that you have cured insane persons by the influence of Mesmerism? A. I have.—Q. What is your definition of a delusion? A. A belief in that which does not exist.—Q. You think that is a perfect definition of a delusion? A. No, I do not pretend to give a definition of it—else than in a general sense perhaps.—Q. For instance, I am not a right-thinking man, for I do not believe in the existence of Mesmerism? A. Because you have not had sufficient opportunities.—Q. I beg your pardon. Never mind whether I have had sufficient opportunities; I do not at all object to break a lance with you, physician as you are; but do you say that the fact of my assertion that mesmerism is nonsense, argues unsoundness of mind on my part? A. Perhaps so, to a certain degree.—Q. I am very glad I got that answer—it is what I anticipated. Then you would say, every gentleman in the room who asserts the same thing, is, to a certain degree, unsound in mind? A. His mental state is to be pitied; he does not know what is true.—Q. How the gentlemen of the jury will eat their lunch after that I do not know. Allow me to ask this," etc. etc. etc.

You will, I believe, agree with me, that such a dialogue is hardly of a kind to elicit the truth. Is it not, in an eminent degree, calculated to lessen the dignity of science, and reduce medicine to the bare dimensions of the law; the trash concocted by our forefathers, when society was in its childhood, and they, if not in their dotage, living, in point of fact, under the dominion, more or less, of their selfishness and lust.

I cannot forbear bringing to your notice yet another illustration of the manner, and not less the extent to which the lawyer and the doctor contend for the supremacy. The annexed quotation furnishes us with a very fair sample of legal *acumen*, and, I think I should add, of medical sophistry,—a sophistry, mind me, which, in the most natural way, springs out of the present very artificial mode of procuring medical evidence, and making *sides* to a question of science, as if it were a mere cricket match, or some equivalent old English pastime or raree show.

"Do you suppose," inquired Sir F. Thesiger of Dr. Winslow, "that a person who had faithfully rendered an account, and money had been paid over, and a belief had been entertained that no accounts at all had been rendered, and that no money at all had been paid; do you suppose that any one, under such circumstances, entertaining such a belief, would be competent to the management of his affairs?" The reply given is:—"A. That incompetency if the incompetency existed, might be the result of advanced age, or from careless habits of business, or from a natural indisposition to attend to the ordinary business matters of life. It need not necessarily be an incapacity arising from unsoundness of mind.—Q. But I put the case of a person. A. I think it is possible that such a condition might exist, apart from actual insanity or unsoundness of mind.—Q. Apart from a capacity to manage the affairs of life? A. No; I draw a distinction between the incapacity and natural decay, which is, in many cases, the inevitable result of old age, and the incapacity which is clearly the offspring of insanity.—Q. But I am putting it to you now—do not vary the ground. I put a distinct question, whether such a person as I have described would, in your discreet judgment, be competent to the management of his affairs? A. In the proper acceptation of the term, such an amount of incapacity would not necessarily indicate unsoundness of mind or legal incompetency to manage the business affairs of life.—Q. Would such a person be competent to the management of his affairs? *Legally speaking*, certainly.—Q. *Actually speaking*, would he? A. There are many sane persons who are incapable of managing their affairs, and who leave all their business matters to their solicitors.—Q. You are running away from my question. I have put a particular case to you, which is clear and distinct. I have put the case of a person who had received from his attorneys accounts of monies faithful and true throughout, and then believing that no accounts had been rendered, and that no money had been paid? A.

