

MR. DASENT'S REPLY TO MR. LYON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—Notwithstanding the insinuation* conveyed in your postscript appended to Mr. Lyon's letter, in the last number of *THE LANCET*, I can assure you I am not influenced by any desire of flourishing in print, and that in my communication respecting Mr. Turnbull's remedies I was actuated purely by the wish of advancing the cause of truth. Mr. Lyon is certainly one of the most valuable instruments in Mr. Turnbull's armoury, for he not only assiduously "rubs in" to the patients, Mr. Turnbull's endermic remedies, but, on occasion, he even brandishes the pen in his defence. If, however, we are to judge of his proficiency in the former function by his success in the latter, we shall not think very highly of his assistance in the application of his patron's remedies.

The chief complaint I have to advance against Dr. Turnbull is, that in his printed work he has so made use of Mr. Baillie's name, as well as my own, as that any of his readers must suppose both of us to testify to the truth of all the reports; whereas, the fact is, that my testimony refers merely to the simple history of the cases, exclusive of Dr. Turnbull's conclusions, and that of Mr. Baillie relates solely to the state of three patients, at the termination of their treatment.

Mr. Lyons asserts that I am singularly deficient in memory, but if he will exert his own, he will recollect that my reminiscent faculties were rather too good for his purpose. Can he refuse to acknowledge that he twice requested me to sign a report of the cases modified by himself, and which my perverse memory prevented me from conscientiously doing. With regard to his pompous assertion, that *Litera scripta manet*, I have only to observe, that he has no writing of mine in his possession which is inconsistent with the tenor of my letter.

I am fully aware, sir, that controversies as to matters of fact can never be satisfactorily terminated on paper; I shall, therefore, not trouble you with any more communications, but I beg to refer any gentleman

* Mr. Dasent misapplies this word with reference to our note. Controversies so rapidly increase on unimportant and personal points, that we only sought to prevent that error on the part of our correspondents, who must be quite sensible of its inutility and impolicy on such occasions as the present; and, indeed, at once to check it, we took the liberty of preventing one or two remarks that were in Mr. Lyon's letter, from appearing in print. However, suppose we let our correspondents have their way on this occasion.—ED. L.

who may take an interest in the matter to my former letter, in which will be found the true history of each case, as well as the means of finding out the patient, an examination of whom will enable any enquirer to ascertain the comparative correctness of Mr. Lyons' statement and of mine. I am, sir, your obedient servant,

BURY J. DASENT,
House-Surgeon.

Westminster Hospital, May 23, 1837.

REVIVAL OF THE CURE OF HYDROCELE BY INCISION.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—In the last number of your Journal I observed a paper on the cure of hydrocele by injections of iodine, as recommended by Dr. Stewart, of Calcutta, and Mr. Martin, the discoverer of the remedy. Having seen the above-mentioned treatment resorted to at the *Hôpital La Charité*, Paris, may I now presume to offer you a few particulars relative to an old remedy for the same disease, which has been equally successful, and it is that which is at present adopted for the cure of hydrocele at the *Hôpital St. Louis*, by M. Jobert, and approved of by M. Richerand. This remedy, bold as it has been successful, is a revival by M. Jobert; it is that of incision. Having found the old treatment of injection to fail so frequently, and sometimes to be followed by dangerous consequences, he tried the present mode. He commences his incision at the anterior and superior part of the scrotum, and continues it down to the most depending part of the tumour, thereby laying it open through its whole extent, and denuding the testes. By continuing the incision thus far, he guards against the possibility of any of the fluid being retained in the scrotum. After evacuating all the effused fluid, he plugs the wound with charpie, and allows it to suppurate for some days, from four to seven, after which it is healed by granulation, although it is not M. Jobert's wish to heal the wound by the first intention.

I may here state the curious fact, that in the Parisian hospitals all attempts at healing by the first intention have totally failed. I have seen it essayed at *La Charité* by Velpeau, after the manner recommended by Dr. Macartney, of Dublin, and although it was fairly tried it completely failed. M. Velpeau stated, that whether the cause existed in the constitutions of the patients, or in the air of the hospitals, he could not

* Paulus Aegineta commenced his incision at the tumour, and carried it to the upper part of it, in a line parallel to the raphe.

say, but failure was the invariable result whenever it was attempted.

