

they are quite equal to the accommodation of the convalescent among the actual five-years'-average number of [thirty-two patients;] they are visited "by a surgeon regularly four times a week;" and for "the last fifteen months there has not been a single male patient subjected to restraint," and "restraint in the female department has been extremely rare." In the name of common sense, if this be a just and true picture of Carisbrooke Asylum, why are all the curable patients removed from it? There is no witness so injurious to a cause as a witness who proves too much.

I have now done with Mr. Hughes, for I can only deal with him in matters of fact. I cannot cope with his wit. I am, Sir, yours,
ALPHA.

Dec. 23, 1843.

ANALOGY BETWEEN DISEASES OF DIFFERENT PERIODS OF LIFE AND CORRESPONDING PERIODS OF THE YEAR.

SOME of the French physicians, adopting the notions of the ancients, have lately promulgated the doctrine of an analogy between the diseases occurring at different periods of life, and those which are reproduced at corresponding periods of the year. Thus, in *spring*, they say, it is the young who suffer most from disease,—the maladies that are chiefly produced in that season, such as inflammatory diseases, and others which are dependent on too copious a general or partial supply of blood, to which persons of early age are more especially subject. The diseases which prevail in *summer* are mostly those attacking persons of middle age, as, for instance, diseases affecting the biliary organs; and the *autumnal* complaints are principally experienced by individuals of more advanced years. The *winter*, they observe, is fertile in rheumatisms, neuralgia, catarrhs, apoplexies, and other diseases which infest the aged, who, for the most part, pay the debt of nature at this season.

MEDICINAL USE OF ALDER LEAVES.

THE leaves of the common alder (*betulus alnus*), externally applied, have been popularly celebrated for their quality of causing cessation of the secretion of milk, and of dissipating certain tumours in the *mammæ*. Buechner, a physician of Stadt-Steinach, in Bavaria, has found them of utility for the resolution of other tumours, and in the treatment of *anasarca*, *erysipelas*, and even *phlegmasia dolens*. Dr. Buechner recommends that the leaves should be gathered early in the morning, and chosen from trees standing in dewy situations. They are to be simply laid over the part affected, in their dry state, and changed two or three times a day. —*Med. Corresp. Blatt, bayer. Aertzte.*

THE LANCET.

London, Saturday, December 31, 1842.

THE political wrongs of the medical profession are incessant. From those grievances they know no holiday. Summer supplies none, neither does autumn, nor the spring, nor yet the winter. Christmas, a season of itself, a fifth season of the year, during which, especially, some abatement of oppressions, some relaxation in the evil workings of the machinery of society, is expected,—even that comfortable season brings no change in the operations of bad medical government. It neither renders many and useful the few and miserable privileges of the members and graduates of the Colleges and Universities; nor converts the fictitious into a certain protection in practice, for the licentiates of the Halls; nor trebles into a fair sum the paltry remuneration of the union surgeons; nor throws open to the general practitioner the wards of the public charities for a few weeks of clinical observation; nor gives them, for the nonce, the position and advantages of hospital medical officers. It arrests not sickness, to lighten their labours, nor increases in any way the means of combating disease with greater ease and in briefer time. No part of the year, not even the common and proper day of rest of all other beings—the Sabbath—yields unusual quiet or particular benefit to the professor of medicine.

Neither, therefore, being his advocate and defender, can the medical press *legitimately* claim rest in the fields wherein the battle on his behalf has to be fought; for if not waged by the press it is not waged at all, the profession having no voice in the councils which rule over it, where its grievances could be urged with prospects of success. Yet if there be one period of the year when the political weapons of the journalist may more reasonably than at another be asked to be laid aside, it is the present, and of that circumstance we have taken advantage.

