

*mortem* examination. The average duration of life, he said, was longer than was generally believed, tubercles being often found in the lungs with the inference that they had existed for a very considerable time. He dwelt next upon the symptoms and diagnosis of the very early stage of phthisis. The disease does not usually manifest itself until after the application of some exciting cause; that the principal indication in the treatment was to place the patient in as favourable external circumstances as possible; that diet, clothing, air, and exercise, should be especially attended to, in conjunction with the use of certain appropriate remedies. The system should in no wise be lowered; a diet of milk and eggs had been found of the greatest benefit. Cod-liver oil and the tincture of sesquichloride of iron were the remedies to be preferred amongst those usually employed. The author lastly referred to Dr. Churchill's plan of treatment, and fully concurred with him in the efficacy of the hypophosphites. He thought that, although much had been done of late years in improving the treatment of phthisis, still more was to be hoped from the use of hypophosphites. Whatever the treatment was, it must be rigorously persevered in. A prolonged discussion followed.

## Correspondence.

### IRIDECTOMY.

LETTER FROM W. BOWMAN, ESQ., F.R.S.

SIR,—The following letter, which I addressed to Mr. Walton with reference to his note in your JOURNAL of the 5th inst., will show how anxious I am that those who still reject iridectomy in glaucoma should have every opportunity which I may happen to be able to afford them, of examining for themselves the kind of evidence on which it is supported. I regret that, in the courteous reply which I have received from him, Mr. Walton does not accept my offer; so that I think I may safely leave the question to rest for the present in the position in which my recent communications have placed it, reserving any further comments on his own opinions on particular, until he shall have explained the grounds on which they rest, in the paper he has promised to send you.

I am, etc., W. BOWMAN.

5, Clifford Street, Dec. 15, 1863.

*Letter from Mr. Bowman to Mr. Walton.*

5, Clifford Street, Dec. 11, 1863.

MY DEAR WALTON,—I see by your note in the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL of last week, that you have taken notice of the discussion that has been going on there relative to the use of iridectomy in glaucoma. I had an impression that some of my brethren in London put less confidence in this treatment than I do myself; but I confess I was not prepared for so absolute a disbelief in its efficacy as you avow, when you say that you "*have not been able to discover that the removal of a piece of the iris has ever exercised the slightest influence over any inflammatory condition of the eyeball, nor over the disease called glaucoma.*"

The issue you thus raise is a most satisfactory one to me—that, namely, of the simple question of fact; I and others adducing the evidence of plain facts in support of our assertion of the efficacy of a definite operation in a well defined disease, while you rejoin that you have not been able to discover the slightest advantage in this method of treatment.

Now as Nature is the same, whoever interrogates her, we may most probably best reconcile these conflicting opinions of men alike competent to observe, and alike conscientious in arriving at their results (excuse the

compliment I am paying myself), by supposing that they have not witnessed facts of the same kind or order, though they may have seemed the same; or else, that the facts on the one side have been imperfectly investigated, owing to causes incidental to the novelty or the inherent difficulty of the subject matter.

The natural way of reconciling these differences, and one, I think, very suitable among men labouring in such a profession as ours, is for those who differ to meet, and examine the disputed facts in concert; to interrogate one another with the cases before them, and with a simple desire to arrive at sound conclusions.

This, surely, would be very easy in the present instance. We assert, you deny, the efficacy of iridectomy in glaucoma: our side of the question is of a positive, yours of a negative, character. If ours be true, a great boon has been provided for the patients of us all; if yours, we shall have still to treat glaucoma by the old methods, and with the old results, until some other remedy with more valid pretensions shall be discovered. It is impossible, therefore, but that you and all thoughtful men, having to treat glaucoma, should at present desire the benefits of iridectomy to prove real. Besides, as a question of scientific interest, few can be indifferent to it.

Now, what occurs to me is this. I have patients who have been thus treated, and whose cases may be placed fully before you, so as to enable you to form an independent opinion upon the results obtained. You express a determination to avoid controversy; and, of course, I have no wish for a conflict of words. But I think your position is such, and you make such use of it in writing adversely to iridectomy, that I have a claim to ask you to take some trouble, and spend some time if necessary, in examining the cases of alleged success. The profession at large do not feel competent to come to a decision, while men, whose opportunities they regard as equally great, are found so directly at variance on a simple matter of fact—one which seems to admit of being easily settled between the opposite parties, if they would only first come to an understanding as to the diagnosis of glaucoma, and then by touch and other equally indubitable means ascertain the physical condition of a glaucomatous eye, as to tension and visual power, before and after an iridectomy properly performed.

My object in now addressing you is to offer, with all the frankness of professional courtesy, and in the interest of our patients who are now suffering from glaucoma, to give you all the details in my power of such cases as may happen to be most accessible, and to show you the individuals who have been operated on. I will be present with you, and will promise you to have no reservations. It would be affectation in me, did I express the smallest doubt as to your coming to the same conclusion as myself regarding them, or as to the perfect readiness with which you would afterwards undertake a further trial of the method, and in due course publish your own approval of it to the world. There seems to me so much misconception prevailing (I know not why) on the whole subject, in spite of the efforts of myself and others to make it plain, and spread a correct knowledge of it, that I should be very glad that you should thus re-investigate it a little from what I may call our side, before committing yourself further by the practical statement of your present views, which you promise to send to the BRITISH MEDICAL JOURNAL as soon as you can find time to settle to the work.

I have only to add, as in duty bound, that I, on my part, shall have great pleasure in seeing in your company any patients of yourself or others, whose cases may have led you to your present opinions; and I am sanguine that I shall be able in a great measure to explain in what way they may be reconciled with the views I advocate.

I am, yours sincerely,

Haynes Walton, Esq.

W. BOWMAN.