I should say that such was a strange, but not necessarily an unsound condition of mind.—Q. Would you consider such a person,—a person who had received money and accounts, and yet believed that he had not received the money, and had not received the accounts, a person capable of managing his own affairs? A. I should say that such was a strange and unnatural condition of mind, but not necessarily an unsound condition.—Q. I understand, in one sense, what a natural mind is. A. You may have such an amount of incapacity coexisting and consistent with sanity. That is what I mean.—Q. But I put a particular case to you. Dr. Winslow, I know you are a match for me, but do confine yourself to the case I put. It is a very distinct one; it is this: I ask you, in your judgment (of course appreciating your character), whether such a person is, in your judgment, competent to the management of his affairs? A. I think the world would say not. Q. What would you say; do you agree with the world, or not? A. I have seen cases of incapacity to the extent referred to by yourself, associated with perfect soundness of mind.—Q. You have told us that the world would have an opinion upon the subject; do you agree with the world, or do you differ from the world? A. I do not bow to the opinion of the world as an authority upon points of abstract science.—Q. Then you look down upon the opinion of the world? A. Certainly not. I consider the question as one of science. When I am asked whether, in a given case, there is an incapacity to manage property, my object is to ascertain whether that incapacity is the necessary result of a diseased mind, or whether it is a natural incapacity arising from old age, decay of nature, or from ignorance of the ways of the world, and a natural careless indifference to the affairs of life. That, in my opinion, is the scientific distinction.—Q. I am putting a case in which there can be no doubt about the moneys being paid and the accounts rendered, and in which the party believes that no money has been paid and that no accounts have been rendered, would you require to ascertain all the circumstances respecting a person's mind before you could come to a conclusion whether such a person was capable of managing his affairs or not? A. I think we could not take as a rule an isolated feature in a particular case, and draw safe conclusions from it. I should be very loth to say, if a case of great incapacity was established, that that incapacity was necessarily the incapacity of an unsound mind. Many men of mature age and vigour of mind are not of business habits, and are not capable of managing their property.—Q. There are circumstances which do not depend upon business habits at all. I put a plain and palpable case to you. A. I think in the case put by you the circumstances, of course, would be suspicious, but such an amount of incapacity might coexist with soundness of mind.—Q. Then you are of opinion that the case I have put to you is perfectly consistent with entire soundness of mind? A. It may be so; I have no doubt upon the point."

So much for the case of Mrs. C. Cumming, who, you will remember, was found, after an investigation of many days, to be *insane*, and that by a jury remarkable at once for its general respectability and high intelligence.

[To be continued.]

CASE OF OBSTRUCTION TO LABOUR CAUSED BY A FIBROUS BAND WITHIN THE VAGINA.

By W. Moxon, Esq., Bilston.

ABOUT 5 P.M. on the 3rd of last September, I was summoned to attend A. B., a strong healthy woman, aged 22, who had been in labour since 11 o'clock that morning. On my arrival at the residence of my patient, I ascertained that she had had two children, and that at her last confinement she was attended by a midwife. I was likewise informed that she had, after her last labour, been troubled with an offensive discharge from the vagina for several

weeks, together with great incontinence of urine for three months.

On making an examination, I found the os uteri fully dilated, the head presenting naturally, and the membranes protruding. The pains being feeble, and the membranes tense and rigid, I waited for about an hour; but, finding no progress in the labour, I ruptured the membranes. As the head advanced, I discovered a dense unyielding band, of an oval form, within the vagina, about an inch and a half from the external orifice, which prevented the further passage of the head.

Strong expulsive pains having by this time set in, I waited for about two hours, expecting that nature would overcome the impediment, or that relaxation would take place to such an extent as to admit of the passage of the child; but finding the resistance too great to be overcome naturally, and fearing that laceration would take place from the great pressure exerted upon the perineum above the constricted part, I made two incisions through the band, which had the immediate effect of allowing the expulsion of the child. The placenta was expelled in a few minutes afterwards.

From the history of this case, I have no doubt that sloughing of some portion of the vaginal canal took place after her last labour. On the first examination, no stricture of any portion of the vagina could be felt.

ENTRANCE OF A NEEDLE INTO THE CHEST: PROBABLE PUNCTURE OF THE HEART.

By T. L. PRIDHAM, Esq., Bideford, Devon.

A FEW evenings since, a woman brought a child, aged 10 years, to my surgery, saying, "it appeared in great pain, and that when her hand rested on its chest it moaned piteously". Although it was a stout child, I remarked that its appearance was very pale, feeble, and distressed. On examination of the body, I discovered a small stain of blood directly over the apex of the heart. On a further examination, at a little distance from the spot of blood, I distinctly felt an elevation of the skin, under which some foreign body appeared to be forcing itself. I then inquired of the mother, whether she was aware that at any time prior to the child's present state, a needle had entered the skin, and had been broken off, leaving the point imbedded. The mother replied that she was not aware of any such accident.

