

ailment. My theory is "pressure." Mr. Auld's theory is leucomaines or ptomaines. He clearly admits pressure as one progenitor, but maintains that putrescent, decaying organisms are more prominent factors. I fear I am not well up in the German theory of "Botulosis." I neither admit nor deny; I am open to conviction. Let any good observer point out to me a few of these organisms in the blood or excretions of a very crampy subject. Then we are only in the first stage of the inquiry, for it may be cause and effect, or a mere coincidence. Then, if I can produce a subject teeming with these microscopic entities, and the former does not suffer from cramp, what becomes of the theory? It breaks down. To establish the theory there must be demonstrative evidence of the existence of the organisms in question, and these must occur in conjunction with well-marked crampy diathesis. In conclusion, one word as to pressure. In the act of parturition there is undeniable severe pressure, and the result urgent cramp. I am not informed that pregnant women are more subject to ptomaines than other less favoured individuals.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Stockland, Nov. 28th, 1888.

SAMUEL D. HINE.

ELECTROLYSIS IN OBSTRUCTION OF THE EUSTACHIAN TUBE.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—I am indebted to Dr. Neale, the author of the "Medical Digest," for kindly calling my attention to several papers in which electrolysis of the Eustachian tube has before been mentioned.

In the *Gazette des Hôpitaux* (No. 31, 1884) is a paper by Mercié on the Treatment of Stricture of the Eustachian Tube by Electrolysis. The means employed and the way of performing the operation are not the same as that described in the paper by Mr. Cumberbatch and myself, which appeared in THE LANCET on the 24th ult., but the principle involved is the same.

In your issue of Sept. 20th, 1884, p. 509, reference is made to a paper by Dr. Bartoux in the *Progrès Médical* of Aug. 30th of that year, on Electrolysis of the Eustachian Tube, but no description is given of the operation. And as recently as June 18th, 1887, there appeared an annotation in THE LANCET (p. 1254) on Eustachian Obstruction in Diabetes, in which the employment of the continuous current is recommended, on the authority of M. Miot, as a mode of treatment, but the way in which it is to be employed is not given. The paper by M. Miot appeared in the *Revue Mensuelle de Laryngologie*, No. 6.

At the time of writing our paper I was not aware that electrolysis of the Eustachian tube had been previously tried, but in this I was evidently mistaken. The idea is therefore not original, but as far as practice is concerned it may still be called a new operation.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Dec. 1st, 1888.

W. E. STEAVENSON.

ACCUMULATIONS OF HAIR IN THE STOMACH.

To the Editors of THE LANCET.

SIRS,—In reference to accumulations of hair in the stomach, I would draw the attention of Dr. Berg and your other readers to the Clinical Society's Transactions, vol. iv., page 180.

I am, Sirs, yours truly,

Grosvenor-square, W., Nov. 29th, 1888.

WILLIAM W. GULL.

BIRMINGHAM.

(From a Correspondent.)

MEDICAL STUDENTS' ANNUAL DINNER: THE FELLOWSHIP EXAMINATION OF THE COLLEGE OF SURGEONS.

THE above annual gathering was held at the Midland Hotel on the 22nd ult., under the presidency of Mr. T. F. Chavasse. There was a large attendance, and the event passed off most successfully. The President, in referring to the proposed establishment of a Midland University at Birmingham, spoke in hopeful terms of its accomplishment at no distant date, a remark warmly endorsed by the Warden

of the College, the Rev. W. H. Poulton, and enthusiastically received by the students. Mr. Lawson Tait, in replying to the toast of "The Professors," made special reference to the papers set at the recent final examination for the Fellowship of the Royal College of Surgeons. The questions as a whole gave evidence of neither care nor attention being bestowed upon them, but there was one in particular to which he wished to direct their notice—viz., that in which the candidates were requested to explain how it was that of late years fractures of the base of the skull were less fatal than formerly. Since reading this he had frequently sought an answer from surgeons he had casually met. Not only had they been unable even to suggest a reply, but it was not until a short time prior to attending that meeting that a diligent search amongst the leading surgical text-books of the day had resulted in solving the problem, which on the authority of Mr. Erichsen was that "the practice of pouring a small quantity of antiseptic fluid into the ear had proved successful in lowering the mortality in cases of fracture of the base." Was it fair to provincial students that a small clique of metropolitan surgeons should thus ride their antiseptic hobby to such extremes, and thereby place at a great disadvantage any candidate who did not happen to have studied at a particular London school? The incident had rekindled afresh a warmer interest in the introduction of a much larger provincial representation on the Council. He was also prepared to do anything he could to hasten this end, even to fight the battle personally. Mr. Oliver Pemberton, in alluding to the same subject, said that few surgeons perhaps had had a greater experience of fractures of the base than he, and he most emphatically denied that there had been any treatment introduced or adopted in recent times which in any way lessened the mortality in these cases. Mr. Priestley Smith fully endorsed Mr. Tait's criticism, and welcomed the prospect of reform, but at the same time he wished to remind the students that, for the time being at all events, they had to pass the examinations as at present constituted, and they as teachers must do their utmost to help them. The toast list was interspersed with vocal and instrumental selections.

Birmingham, Dec. 1st.

NORTHERN COUNTIES NOTES.

(From our own Correspondent.)

HUMAN BLOOD AND THE MICROSCOPE.

AT the Durham Assizes on Thursday last, during the trial of William Waddle, who was subsequently found guilty of what has been known as the Birtley Fell murder, a point of medico-legal interest was argued. Messrs. Galloway and Taylor, the experienced and intelligent surgeons, who were witnesses in the case, contended that it was generally admitted that it was impossible to differentiate with certainty human blood under the microscope from that of the lower animals, such as the pig &c.; but, on the other hand, Mr. Stock, the county analyst, said he thought it was possible to speak with certainty on the matter, as there was a difference between the size of the corpuscles of human and pig's blood. The counsel for the defendant gave up the point, so it is to be hoped that a debatable microscopic question like this did not influence the verdict of the jury when a man's life was at stake.

SUNDERLAND: THE HOMES OF THE POOR AND TYPHUS.

Mr. A. E. Harris, the medical officer of health for Sunderland, has forcibly drawn the attention of the sanitary committee to the dilapidated and insanitary state of some of the poorer dwellings in Sunderland and their connexion with typhus fever. "It is," he says, "in such places that typhus fever originates, and he was sorry to say that the disease existed still in Sunderland, although stamped out in other towns." Mr. Harris points out that the necessary powers were conferred by the Artisans and Labourers' Dwellings Act, 1868, and the Amendment Act, 1879. If the owners made default, the urban authority could order the premises to be shut up or demolished, or it might itself do the work and charge the expense to the owner. Mr. Harris allowed that the subject was a large one, and not to be handled in an offhand manner; but he suggested that they should have frequent reports on these unhealthy dwell-