

ences as the Orientals themselves, adopt their customs with a very different effect to what they would have if carried out in this country?

Again, it is well known that an immense drain takes place from the skin of persons who are placed in these hot-air baths. I have heard many speak of the perspiration flowing from their skins in streams, and of pints of fluid collecting about their feet. Now, it appears to me to be an interesting question to determine to what extent this excessive drain from the skin can go on, and be consistent with health, or without being positively injurious. If in health, be daily thrown off by the skin, say 100 grains of azotized, saline, and other matters, what must be the consequence if, under the influence of the baths, 200 or 300 grains are so eliminated? Is it right to rob the blood in this wholesale way of its saline and other constituents? May it not have a similarly depressing effect to excessive purging, or excessive diuresis, or even bloodletting? Or may not the kidney secretion become so concentrated from the great determination of fluid to the surface as to give rise to injurious irritation of the urinary apparatus? I have myself been a witness of the depressing effect that the Turkish bath has exercised on some vigorous constitutions. A young clergyman, a friend of mine, submitted himself to the hot-air bath. He was stout and of great physical power, though of rather lax fibre, and was in good health at the time. He said the perspiration ran down his legs in streams. He was made very uncomfortable about the head, faint and languid for an entire day—in fact, to use his own expression, he was completely “knocked down.”

Another question arises as to how far we can stimulate the glandular apparatus of the skin without permanently damaging or enfeebling its function. Closely connected with the foregoing is the question, How often ought the baths to be repeated, and at what intervals? These are important points which require to be settled before the profession can with confidence recommend the use of the Turkish bath to their patients.

Then as to the diseased states of the system in which it is likely to be useful. One can easily understand its efficacy in those dry cutaneous diseases where the sudoriferous and the other cuticular glands are impaired in their function or their ducts obstructed. In rheumatic fever, where the profuse acid sweats indicate an effort of the system to throw off the morbid matters in the blood by the skin, by placing a patient thus affected in an atmosphere of hot air the skin would be stimulated to pour out this morbid product very rapidly; the blood would thus be relieved of its presence speedily, and probably those serious cardiac affections which so commonly follow severe attacks of rheumatic fever, and which doubtless depend upon the action of the morbid blood upon the valvular apparatus of the heart, would be to a certain extent prevented. I can also readily understand that benefit is likely to arise from its occasional use in all internal congestion, in morbus Brightii, in diabetes, &c.; but I have reason to know that in persons suffering from chronic forms of disease with debilitated constitutions, its indiscriminate and frequent use is productive of baneful effects. It is in such cases particularly that the influence of the bath should be carefully watched by the medical attendant.

I believe, further, that locality has a great deal to do with modifying the effect of the Turkish bath. In a locality such as I have before mentioned—i. e., Rickmansworth, a notoriously low and damp situation, where rheumatism, typhoid, intermittent, and other forms of zymotic disease abound, and where, from the condition of the surrounding atmosphere, cutaneous transpiration is greatly impeded,—there the effect of the bath, as might be expected, was very salutary, and doubtless it would be so in all similar localities; but I greatly doubt if such would be the case in a dryer atmosphere, where the functions of the skin were not interfered with.

Again, as to the temperature to which the hot-air bath should be raised. Now, although we have abundant evidence that very high degrees of temperature can be borne by some persons with impunity,—and indeed the gentleman I have already alluded to I know used commonly to submit his infant child, not six months old, to a temperature of 140°,—yet I am persuaded that it would be exceedingly rash to conclude from such statements that persons generally can bear exposure to so great heat for any length of time without the risk of dangerous consequences, especially so in persons disposed to cerebral excitement. I am told that glass-drawers, who are in their occupation exposed to very high temperatures, have to use the greatest caution in order to preserve their health, and that they are obliged to lie in blankets for hours after their work is done before they dare venture to expose themselves to the external a

I would further ask, Do we sufficiently consider the effect of the shock from the hot air to the cold douch upon delicate and sensitive persons, as most invalids are? and those are the very persons who will avail themselves of the bath.

I think the practical conclusion from all this is, that until the Turkish bath has been submitted to a more careful and unbiassed examination than it has hitherto received,—until it has been fairly tried in some of our large hospitals, and reported upon by the medical officers, and until all the facts bearing upon the question have been collected and analyzed,—we shall do well to be very cautious in recommending its application in any form of disease. We should inform our patients, who are certain to press us on this point, that the question is still *sub judice*, and that without repeated and disinterested experiments its merits cannot be ascertained. Why persons in good health should desire to use the Turkish bath in this country, I cannot understand. I believe cold water and a rough towel are far more healthful applications, because far more natural.

Your obedient servant,

Tulse-hill, Brixton, Feb. 1861. THOS. W. GARLIKE, F.R.C.S.

## POOR-LAW MEDICAL REFORM ASSOCIATION.

(LETTER FROM MR. GRIFFIN.)

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—Again I must crave your indulgence for space to inform the Poor-law medical officers that a Select Committee of the House of Commons has been appointed to inquire into the “Operation of the Laws relating to the Poor, &c.” (See *Times*, Feb. 23rd, p. 8.) I therefore trust that all who can give evidence on the present iniquitous system of the medical relief of the poor will not fail to tender the same, and do their utmost to improve the laws which now inflict much cruelty on the poor and are so grindingly oppressive to the medical profession. I have addressed a letter to the Chairman of the Select Committee on Poor-law Administration, House of Commons, requesting to know when I may attend to give evidence. If my medical brethren will do likewise, I have little doubt they will receive all necessary information; but no time should be lost.

On the 1st of this month Mr. Serjeant Pigott wrote to me in respect of our proposed Bill as follows: “Mr. Villiers’ Committee is just the opening you require, and the evidence of all the matters related in your preamble would be received by that Committee; after their report the field for legislation will be well prepared.” I regret I cannot guarantee the expenses of those gentlemen who may come to town, as some of my friends have of late grown rather penurious, and the funds will not permit it; but I believe the Select Committee will pay *a something*.

I have this day received a letter from Dr. Bisset Hawkins, kindly enclosing a cheque for £5 “towards defraying the expenses of the proposed application to Parliament.” And I have also received within the last two months about 70 subscriptions from Poor-law medical officers; I wish I could say 700 instead of 70, for then I should be in a position to print a large mass of evidence and send it to each member of the House of Commons, and thus have ensured a thorough knowledge of our grievances.—I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

12, Royal-terrace, Weymouth, Feb. 26th, 1861. RICHARD GRIFFIN.

## THE JUNIOR MEDICAL SOCIETY OF LONDON.

To the Editor of THE LANCET.

SIR,—It is with great satisfaction that I find myself in a position to say that the labours which I commenced on the 25th of last month have been crowned with success.

On the 23rd instant the first meeting of the council of the Junior Medical Society of London took place. That council was composed entirely of delegates from the different Medical Students’ Societies.

I should not omit to mention that the establishment of the Society is in a great measure due to Dr. Alfred Meadows, of King’s College, to whom I first mentioned my views; had it not been for the kind encouragement I received from him, and the assistance he afforded me, the project would in all probability have fallen to the ground. My acknowledgments are owing also to Mr. Ernest Hart (to whom is due the merit of originating a similar scheme some years back) for much valuable assistance. Nor must I conclude without expressing my thanks for the powerful support which has been given to the undertaking by THE LANCET.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Feb. 1861. ALEXANDER SQUIRE, Hon. Sec. pro tem.