Keeping the sword still sheathed, then, for the season, we accede a farther truce to the common enemy, and again look around for more peaceful objects of contemplation from this position of our Journal. And since we are every week supplying (thanks to our correspondents) in other parts of our Journal, so abundant an amount of contributions to medicine derived from observation at home, we cast another glance abroad, and at once find in the imperfection of our knowledge regarding that important constituent of the animal frame, the nervous system, a sufficient apology for introducing here a notice of the opinions of any new and reputable authors on this subject. Some such we find in an Essay on the Functions of the Nervous System, by H. STILLING, in the "Archiv. fur Physiolog. Heilk," 1842, No. 1. After the division of the posterior roots of the spinal nerves, the muscles to which they proceed, while retaining their contractile power, says that writer, become flaccid; whence he concludes that one function of the posterior, or sensitive roots, is that of maintaining in the muscles a certain tonic power. The arachnoid fluid in the spinal canal was found by STILLING to be so essential to the due performance of the functions of the cord, that on its removal (in a cat, for instance,) through a puncture between the occiput and atlas, the voluntary motion of the animal was much disturbed, and was sometimes abolished until the liquid was reproduced. The spinal cord appears to be not simply a conductor of nervous influence from the brain, but to be endued with special and independent functions of its own. If divided in a frog, between the second and third vertebræ, strong movements may still be excited in the posterior extremities by ordinary means; and if one or two drops of a solution of acetate of strychnine be introduced into the mouth, tetanus results in the posterior as well as in the anterior extremities, as if the spinal cord had not been divided, and notwithstanding that the two cut extremities are not in contact. This result, indeed, as well as the foregoing, *might* have been justly considered to be due to the

communication of the nerves supplied to the posterior extremities, with other nerves coming from the spinal cord *above* the division; but we are told that tetanus is similarly produced in these extremities on the application of the strychnia to the spinal cord *below* its section. With BELL and MAGENDIE, STILLING regards the posterior columns of the spinal cord as those which alone are endued with sensation, and convey impressions to the brain: he also considers these to be the fundamental part of the spinal cord. And while admitting that the power of motion may remain perfect after the section of the posterior roots of the spinal nerves, he asserts that it by no means possesses its natural vigour when those roots are divided.

Such are the principal heads in the essay to which we have referred. In all his statements and assertions, as well as in one that *pain* is but a modification of ordinary sensation, STILLING is at issue with ALEXANDER WALKER, who, we believe, was the first modern physiologist that contended for a difference in function of the different portions of the spinal cord and roots of the spinal nerves. (Walker on the Nervous System.) These views seem to derive some confirmation from several recorded pathological facts, among which is a case reported in THE LANCET, of Sept. 18th, 1841. The opinions of WALKER on the anatomy and physiology of the brain and nervous system, are chiefly exposed in the above-named work, which, though it contains much polemical matter, is a learned and invaluable treatise.

On examining "Schmidt's Journal," No. 487, we find, in a paper on the Morbid Anatomy of the Nervous System and the Organs of Sense, that much attention has recently been devoted by M. GLUGE to determining the morbid appearances in the above portions of the frame by the aid of the microscope. The appearances in the brain after death from acute hydrocephalus do not afford, he says, any indications of previous inflammation. The serosity exuded into the ventricles contains but little albumen, and the softening of the brain in the

parts contiguous appears to be solely an effect of maceration. The red points scattered throughout the cerebral substance in cases of congestion, M. GLUGE has ascertained to be due to an extraordinary number of capillary vessels compactly united with each other, and which he regards as vessels of new formation. Apoplexy, he says, is always attended with sanguineous effusion, the ruptured vessels being in some cases the capillaries, in others the larger arteries. The apoplectic nucleus, examined immediately or a few days after death, is found to consist of a coagulum of red globules; of fibrin, seldom much consolidated; and of the remains of capillary vessels, commonly filled with coagulated blood. The white filmy shreds inclosed in the clot are not false membranes, the products of inflammation, but broken-down cerebral substance.

Iridoplasma is a name given by M. GLUGE to a degenerescence of the eye, the structures of which assume colours that are very different from those which they have in their natural state. In one instance that he has reported the eye consisted of a succession of structures of four different colours. The first was composed of a substance which was similar, both in consistence and colour, to the brain of a newly-born infant, inclosing many whitish irregular bodies. The second and third layers were pale, or of a yellowish-white tinge, with here and there similar irregular bodies scattered through their substance. The fourth structure was the crystalline lens, unchanged from the normal condition as regards its composition and transparency, but coloured green. Small fatty bodies were dispersed throughout each of these structures, all of which were enclosed in the sclerotic coat without being adherent to it. There was no trace of either a retina or a vitreous humour, and some blackish striæ alone were supposed to represent the choroid coat. The optic nerve had its natural form, but instead of true nervous matter, it consisted of a yellow substance, which, under the microscope, presented an appearance similar to that of the second and third layers in the eyeball above described.

