

OPERATIONS FOR STONE.

The following statistique of operations performed at the *Hospital of Incurables* and of *St. Mary*, at Naples, during the Spring of 1835, we extract from the *Gaz. Med. de Paris*, No. 44 :—

The neck of the bladder was divided downwards and to one side. Professor DE RENZI is in the habit of publishing annually the statistics of all the operations for stone which are publicly performed at Naples. How much would be gained by science if the surgeons of our great hospitals were compelled to imitate this example, for the principal operations which they are called upon to perform! We should then have a body of authentic facts upon which confidence might be placed, and from which deductions of the highest value might be drawn.

At the *Hospital of Incurables*, ten operations were performed; six of the patients were below ten years of age; the others had not reached that of puberty. In four cases the stone was large; in three it was small; in three of a moderate size. There were nine males and one female. Only one patient died of the ten; after having cut into the bladder, the surgeon was unable to extract the stone. The bladder, after death, was found much inflamed, almost gangrenous, and the mucous membrane was reduced to a kind of pulp.

At the *Hospital of St. Mary*, four patients were cut, and all recovered: three were below fifteen years of age.

Since the year 1821, up to the present time, 454 patients have been operated upon in these two hospitals. 439 males, 15 females; or 216 children, 191 adults, and 47 old. Of these there were cured 388; died 66; giving an average of one death in nearly every seven cases.

ARTIFICIAL ANUS CURED BY A NEW PROCESS.

IN the month of September last, M. AMUSSAT, of Paris, was called on to see a child two days old, who had not yet passed any meconium. The anus existed, and was well formed, but the rectum terminated by an opening in the vagina. On examination it was found that the rectum did not exist for two inches from the anus. M. AMUSSAT, therefore, determined on seeking the extremity of the great intestine, separating it from its attachment, and fixing it by suture to the opening in the skin; for this purpose he made a T incision between the vaginal

opening and the anus, and having introduced the finger by this opening, he separated the vagina from the coccyx and sacrum, until he arrived at the blind end of the great intestine, which was placed above, to the right side of the sacro-vertebral angle. Arrived at this point, the manœuvres produced a desire to evacuate the meconium. The gut was recognised by Messrs. Deneux and Lebaudy, who were in attendance. It was seized with a hook, separated from the surrounding parts by the finger, and drawn gently down to the opening in the skin, where it was fixed with several points of suture. It is now twenty-eight days (said M. AMUSSAT at a late meeting of the *Academy of Medicine*) since the operation just described has been performed, and no accident has occurred, the child being in the most satisfactory state.

INQUEST AT FARNHAM.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—The details of the subjoined case will go farther to prove the necessity for the appointment of medical coroners, than any which I have yet known to be brought before the public. The verdict delivered was "Accidental Poisoning," and nux vomica was the poison sworn to have caused the fatal result. The medical evidence and a general outline of the inquest I transmit for publication, well assured that the pages of THE LANCET will be open to the insertion of facts of so much general importance, especially as the character of a respectable individual is involved in the inquiry, the medical evidence having guided the coroner and jury in the delivery of the charge and the verdict. No other channel offers to clear the person on whom odium is attempted to be cast (the local opportunity being hermetically sealed), and he here, therefore, begs to challenge those opinions which can decide the question at issue. The details are given from memory, for on applying to the coroner for a copy of the depositions, he declined granting one, on the ground of the concession being illegal, though he politely read the depositions to me; and as Mr. Portello appealed to me in his distress, I am bound to carry the inquiry forward to an issue, that I may not be involved by undertaking a defenceless cause.

