

the radiated arrangement of these vessels, and the circulation (to a certain extent,) of fluid through them, are dependent on a power accompanying the former, and identical in its direction with the magnetic force. The conclusion was not drawn that the vital and electro-magnetic forces are the same, but that the direction and relation of both forces are identical.

Sir John Herschel said, as authors had placed before the Sections their opinions of the origin of muscular contractions and motions, he would also mention an opinion of his own, merely in the form of a guess for future consideration. There were three things to be noted in the entire phenomenon,—the first was mental,—viz., the determination of the will; the second was an effort, the existence of which became manifest by the consequent weariness; the third was the force which resulted and manifested itself in the effect produced. Now, here it appeared that a link was wanting between the second and third; and to supply that link was the object of the present inquiries. The idea he wished to throw out was, that the individual portions of muscular fibre might consist of something like spheroids inclosed in outer coverings; and that, in the quiescent state of the muscle, these spheroids might all lie with their major axes or longer dimensions along the length of the muscle, and then by an excitation of electric currents around them, caused by the will and consequent effort either circulating through the surrounding tissues or suitable nerves, a reversal of polarity might cause these spheroids to reverse their major and minor axes, and thus cause the entire muscle to swell out at right angles to its previous length.

Dr. Carpenter stated that by the aid of powerful microscopes it was easy to see, in a properly prepared muscle, that its several distinct fibres were divided into oblong cells. In the act of muscular contraction these cells contracted in their longer dimensions, and were thus forced to swell out in their shorter.

CASE OF POISONING BY LAUDANUM: INQUEST.

An inquest was held on Thursday, October 15th, before A. H. English, Esq., Coroner for Bath, on the body of a male infant, aged five days, the child of a man named Carey, which died from the effect of two drops of laudanum, administered to it by its nurse.

Mr. G. King, surgeon, deposed that Mrs. Carey was delivered on Friday night, about ten o'clock, of a fine healthy boy; he saw the mother and the child the next morning, Saturday, and on Monday, both going on well. On Wednesday morning, about eight o'clock, he was sent for by Mrs. Carey to say that her baby was very ill. On his arrival he found the child in the nurse's arms in a dying state. The mother stated that the nurse had given it two drops of laudanum about three o'clock in the morning. Witness recommended a cold bath for the child; the parties demurred about it, when Mr. King himself plunged it into a tub of cold water, which revived it, and it cried; it afterwards relapsed. Mr. King continued his attendance till its death, which took place at nine o'clock in the evening, the cause of which, he believed, was an over dose of laudanum,

Mrs. Edgar, a neighbour, was next examined. She was present at the birth, and had seen the child every day since; heard no complaint of its being ill; thought it a very healthy child.

There being no other evidence, the coroner thought that there should be a *post-mortem* examination, as it would be satisfactory to the jury to know that there was no other cause for the death of the child. The inquiry was adjourned till the following evening, to admit of a *post-mortem* examination.

It was then deposed by Mr. King that, in compliance with the Coroner's order, he had made a minute examination of the brain, the stomach, and bowels, which were all in a perfectly healthy state; there was no smell of opium in the stomach; he was assisted in this examination by Mr. Cox. Mr. King was asked if, after the *post-mortem* examination, he saw no reason to alter his evidence given yesterday? No, he was still of opinion, from the symptoms during life, that the child had died from the effects of some powerful narcotic poison, which he believed to be opium, he having been told that two drops of laudanum had been given, and this, in his opinion, was enough to cause the death of a child five days old.

The father of the child was examined. He knew nothing of the circumstance until the child was dying; he had found a bottle with about two drachms of laudanum in it in the bed-room, which his wife told him was the one the nurse took it from. It had been in the house eighteen months. Mr. King examined it, and though it had been kept in the house so long, it was stronger than if it had been fresh bought; the spirit had gone off and left the opium.

The Jury returned the following verdict:—"That the child died from the effects of two drops of laudanum, administered to it by the nurse, and, having frequently been attended with good results, through good intent; that is to say, *Excusable Homicide!*"

The nurse had before administered laudanum to children to ease their pains. The Coroner considered the verdict in direct opposition to the law as held by authorities referred to by him in summing up, and adjourned the inquiry till Saturday evening, when he agreed to receive the verdict; and, after an admonition and caution to the nurse as to her future conduct, the Jury was dismissed.—From the *Bath Chronicle*.

MEDICAL CONTRACTS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND
SURGICAL JOURNAL.

SIR,

Before offering a few remarks upon the letter of your correspondent of the 7th instant, signing himself "Honestas," I should assure you I am not connected either directly or indirectly, with any club, society, fellowship, or body of men, who take the method described by "Honestas," for remunerating their medical attendant. But I must confess I do not see in it anything to justify the expressions of "disgraceful" or "beggary." Let us look at the subject—first as regards the working men, and then with reference to the degradation (*in point of pay*,) it brings upon the profession. Do not suppose I wish to uphold these clubs upon all views of them; I refer solely as regards