The French medical journals have lately been very fully occupied with reports of discussions in the Académie Royale de la Médecine on the subject of TENOTOMY, or the section of the muscular tendons for the relief of club-foot and other of those deformities which are dependent in part on muscular contraction. M. GUERIN is the great apostle of this practice, the benefits of which he astutely maintains against MM. VELPEAU, BOUVIER, GERDY, and other distinguished French surgeons. According to M. GUERIN, there are two classes of tenotomists, the scientific and able (*rationnels instruits*), and the empirical, or ignorant operators — the mob-tenotomists, the legitimate descendants of the barber-surgeon dynasty. Under the first of these classes M. GUERIN ranks himself, and, moreover, demands to wear the crown alone, thinking no one worthy to be placed either on his right or his left. The rest of his surgical brethren are, by him, hustled, without distinction, into the second class, the class of the mob and the barbers. M. VELPEAU has proved, in examining the points under discussion in detail, that M. GUERIN not only has propounded nothing that is new, but, in fact, that the fixed laws and “grand principles” which he has compelled us to listen to for years are nothing more than may be found in surgical books generally, the authors of which never dreamed that they were communicating in them anything that was extraordinary. M. GUERIN, in fact seems to have nothing remarkable to communicate, excepting when he exaggerates and then it is only remarkable that a man in his position should allow himself to do so. However, M. VELPEAU has inserted a passage in his “*Medicine Opératoire*” which M. GUERIN finds to be an unequivocal and invaluable testimony in support of his theory. “How then,” says the “*Expérience*,” “can the personal opposition of M. VELPEAU, in the controversy, be reconciled with his written testimony?” The following version of this affair is given by M. VELPEAU himself:—

“ My ‘*Traite de Medicine Operatoire*’ was published complete in 1839. I subsequently extracted from it an article on tenotomy, which I handed for publication to the Editor of the ‘*Esculapius*,’ indicating, at the same time, that it had already been printed upwards of a year. M. Guerin having read this article, complained that I had not taken notice in it of his pretensions. Wishing to be just, therefore, though ignorant of wilful omission, I agreed to insert a concise note, by M. Guerin, respecting his views on tenotomy, together with other recent information, in a supplement at the commencement of my work. *It is this note which M. Guerin has quoted to the Academy. The words are his own ; not mine !* I may add, that from the period of my publication of this note I have become convinced, more and more, that his views are destitute of foundation.”

It is common enough to meet with the converse of the above transaction, viz., one author appropriating to himself the ideas and words of another ; but that a writer should palm off his own work upon a superior authority, is a literary phenomenon indeed, particularly among our French neighbours !

According to a report recently laid by M. FANCHON before the French Academy of Sciences, CANCER is a disease which appears to increase in frequency with the progress of civilisation. In 1830, 668 persons were said to have died of cancerous complaints in the department of the Seine (comprising Paris and its immediate environs within a radius of five or six miles), which was 1.96 per cent. of the deaths in the department for that year. In 1840, the number had risen to 889, or 2.4 per cent. of the total mortality. In Paris alone, in 1830, there were 595 deaths from cancer, and in 1840 as many as 779 deaths, or 2.54 per cent. on the whole number of deaths. In the rest of the department of the Seine 73 deaths took place in 1830 ; and in 1840, 110 deaths, or 1.63 per cent. The main object of M. FANCHON’S communication is to propose means that may tend to arrest the mortality from tumours of the breast, superseding either the necessity of operations thereon, or the employment of caustic. Among other means he advises compression, and the continued application

over the part affected of a muslin bag (*sachet*), containing a powder composed of 1 part of *iodide of potassium*, 2 parts of *chloride of sodium*, 2 of *burnt sponge*, in powder, and 8 of *muriate of ammonia* ; or, at other times, the use of an absorbent powder, consisting of *nitrate of potass* and *Florentine orris root*, 1 part each, and *powdered burnt sponge*, 20 parts. Thirty individuals treated by the above remedies are said to have experienced such marked benefit as to require no operation, ultimately, for the excision of the diseased organ. In some, though not many cases, the mammary glands are stated to have become wholly absorbed, as an effect of the applications.

