

the reflex nature of the respiratory acts would have led us to anticipate.

When, in mammalia (especially the young), the cerebrum and cerebellum are removed, the respiration continues as a purely reflex action, exerted principally through the medium of the pneumogastric nerves; when these are divided, in addition, a few and rare acts of respiration occur from the influence of the trifacial and spinal nerves. In birds these spinal nerves are as really exciters of respiration as the pneumogastric itself; under their sole influence, therefore, respiration may continue for hours.

A series of experiments illustrative of the relative value of each of these parts of the nervous system would be highly valuable.

There is no reason, from any facts which we yet possess, to think that the medulla oblongata is the *primum* mobile of respiration. As the *secundum* mobile, the key-stone of the reflex arcs, its office is most clearly established.

London, May 11, 1842.

## THE MINER'S ELBOW.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—I notice that Mr. Chance, at the Westminster Medical Society, on April 2, makes the following remark, namely, that "he had met with a fluctuating tumour at the posterior part of the elbow-joint. He opened it with a lancet, and found it to be a serous cyst; it refilled, but after opening it a second time the fluid had not again collected."

In the mining district in which I am situated this fluctuating tumour at the posterior part of the elbow-joint is of frequent occurrence, in consequence of the narrow passages the miner has occasionally to pass through, in ascending from and descending to, and sometimes to work in; the posterior part (or cap) of the elbow-joint is bruised, in consequence of which the bursal sac becomes inflamed, and an effusion of serum follows. To this tumour I have for several years past given the name of "the miner's elbow," its cause and its treatment being the same as the "housemaid's knee," which is simply this: in the early stage tepid bathing with water and a warm bread-and-water poultice, three times daily; and after this has been applied a few days, and the inflammatory action subdued, the dispersion of the fluid should be accomplished, either by the application of about half a drachm of the hydriodate of potash and iodine ointment combined, or of a lotion of two drachms of tincture of iodine to an ounce of rectified spirits of wine; to be used in drachm applications over the tumour three times a-day. The same treatment will cure the housemaid's knee; a complaint to which miners,

from occasionally being obliged to kneel during their labour, are very liable.

I have seen several cases where this fluctuating tumour at the elbow-joint (miner's elbow) has burst, and from neglect a fistulous opening into the sac had been the result, in which nothing could be done but laying open the sac by a crucial incision, and causing granulations to spring from the bottom of the sac, to consolidate the whole. I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

EDWYN GURNEY.

Camborne, Cornwall,

May 7, 1842.

\*\*\* At page 191 of the first report of the commissioners for inquiring into employment in mines, presented last week to the House of Commons, the following passage occurs (ED. L.):—

"790. The sub-commissioner for the Forest of Dean gives the following account of a painful disease of the joints, common in that district:—'The men employed in cutting down the coal are subject to inflammation of the *bursæ*, both in the knees and elbows, from the constant pressure and friction on these joints in their working postures. Where the seams are several feet thick, they begin by kneeling and cutting away the exterior portion of the base. They proceed, undermining, till they are obliged to lie down on their sides, in order to work beneath the mass, as far as the arm can urge the pick, for the purpose of bringing down a good head of coal. In this last posture the elbow forms a pivot, resting on the ground, on which the arm of the workman oscillates as he plies his sharp pick. It is easy to comprehend how this action, combined with pressure, should affect the delicate cellular membrane of the joint, and bring on the disease indicated. The thin seams of coal are, necessarily, altogether worked in a horizontal posture.'

## PHYSIOLOGISTS AND PHRENOLOGY.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Whilst I cordially concur in the opinion expressed by Dr. Dick, that the discussion respecting the application of phrenology has occupied too much of your space, yet, as in his valedictory effusion he has introduced an objection, which I consider to be as unfounded as his previous observations, I cannot allow him to publish incorrect statements without offering a few remarks in reply. A brief notice is also requisite, because in the present instance a popular fallacy has been advanced, which can sustain neither the test of principle nor fact.