

LANCING THE GUMS.

SIR,—I have always thought that the philosophical treatment of disease was, if possible, to remove the cause of the untoward symptoms. No one would think of radically curing toothache by giving the patient an opiate; for though, doubtless, it would remove the pain for a time, the carious tooth, the source of irritation, would still remain. In the infant, we have a tooth trying to force its way through dense and often very unyielding tissue, causing through the pressure sometimes very serious symptoms of nerve-irritation. Is not one of the axioms of surgery the relief of tension? And surely there is always more or less tension during the eruption of a tooth. I willingly admit that, in many cases, this tension is not great enough to cause much nerve-irritation, and, in these fortunate children, dentition gives no trouble; but cases continually occur where the hard unyielding gum is swollen and inflamed, and where, I believe, tension exists; these are the cases where one deep incision with the gum-lancet gives almost instantaneous relief. That the lancet may be used as a cloak for ignorance is not a sound argument against its right use; everything may be abused, not excepting the all-powerful bromide of potassium; but, most assuredly, the abuse of the gum-lancet will never cause, I believe, a tithe of the harm arising from its non-use. The right place for the lancet, I conceive, is in those cases where we find a hard, swollen, inflamed gum, and the infant ill from this cause.

It is, of course, necessary, in all cases, to make a correct diagnosis, and one cannot expect the lancet to relieve the convulsions of indigestion.

Many a chick would remain in the shell, to become its tomb, were it not for the friendly chip of the mother's beak on hearing its gentle tapping from within; and, I believe, many a little one will be consigned untimely to the silent grave if we discard the lancet, neglecting to give the friendly chip to release the imprisoned tooth, and only attempt to alleviate the symptoms by drugs, but do not remove the cause of irritation.

How often have I seen the quick relief gained by the timely use of the lancet; the crying, restless, feverish infant changed, as if by magic, to one with a happy smiling face, or lulled to sweetest sleep.—I am, etc.,

WM. WRIGHT MILLARD, M.B. Edin.

PERMANGANATE OF POTASH.

SIR,—“Facts are stubborn things,” such as seldom admit of discussion and dispute; I therefore reassert every word of my letter in the *Journal* of February 7th, except that portion which speaks of the remedy as having been “introduced” two or three years ago; the word should have been “reintroduced.”

The antiseptic properties of permanganate of potash have been known to us for twenty or twenty-five years at least; and, in the second edition of Garrod's *Essentials of Materia Medica*, etc., 1856, it is said to be useful in cases of diabetes, in doses of one to three grains in pills. In Quain's *Dictionary*, no mention is made of this drug in connection with diabetes, nor am I able to find any cases in which it has been used, until it was introduced again about three years ago; also Squire's *Companion*, 13th edition, 1882, says but little more about its use internally than does Dr. Garrod's more ancient work. As to kaolin, I doubt whether its employment in pharmacy is five years of age. Squire writes only five words about it under the head of aluminium; but, a few days since, it came to my knowledge that a mine of this substance has been offered for sale by some one in Silver City, New Mexico, who says that it is imported from Persia and India for the manufacture of fine china-ware, and that it is very valuable, as being difficult to obtain of sufficient purity in any quantity. Now, if this article be identical with the kaolin used for making up pills (see Martindale's *Extra Pharmacopœia*, edition 1884), it is easy to understand that, when worked up, it may become very hard and insoluble, and very likely indeed to pass through the intestines in the way we know that hard substances do, which, luckily for most of us, escape that well known trap, the cæcum, as they go on their way.

In the *Journal* of February 21st, Mr. Oglesby, of York, writes, “with Dr. Simms, I have known pills pass through the body unchanged.” And, again, “Kaolin-made pills readily dissolve.” Well, sir, recently I have taken the trouble to inquire about the unaltered pills mentioned in my former letter, and have traced them to their source—a most undeniably respectable one, as my twenty years' experience of it testifies. I have seen some of these pills, which are made of kaolin, etc., and which are quite hard.

Tablets of permanganate of potash, taken in water very freely diluted, and directly after meals, may be safe, perhaps. I have never tried them, but they cannot be used by themselves, as Mr. Powell's letter in the *Journal* of February 21st amply testifies; whilst, for the mouth itself, Condy's fluid, freely diluted, is the preferable mode of application. I am unable to discover whether Mr. Gubb denies that the tablets have any caustic action when applied locally, that is, without precaution; but he can very easily test them, for *fiat experimentum in corpore vile* is a very old means to an end; one thing is certain, that, if the drug have the good qualities attributed to it, and this I neither affirm nor deny, it must be administered as carefully as arsenic, and much in the same way.

Into Mr. Gubb's jocose comparison, I will not enter, for my letter is already too long.—Your obedient servant,
FRED. SIMMS,
6, Mandeville Place, W.

CERTIFICATES UNDER FACTORY ACTS.

SIR,—I should be much obliged if you, or some certifying factory surgeon, through your columns, would kindly let me know how examinations of children and “young persons” under the Factory Act ought to be performed. These examinations have to be made at the factory; and I, at least, find ascertainment to be quite impossible there, on account of the noise made by the machinery. One can hardly be expected to make a very searching examination (such, for instance, as in insurance-cases) for the miserable fees allowed; but still I should not consider myself justified in certifying that a child was fit for work, without satisfying myself that the heart and lungs, at least, were not seriously affected.—Yours truly,

MIDWIVES.

IF “M.R.C.S.” will apply to the Matron of the British Lying-in Hospital, Endell Street, W.C., or to Queen Charlotte's Lying-in Hospital, Marylebone Road, N.W., he will obtain all the information he requires.

SHIP-SURGEONS.

SIR,—I wish to go a sea-voyage; can you kindly inform me as to the best way to try for the post of surgeon in a good company's service? Is it possible to get such a berth for one voyage only, for example, to India and back?—Yours, etc.,
P. AND O.

SURGEON-MAJOR T. MURTAGH.—We have no means of answering your question.

ARTIFICIAL EYES.

LIMPET asks where he can procure artificial eyes at the first hand.

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BOOKS, ETC., RECEIVED.

The Social History of the Eighth International Medical Congress, 1884. By D. Bryson Delavan, M.D., New York. London and New York: Putnam's Sons. 1885.
Lettsomian Lectures on Bronchial Asthma. By J. C. Thorowgood, M.D., F.R.C.P. London: Baillière, Tindall, and Cox. 1885.
Lateral Curvature of the Spine. By W. J. Tivy. London: Hamilton, Adams, and Co. 1885.
Transactions of the American Surgical Association. Vol. II. Edited by J. E. Mears, M.D. Philadelphia: P. Blakiston, Son, and Co. 1885.
Transactions of the National Association for the Promotion of Social Science, Birmingham Meeting, 1884. London: Longmans, Green, and Co. 1885.
The Common Sense of the Exact Sciences. By the late W. K. Clifford. London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co. 1885.
A Manual of Dermatology. By A. R. Robinson, M.D. New York: Appleton and Co. 1885.
Lectures on Diseases of the Nervous System, especially in Women. By Dr. S. W. Mitchell. Philadelphia: Lea, Brothers, and Co. 1885.
Operative Surgery in the Calcutta Medical College Hospital. By K. McLeod, A.M., M.D., F.R.C.S.E. London: J. and A. Churchill.

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