A medical man belonging to the nation which has endeavoured to substitute the product of beet-root for the juice of the sugar-cane, has lately manifested considerable anxiety to introduce LACTUCARIUM into extensive use in pharmacy. It is, as may be known already, the concrete juice of several kinds of lettuce, and, in the opinion of M. AUBERGIER, ought to rival opium in medical practice, M. AUBERGIER announcing his hope that its employment in France will diminish the consumption of a production for which so high a price is paid “ to foreigners.” Lactucarium must be carefully distinguished from the watery extract of lettuce, in which it is contained only in a very small proportion, this proper juice of the plant being in an extremely small degree soluble in water, to which circumstance the great inferiority of narcotic power manifested by extract of lettuce is doubtless owing. Lactucarium is not present in all the species of *lactuca* ; the *l. striata*, *acuminata*, *longata*, &c., yield only an insipid or sweetish juice, containing a great deal of mannite, but destitute of that principle on which the medicinal quality seems to depend. It is obtained in the greatest quantity from the *lactuca altissima*, which, by culture, may be made to reach ten feet in height, and from a few plantations of which gigantic vegetable, M. AUBERGIER calculates on obtaining a sufficient supply of the drug to expel the opium from the market of his country. The juice flows from a number of

incisions made in the stalk and leaves at the time of inflorescence, and is at first of the colour and consistence of cream, but soon hardens, becoming successively of a yellow and a brown colour; and after having lost about 71 per cent. of its original weight, by evaporation, it presents itself covered with a crystalline efflorescence of mannite. Lactucarium contains a bitter principle, mannite, asparigin, a crystallisable matter (giving a green colour to the salts of iron), a resin combined with potass, another resin, cerine, myricine, pectine, vegetable albumen, ulmate, oxalate, malate, nitrate, muriate and sulphate of potass, phosphate of lime and magnesia, oxides of iron and manganese, and silica. The bitter medicinal principle is a crystalline matter, which, as it is said to bear "the same relation to lactucarium that morphine does to opium," we might perhaps call *lactucine*. But, unlike morphine, it has no alkaline reaction. It is nearly insoluble in cold, but partly soluble in hot water, from which it is deposited, on cooling, in scales, resembling those of boracic acid. It dissolves in both strong and diluted alcohol, the more completely as the menstruum is more heated. It is insoluble in ether, and is decomposed, not sublimed, by dry heat. Its bitterness disappears when in combination with an alkali, but is restored on the addition of an acid that is capable of neutralising the latter. Lactucarium is reported to possess all the sedative qualities of opium, with the advantage of causing neither constipation nor cerebral congestion.

Amongst other evidences of the new life which has latterly seemed to be being breathed into medicine, we find one in the recent establishment of a FORTNIGHTLY MEDICAL PERIODICAL AT MILAN (a city of a very poor country in science), edited by Professor PANIZZI and Dr. BERTANI, called the "Gazetta Medica," divided into five sections; the first and principal comprising reports of cases in the hospitals of Austrian Italy, the rest being devoted to original medical essays, reviews of works, matters of a speculative nature, bibliographical notices, and advertisements. The proprietors have appealed to the practitioners of the Lombardo-Venetian kingdom for the results

of their experience, and to the medical public of Europe, generally, for contributions in the Italian, Latin, German, French, or English languages. A volume and index are to be completed yearly. The price is only about sixpence per number, and much less in proportion to annual subscribers. Among the contents of the first five numbers are papers by Professors FLARER, FRANK, and CORNELIANI, and Drs. BERTANI, CASORATI, DUBINI, TRINCHINETTI, GIOVANNI, VERGA, A. BIANCHI, FABRIZI, GOLA, &c. If the editors continue true to their professions, this journal will be a valuable record of the medical news of Northern Italy.

We seize the opportunity, before advancing to other topics, of wishing our readers—the whole knowledge-acquiring medical community of these kingdoms—A HAPPY NEW YEAR, and a representative government at their head before it has closed.

On the Curative Influence of the Climate of Pau, and the Mineral Waters of the Pyrenees on Disease. By A. TAYLOR, M.D., &c. London: J. W. Parker, West Strand.

AT page 884 of the last volume of THE LANCET we briefly noticed this work, and observed that the author had naturally spoken in the highest terms of the climate of the place to which he had devoted his labours as an author, not, however, generally speaking, more naturally than truly, or we should have so said. But intending to recur to the work, we were content then simply to add a passage from its pages, reserving for another opportunity, which we now seize, some remarks on the statements of Dr. Taylor, and on the common question of climate.

We took up the volume as one that was likely to awaken such grateful sensations as must ever accompany a return, mental if not bodily, to a spot of earth which had been visited in former days, and to whose genial climate we were indebted for restoration to health.

It was on our premeditated route to Valentia that a halt was made at Pau, fatigued by a journey through the whole length of France, and weary of the pelting rains which harassed the traveller during the last week of his march. On a dull afternoon a first sight was obtained of the Pyrenees, which masses of sweeping clouds kept hiding from view, but upon reconnoitring the environs of