered fit for the body to assimilate it, it might just as well not be given to the patient at all, in so far at least as the object held in view is concerned. As I know manufacturing pharmacians desire to aid the practitioner in combating disease and death by every means in their power, and that they are always willing to adopt all reasonable improvements both as regards the modes of preparation and the forms of administration of drugs, I trust the calling their attention to such an important therapeutical suggestion as the above—founded as it is on true physiological principles—in the pages of THE LANCET will have the desired effect.

I am, Sirs, yours faithfully,

Harley-street, W., May 22nd, 1896.

GEORGE HARLEY.

"THE OPTICIAN v. THE OPHTHALMIC SURGEON."

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—My attention has been directed to the admirable article in THE LANCET of May 9th on the relations between oculist and optician, and I may say at once that I entirely concur with the spirit of your remarks; but in dealing with the matter—very naturally and rightly from the standpoint of the medical profession—you seem to me to do us traders rather scant justice, and I therefore crave permission for a few words from the point of view of the optician, and the essence of my protest lies in your use of the word "encroach." Surely, if the word is to be used at all it is rather applicable to the oculist than to the optician; but the word is not a nice one and I would prefer to represent the state of affairs in this way. The correction of defective sight by means of spectacles has remained for centuries almost entirely in the hands of the trader; but the great increase during the last thirty years in the knowledge of ocular refraction and the therapeutic use of spectacles has lifted the whole matter into the professional sphere. But in this connexion it should be recognised that we are still in a state of transition. I think the majority of opticians—those, at least, who have a due sense of the responsibilities involved—look forward hopefully to a time when people will go as naturally to the medical practitioner for advice on eye and sight troubles as they do now for defects of hearing. I think, too, they are doing good work, each one according to his opportunities, towards bringing that time about. But there are many difficulties that the optician has to meet, such as the refusal of people to take their defects of sight seriously, ignorant prejudice, the ingrained habit of old-fashioned customers, and, not least common, the specialist's fees. No doubt time will dissipate these difficulties, but meanwhile it would be generous—one might almost say just—to make allowances for them and to give the optician credit for doing his best to adapt himself and his business to the new conditions.

I am pleased to think that in my main view of our present duty I am absolutely in accord with the recommendations of your article. No encouragement should be given to proposals for measures, legislative or other, such as have recently agitated the State of New York. Feelings of rivalry should be restrained and the issue left to easy and natural development.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

New Bond-street, W., May 21st, 1896.

W. A. DIXEY.

SHORTHAND IN MEDICINE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—With reference to the remark in your annotation on our petition to the General Medical Council I may point out that the petition is for "shorthand," and not any one system, to be allowed to bear some marks to those who choose to present it. The wide use of phonography has been, perhaps, unwisely referred to in the petition, but the College of Preceptors accept any system of shorthand as an optional subject at the same examination as is recognised by the Council. Those who are passing it for the medical profession, however, do not present shorthand because the General Medical Council has not included it as a subject for

¹ Plant Lore Legends and Lyrics.