

## THE EXAMINATION IN BOTANY AT THE UNIVERSITY OF LONDON.

[LETTER FROM PROFESSOR HENSLOW.]

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—I am ready to allow that the objection raised by your correspondent, "M.D." (THE LANCET, *ante*, p. 25,) against candidates for an M.B. degree being required to retain the characters of a certain number of our British genera of plants in their memory, is well deserving consideration. Still, I think he has overstated the inconvenience which such a demand would impose upon any one who has been paying the proper degree of attention to this subject. Although there may be few persons capable of retaining in their memory, for any great length of time, the generic characters of a large number of plants, yet any one who has really studied them may very readily refresh his memory with the characters of a few selected genera in anticipation of an examination, when he has been told the limits within which questions of this sort are to be restricted. It was to meet objections that had been made to the vast extent of the science that the syllabus was proposed in the regulations. With respect to the genera selected not containing medical plants, I cannot do better than direct the attention of "M.D." to a remark of Professor Balfour, in the Introduction to his recently published "Manual of Botany," p. xiii:—"The relation which botany bears to medicine has often been misunderstood. The medical student is apt to suppose that all he is to acquire by his botanical pursuits is the knowledge of the names and orders of medical plants. The object of the connexion between scientific and mere professional studies is here lost sight of. It ought ever to be borne in mind by the medical man, that the use of the collateral sciences, as they are termed, is not only to give him a great amount of general information, which will be of value to him in his after career, but to train his mind to that kind of research which is essential to the student of medicine, and to impart to it a tone and a vigour which will be of the highest moment in all his future investigations. What can be more necessary for a medical man than the power of making accurate observations, and of forming correct distinctions and diagnoses? These are the qualities which are brought into constant exercise in the prosecution of the botanical investigations, to which the student ought to turn his attention, as preliminary to the study of practical medicine," &c.

During the past year, I have had some correspondence with botanical friends and others respecting the possibility of establishing some "minimum" to be generally required at a pass examination in botany. With this object in view, I printed a syllabus suggestive of the range within which I thought our Cambridge students might be restricted under the new regulations, then about to be proposed, and which have since been adopted by the university. If your correspondent will favour me with any address, I shall be happy to forward him a copy, and to thank him for any comments he may be pleased to make upon this subject. As our Cambridge scheme will come into operation next year, I shall hope (with the advice of others) to prepare such a scheme as may be generally approved. With respect to the forthcoming examinations, my papers have already been forwarded to the registrar, and I could not depart from the appointed regulations. I have inserted a form of question (No. 7) in the paper for honours, which, I am inclined to think, would be more satisfactory, both to the examiner and the examined, at a pass examination, than one which requires a candidate to describe the characters of particular genera.

Hitcham, July, 1849.

J. S. HENSLOW.

## TREATMENT OF CHOLERA BY EXTERNAL COLD AND MOISTURE.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—A letter was inserted in last Saturday's *Times*, with our names attached, headed, "Method of Restoring Heat to the Surface in Malignant Cholera;" we now request that our observations may meet with insertion in your valuable journal. To those who may object that it would have been more in accordance with professional etiquette to have sent the first announcement to a medical journal, we reply, that on Wednesday our treatment had not been applied in a sufficient number of cases to do away with the charge of prematurity; but by Thursday evening we had had ample opportunities of testing our remedy, and had been so astonished at its effect, that we considered we should have been guilty of a dereliction of duty

to the profession and the public in general, had we still further delayed to announce it.

The remedy we use is described in Dr. Edward Johnson's work on "Hydrophathy," as "packing in the wet sheet." Everything having been removed from the mattress, a pillow is placed upon it for the patient's head, upon the mattress, and extending over the pillow, a blanket is spread smoothly, and over this the wet sheet wrung out of cold water as dry as possible. On the bed, thus prepared, the patient is placed on his back, perfectly unclothed, and with the arms extended by the side. As quickly as possible the patient is wrapped up in the sheet, first one side being brought tightly over, and then the other. Above the patient are placed five or six blankets, and he is allowed to remain two or three hours or more, according to the effect produced.

In our letter to *The Times* we spoke of having tried this treatment in thirteen cases; a still further trial of it since that time, in at least twenty cases, confirms the opinion we there expressed, as to its efficacy; in every case (with one exception only) we have succeeded in obtaining the object in view—viz., in restoring heat to the surface. In many of these cases the surface was icy cold and blue, and the pulse imperceptible at the wrist, yet in one case only did we fail in restoring a general warmth to the surface, in from fifteen to twenty minutes, and in several cases the patient was quickly bathed in a profuse perspiration. In the case in which we failed, that result was due to the extreme restlessness of the patient, and the impossibility of keeping her packed in the proper manner.

We do not put forward this mode of treatment with the high-sounding title of Cure for Cholera, but simply as a method of restoring heat to the surface, and inducing reaction in the circulatory system, and as an accessory to the other modes of treatment, although we can with sincerity say that it does more, as in every instance we have noticed that the diarrhoea, vomiting, and cramps, have been very materially lessened, and in some cases entirely checked.

Further observation and experiment are required to carry out this method of treatment, but we are perfectly convinced of the wonderful power of the wet sheet in producing reaction, even in the latest stages, and rendering the patients fitter subjects for the trial of other appropriate remedies.

We are not aware that we have been anticipated either in the recommendation or adoption of this plan of treatment, but if so we are happy in being able to add our testimony to its success.

We are, Sir, your obedient servants,

Milton-next-Sittingbourne,  
July, 1849.

GEORGE RAY, } Surgeons.  
JOHN FARMER, }

## A PRIZE MEDICAL REFORM BILL.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—As Parliament is now rapidly drawing to a close, and the late attempts to legislate upon medical affairs have apparently, and I would add deservedly, followed in the course of those which have preceded them, and proved abortive, no further endeavour, I presume, either on the part of Government or of individuals, will be made, during the present session, to overcome the difficulties which have presented themselves.

"The Principles" have failed to obtain the approbation of the profession. The same incongruities continue in the medical body as heretofore. Most of the evils which have formed the points of contention are as prominent as ever; whilst some during the past twelve months have become still more intolerable. On the one hand, corporate selfishness increases—cliqueism advances; on the other, disunion and contrariety of opinion upon most of the subjects of pressing and vital interest to the profession generally, progress *pari passu*. Each suggestion, as it is made, appears but to pave the way for its equally fragile successor. No children playing at blind-man's buff ever groped more vaguely, with extended arms, in search of their object, than have medical reformers in the attempt to correct that which they think and feel to be wrong. In proof of this, it is merely necessary to refer to the pages of your own and other journals bearing the observations of numerous correspondents and editors upon the *questio vexata*, medical reform.

I need not remark, Sir, how very undesirable it is that this conflict and uncertainty of opinion should continue; but I may ask—Is it necessary, is it unavoidable? I think not; and beg to suggest to the consideration of yourself and the faculty, the following proposition, in the hope that, if adopted, it may tend to procure a nearer approach to unanimity of thought and action with regard to "principles" than hitherto we appear to have possessed.