I have seen many individuals cured of hydrocele during the past session at *St. Louis* by this operation. Indeed, not a single failure occurred amongst those cases in which it was employed, and many of those who were operated on had previously resorted to the old remedy of injection. The last individual on whom it was tried was an old German monk, or friar, whose foot was amputated (Chopart's operation), some time previously, by M. Jobert, in consequence of the effects of syphilis; in fact, his great toe, and the two next toes, were merely attached to the foot by a thin shred of cuticle, as the process of suppuration had extended through the joints, and was extending to the next when the foot was amputated. Still this man recovered rapidly, and was soon restored to perfect health. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

THOMAS HENRY BURGESS, M.R.C.S.

11, Caroline-street, Bedford-square,
May 22nd, 1837.

NEGLECT OF CORONERS TO OBTAIN PROPER EVIDENCE AT INQUESTS.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR:—If not occupying too much of your valuable time, I will relate to you an inquest which took place, I believe, only a very short time before your salutary Bill in our favour passed the House.

I was attending a young man, with gonorrhœa, of the name of Hort, who was an inmate of the Collegiate Coffee-house, Tottenham Court-road. During one of his visits to me, he, being a tailor, said to me, "I am making some very delicate embroidered silk waistcoats, and have had the misfortune to grease them, and I am told that prussic acid is the very best thing to eradicate the stain." I replied, "In the first place, I do not consider prussic acid at all calculated to effect the purpose you wish; and, moreover, the effluvia from it, used in any quantity, would destroy you;" and I remarked that neither myself nor any other person in his senses would supply him with so subtle and destructive a preparation. Now, this man was of a most vivacious, and more than ordinarily animated character, with a demeanour more respectable and gentlemanly than was to be expected from a person of his class; but upon this occasion I fancied that I detected in his countenance an expression of anxiety and grief, which he endeavoured to overpower by an assumed and uncalled-for hilarity. Accordingly, I presumed thus to speak to and catechise him: "Hort, you want this deadly poison as a means either of your own destruction, or that of some one

else; or do you want it to destroy any noxious animal? I doubt the truth of your statement; for God's sake disclose to me any thing that may be preying on your mind, and reflect seriously on the enormity of the act which I fear you contemplate." He replied, "You cannot suppose for a moment that I am tired of my life, sir. I see too much fun and pleasure to wish to quit this world, and I am surprised that such a thing should enter your head; I assure you I only want it for the purpose alluded to." His earnest denial and subsequent disembarassment lulled my suspicions, and induced me to believe that he was telling the truth, and he left me as usual. A few days after, on my return home from a professional round, Mrs. Langley informed me that I must go immediately to the Collegiate Coffee-house, as something particular had occurred; I said, almost instinctively, "Hort has destroyed himself." I hurried to the house, and found the poor fellow dead, having nearly severed his head from his trunk.

In a day or two an inquest was held; the evidence of the person fluding him was taken, with the collateral testimony of other inmates, but I, the medical man, was not called; my evidence, if required, would only have tended to more strongly confirm the belief that it was his own act; but the artifice resorted to in order to obtain the prussic acid, would have influenced the verdict, as to a verdict of "insanity," or that horrid alternative, "felo de se;" but, in the event of a doubt existing or arising, as to the death having been an act of self-destruction, or suspicion falling on any other party, of what material and conclusive importance would my testimony have been in removing such impression.

I have merely thus troubled you to shew you the necessity of medical evidence in all cases of sudden and violent death, concurrently with which necessity is the fact, that the coroner should be a medical coroner. Points of law are seldom if ever involved in such inquiries, but medical knowledge most importantly so. I have the honour to remain, sir, your obedient servant,

JOHN LANGLEY.

36, Tottenham-street, Fitzroy-square,
May 19, 1837.

* * * With the above letter, we received from Mr. Langley a copy of a communication addressed by that gentleman, with praiseworthy motives and zeal, to the Secretary of State for the Home Department, on the subject of the neglect of coroners to call medical evidence at inquests on bodies found dead. After alluding, in his letter to Lord John Russell, to the improvement in the law effected by the Medical Witnesses Act, Mr. Langley proceeds to point out the necessity of compelling coroners to obtain the evidence of medical men at inquests, on