Notwithstanding this statement, I immediately made two incisions in the shape of τ near the situation of the slightly elevated skin. My knife soon grated on something, which receded with my endeavour to extract it; and I was fearful that I should entirely lose the object; and that if I could not in some way fix it, my efforts to extract it would be fruitless. I therefore introduced a tenaculum sufficiently deep to surround the head of a needle, and drew it gently towards me. I was then able to lay hold of it with the forceps, and extracted a fine stocking-needle two and a half inches long, which the anxious mother was then able to tell me she had missed from her shawl two days before, having employed it in order to secure that article of dress.

My impression in this case is, on comparing the original puncture with the situation and beat of the heart, that the needle must have passed through the apex of that organ. How far it is possible to have done so without destroying life, is a question for consideration. The effectual manner in which the tenaculum assisted in extracting the needle, is worthy of record. In two or three days the child recovered its usual healthy and animated appearance.

Reviews and Notices.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE TOPOGRAPHY AND CLIMATE OF ASPLEY GUISE, in reference to their Influence on Health and Disease, as compared with celebrated English and Foreign localities. By JAMES WILLIAMS, M.D. pp. 48. London: Thomas Richards. 1856.

The fact is now beginning to be recognised that our own country possesses localities fitted for the sojourn of the invalid, especially the consumptive; and that the dismissal of such patients to foreign parts is often little or nothing better than sending them away to die. To bring under notice one of these favoured spots of England, is the object which Dr. WILLIAMS has in view.

"The village of Aspley," says Dr. Williams, "is upon a deep though narrow line of the green-sand formation; a circular range of hills of moderate elevation extending from Tring in Hertfordshire to the neighbourhood of Biggleswade.... The general position of the village is sheltered by hills of moderate elevation; but, as far as my own experience goes, its healthful tendencies appear not to be due to that cause, inasmuch as my observations, made in three different parts, vary but little in the range of temperature, although more moisture is evident in the lower valley-like portions. The air is particularly dry and bracing, and upon the elevated parts exposed to the west, is compared by many to a sea breeze. The general temperature is but slightly below that of the Undercliff of the Isle of Wight. Sufficient evidence to those who may think the place oppressively hot in summer, is, that the average temperature of July and August is 61° of Fahrenheit only. The greatest range of temperature is in these months, and the smallest in November and December, which may be considered of no little importance to the consumptive invalid, who is generally as much tried during the latter part of the year as in the spring months.

"The principal feature in this locality is the dry sandy character of the soil; and the leading property of sand being its great power of absorption of both heat and moisture, its effect is to render the surface of the ground sufficiently dry (even immediately after heavy rain) for exercise, and also in hot weather to cool the atmosphere, by absorbing the superfluous heat; from hence we get radiation of the latter during the night, diminishing cold, and thus an equilibrium is approached, and the small variation of the atmosphere partly accounted for.

"This sand stratum in the higher parts of the village has been ascertained to be nearly one hundred feet deep. Underneath this we get springs of the finest water. It is bright and sparkling, nearly free from earthy impregnation, and, in addition, soft—an invaluable property when found in spring water." (pp. 9, 10.)

"Evidence of the dryness of the air of Aspley will be found in the small annual fall of rain. In this particular, my observations extend over a period of about four years, during which time, by very careful admeasurement, it only amounts to 18½ inches; a fraction less than Paris (18½); a little less than Toulon (19½); and three inches only more than at Marseilles. And, so far as I can learn, the annual fall of rain at Aspley is less than in any known English locality. This, with the entire absence of any river, or considerable stream, accounts for, and strengthens the evidence of the dryness of its atmosphere." (p. 26.)

The mean temperature for night and day lies between 36½ in January and 61½ in July; the annual mean being 47½, and the mean annual range 8. In the smallness of the range, Aspley is only exceeded by Pau, which has a range of 7.6-10ths.

Such being the hygienic condition of Aspley, Dr. Williams finds that, though neither it nor any other place enjoys an absolute immunity from disease, it yet enjoys a comparative immunity, and that the rate of mortality is below the average of a healthy rural district.

"In connexion with consumptive cases in particular, one fact is very remarkable—that persons afflicted with *positive* and *incurable* disease, live much longer here than in almost any other part of England, save our much sheltered southern coasts.