On Thursday, the 8th of October, a travelling man and woman called at the shop of Mr. Postello, a druggist in Farnham, and requested some medicine for a sick child of thirteen months old. The child was drowsy, and its bowels were much confined, to ob-

viate which latter symptom he gave two aperient powders. (In the course of Mr. Postello's examination he stated his entire forgetfulness of this circumstance; but that the man and woman had applied to him was distinctly proved in the evidence). The first powder was given on the Friday morning, and was followed by sickness, the stomach doubtless rejecting it from previous disorder; nothing having passed the bowels, and the child becoming more drowsy and insensible on the Sunday morning, the other powder was given. Its effects were *four stools*, and no sickness. Nothing further was attempted for its relief until Thursday, when Mr. Bury, a surgeon of the town, was called in. He found the child in a state of coma, with very contracted pupils, and at first sight pronounced the child to be *poisoned*. He attended it up to Friday, and as the coroner also declared to me, administered medicine, although it was not stated in evidence that he did so. On the Friday it died.

The rumour of a case of poisoning justified the holding of an inquest, Mr. Bury having previously opened the body and head to illustrate and establish the fact. A copy of the exact words of the evidence having been refused, I can only state the substance; and as the material part is the post-mortem examination, I give it as read to me, waiving the phraseology.

Mr. Bury stated that he found the brain healthy, but with rather an *undue quantity of water in the ventricles*. His researches were then transferred to the body, where he found the lungs and heart and the abdominal viscera healthy, excepting the stomach, in which he found a powder, which he secured by a process which he specified, and instantly adjudged it to be *nux vomica*. He stated that as no analytic test could establish its identity, he depended on analogy; and having procured some of the recent drug, he mixed it with the fluid of the stomach, tasted the suspected and the real, and was satisfied that *nux vomica* had killed the child. It did not appear in evidence which of the two he had tasted first, nor how long a period there was between tasting the true article, and the supposititious one. Having thus satisfied himself as to the nature of the poison, he stated that there were traces of inflammation of the coats of the stomach. This closed the substance of his medical evidence.

It appears that Mr. Postello had forgotten every thing connected with the dispensing of the medicines; but the local situation in his shop of a jalap preparation which he used for aperient purposes, and the powdered *nux vomica*, were remote from each other, and this Mr. Bury was shown to be the fact on calling previous to the inquest. In the routine of an extensive business, it is possible that little attention may be paid to personal identity, and Mr. Postello failed to remem-

ber the individuals who had called on him about the child. The verdict was returned, and Mr. P., not by direct charge, but by *in-undo*, was asserted to have caused the death of the child, and this too even by one of the jurymen. On the Sunday following, he sent for me, and begged me to inquire into the justice of the allegations. I saw the parents of the child, and then for the first time it was discovered, that Mr. Bury had himself given it medicines; and from the woman I learnt, as well as from the father, that the effect of Mr. Postello's powder was precisely that which was intended. Mr. P. having entrusted his case to me, and well knowing the serious consequences of such a general impression, I advised him by all means to adopt the most strenuous measures to clear himself from so unhappy a suspicion. We went to the coroner, who feelingly expressed his sincere regret, and viewed the case in the most serious light, promising Mr. Postello to give him, if possible, a copy of the evidence; but this has since been refused on the ground I have named. The question of the propriety of a druggist prescribing for a sick person is not for me to determine. The proceeding had already taken place, and my desire is to establish the impossibility of the powder given by Mr. Postello having poisoned the child. I believe that no reasonable man, certainly no medical man, will assent to the allegation, that a medicine given for a specific object, and fulfilling its design, and taken on a Sunday morning, could be found in the dead child's stomach on the Friday morning. As to the accuracy of the mode of determining the poison adopted by Mr. Bury, or its incompatibility with the appearances found in the stomach, together with the state of health which the child was admitted to have possessed for the nine days previous to the fatal event, I have nothing to say. I appeal to every reflecting mind to decide whether the powder so found, could be the powder given by Mr. Postello. Both the father and mother declared, that the child became sick, very sick, from the medicine given by Mr. Bury, and that it was much convulsed after taking it. Now the ways of Providence are indeed mysterious, for the elucidation of crime and criminal carelessness. Mr. Postello's medicine, after operating four times, six days before, must, to have so poisoned the child as Mr. Bury imagined, have traversed back, as a purgative, many feet of bowels, to reach the dead child's stomach, and then maintained its position in defiance of the vomiting produced by Mr. Bury's medicine. It shall be conceded that *nux vomica* was found; found by Mr. Bury. All I seek to prove is, that Mr. Postello was not the instrument of its introduction there, either directly or indirectly. But why do I argue for a conclusion that must be inevitable? This inferential mode of destroying

