Dr. Davis and the more numerous dissentient authorities may both be right; that the cases may terminate favourably; and also that they may be beset with peril.

ON GENERAL BLEEDING.

By H. Wilkinson, Esq., Rotherham.

[Read before the Yorkshire Branch, June 4th, 1857.]

In bringing the subject of general blood-letting before the notice of this meeting, I am aware that I am treading on very delicate ground. But, as Lord Bacon has said, “Human experience, which is constantly contradicting theory, is the great teacher of human knowledge; and as I do not intend to introduce anything but facts, letting alone theory, I shall not expose myself to severe criticism from those who may think differently.

The propriety of blood-letting, particularly venesection, has undergone considerable modification in the minds of practitioners in late years. What has occasioned this change of opinion, I am at a loss to know; for my own part, I am more and more convinced of the value of the remedy, and am often reminded of the remark I once heard from the late Dr. Young, of Sheffield: “That he had often had to regret not having taken sufficient blood, but seldom, very seldom, that he had taken too much.”

My gentlemen are of opinion that the aspect or type of disease has changed, and that we have no longer that acute form of disease we used to see. These altered views may account in some measure for the disuse of the lancet in those who entertain this opinion, and I intend to introduce anything but facts, letting alone theory, I shall not expose myself to severe criticism from those who may think differently.

But, as I have already said, the spirit of the profession is opposed to this practice. As an instance of this, I was particularly astonished, about a year and a half ago, in reading in the Lancet, of a paper being read at one of the medical societies, wherein the author came to the strange conclusion, that pneumonia was an adynamie disease; and what surprised me still more was the circumstance, that in so learned a society, no one should venture to criticise such singular views. If the gentleman believes that all diseases are adynamie, I can go with him to a certain extent; but if he means to classify pneumonia with syncope, hypochondriasis, and the like, according to Cullen, then I should say that these are certainly most dissimilar. Indeed, there is scarcely one inflammatory disease, when acute, which admits of a greater amount of depletion than pneumonia; and although I am aware that some members in the profession maintain that it can be cured without bleeding, I am ready to prove that it can be cured much more safely and much less risk, with it.

Having introduced the subject of my paper, I will bring before the meeting a living illustration of the value of blood-letting, in a patient of a most unlikely appearance to bear or require such a remedy.

CASE I. S.G., aged 46, a weak spare man, had suffered from asthma for a long time, when he consulted me for a violent paroxysm of the disease, attended with bronchitis. To all appearance, he could not have lived many hours with such violent dyspnoea; when, in the very height of bleeding in the arm as a last resource, which he bore freely, without fainting, and which gave him instant relief. He has been bled from the arm twenty-eight times within the last ten years, always with the same amount of relief; and although he still suffers from the asthma, he con-