a character, is sad indeed. Had Mr. Postello been provided with a competent medical friend at the inquest, the coroner and jury, if they had believed the child to be poisoned, would never have suspected Mr. Postello of the act, and that the coroner had that impression on the inquest I can positively assert. A hundred times better would it have been for Mr. Postello to have been committed for the crime of poisoning at once; he might then have cleared himself on his trial, in the minds of his townsmen, from what has excited, and is calculated now to continue to excite, distrust. But this inquest is final, and although to clear Mr. Postello every fair proposition has been made, especially that of strict inquiry by a select body of medical men, the appeal has been contemptuously rejected, and a threat of action even hinted at, if he perseveres in the demand. The coroner, Mr. Woods, is in every sense a gentleman, and was most anxious that the character of Mr. Postello should be cleared; but the only resource now is the public press; and to your journal he appeals, as to the most honest of medical periodicals. With respect to *my* position in the affair, Mr. Postello having thrown himself in the emergency on me, I cannot allow the facts to be smothered.

That medical knowledge in a coroner is a most essential requisite for the good both of the public and of individuals, must be too obvious from the history of this case, to need further exposition from me. I remain, Sir, your most obedient servant,

G. V. ROGERS, Surg.

Farnham, Surrey, Oct. 26th, 1835.

P.S. The mother was found by Mr. Bury in a state of extreme intoxication, when he first visited the child.

THE LANCET.

London, Saturday, November 14, 1835.

A FACT which is most happily characteristic of the hole-and-corner proceedings in the College of Surgeons, has just been presented to the profession in the election of a new member into the Council. We ought, in truth, to make some distinction between the two last elections, referring specifically to the first of them as furnishing the best evidence of the event to which we allude. Mr. GREEN, of *St. Thomas's Hospital*, was not chosen the other day by the self-perpetuating junta, but was, positively, elected

some months since, on the resignation of Mr. LYNN; and yet so secretly, so covertly, and—we may, in justice, state, with reference to the great body of the members—so clandestinely, that it was not known up to this very week, to the profession in the metropolis, that Mr. GREEN had become a member of the Council; and, in reality, the circumstance is now for the first time published to the profession generally.

What a state of things is this! And yet this system of secrecy has been endured by the medical community since the barber-surgeons were first erected into a corporation! Even the charter of 1800, under the authority of which these odious secret elections were conducted, was merely, in spirit and in letter, an emanation from the Act of the 18th of GEORGE II. It was not, therefore, Mr. GREEN who was chosen in consequence of the vacancy which was caused by the death of Sir WILLIAM BLIZARD, but Mr. CALLAWAY, the Assistant-surgeon of *Guy's Hospital*. Although, therefore, we were wrong with respect to the *name* of the gentleman who was last week stated by us to have been elected, still, so undeviating is the College in showing its unjust and pernicious partiality towards the surgeons who are connected with the hospitals of this metropolis, that not a little of our argument was inapplicable to the occasion. If Mr. KINGDON and hundreds of others had not been turned aside to give place to Mr. GREEN of *St. Thomas's Hospital*, they were made to yield to the preference which was shown for Mr. CALLAWAY of *Guy's Hospital*. To such a barefaced and scandalous extent is this practice of choosing the hospital surgeons carried, to the exclusion of other gentlemen of acknowledged attainments, abilities, and industry, in the profession, that out of the twenty-one Councillors who at the present moment sit in the College, the enormous number of seventeen are holding office in the “recognised” hospitals of this metropolis; and these men, conferring in conclave in the College, issue