

sprang. But any of these segments, whatever their forms and size, have an inherent power of growth besides that of segmentation; consequently, portions so small as to be called molecular can increase so as to be distinctly recognised as what has been commonly called a vegetable "cell." Into the cell question I am not intending to enter: suffice it to say, that a mass of vegetable matter (protoplasm) so minute as to appear with the higher object glasses scarcely larger than a point, can increase in size so as to be recognised as a distinct growing vegetable body, usually called "cell," which upon further growth can become a distinct cell, with its wall and nucleus. The two properties of subdivision and individual growth seem to antagonize one another. When segmentation is in excess, then we may see the subdivision reduced to these minute particles, which may again recover their size by the subjection of the dividing process to that of growth. The movement of these vibriones is probably akin to that well known in oscillatoria.

In the second place, further on Dr. Bennett says, in speaking of the function of the contractile cell, "In the uterus during pregnancy they are greatly enlarged, and though non-contractile during their increased growth, they assume that property for the purpose of expelling the fœtus; which accomplished, they undergo fatty molecular histolysis and disappear."

I think it is pretty well known to those who have paid much attention to the conduct of the uterus during pregnancy, that the uterus has undoubtedly the power of contracting throughout the whole of pregnancy—at least as soon as it is to be felt above the pubes, and that at almost all times it can be felt in the act of contracting and relaxing alternately at not very distant intervals, frequently of five, ten, or twenty minutes; so that I know no more sure sign of intra-uterine conception, be it normal or the contrary, than this, excepting, of course, the foetal heart-sounds when a living fetus be present. Besides this, even the unimpregnated uterus is in a state of constant readiness to contract upon any exciting cause; as witness the expulsion of tumours from its walls, and of polypi from its cavity. This property serves to explain numerous circumstances, otherwise ambiguous, which occur in the various states of the uterus.

I am, Sir, yours &c.,

J. BRAXTON HICKS, M.D. Lond., F.R.S.

Wellington-street, London-bridge, Feb. 1863.

### THE ARMY MEDICAL DEPARTMENT.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—Having read with much satisfaction your able and eloquent support of the Medical Department of the Army in some recent numbers of THE LANCET, I am emboldened to forward to you this letter, with the hope that you will be pleased to insert it in your valuable journal.

There can be little doubt but that you have taken a correct view of the ante-dating of Staff Assistant-Surgeon Becher's commission. Such a deed was a gross injustice to the other assistant-surgeons of the army thus made junior to him; but I trust those medical officers will take speedy measures to have this act cancelled, for, if permitted to pass unnoticed, it would form a precedent for future aggressions of this nature. When such injuries and insults are inflicted on the Department with impunity, is there any wonder in the number of resignations we see in every military gazette of assistant-surgeons? Only the other day an assistant surgeon resigned his commission, though informed by the Director-General that if he remained in the Service he would be allowed a perpetual stationary appointment in England, thereby avoiding foreign service; yet, notwithstanding this great boon, it was rejected by him, preferring civil practice, with all its vicissitudes, to the questionable advantages of military life. Again, I understand at the ensuing competitive examination this month for Army assistant surgeons, there are only "ten" applicants for "forty" vacancies. Does not this speak volumes of itself? How can the Service become so unpopular if there is not something rotten in the management of its affairs? Let us search a little further, and we will gradually unfold the decaying root of the tree; for the more we inquire the less we will have to admire. There is what is called a "roster" kept at the Army Medical Office of army medical officers on the staff at home for foreign service, but we find the words "exempt from foreign service" opposite certain names. Why, we ask, should this be? What have they done to merit this favour? There is more than one staff surgeon at the Army Medical Office who has not been abroad since 1856, on their return from the Crimea; we find another at Chatham who returned from Turkey in 1854, his last foreign service, while during these periods several staff surgeons have

had their tour of duty in India, China, and Canada. Is not a roster, then, under these circumstances, a mere farce—a blind to satisfy the prejudices and gratify the wishes of the Director-General at the expense of meritorious officers? Any one will say this is bad enough; but does favouritism end here? I think I shall be able to prove not. We must go a little further, for the noble working of the Army Medical Department is deep, and requires to be unravelled with care to have a clear perception of its beauties. Will our non-military friends credit the fact that there is at this moment a regimental surgeon doing staff-duty at the Camp at Aldershot who has been nominally in his regiment for the last five years, but who has not done one hour's duty with that regiment? He was even permitted to remain at home in his present station, though his corps went abroad on active service. Is not this monstrous? May I ask, is not this favouritism in its most repulsive aspect? How are acts of this kind to be defended by the laws of impartiality, or the commonest principles of justice? However, I am credibly informed that more than one surgeon intends bringing this case forward as a precedent, should they, from sickness or other causes, have occasion to remain at home when their regiments go on foreign service. This is a point which cannot be evaded.

Such is a brief outline of the discontent prevailing in the Medical Department of the Army under the "able and impartial" management of Dr. James Brown Gibson, C.B., Director-General.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Feb. 1863.

A MEDICAL OFFICER.

### ALLEGED CONSULTATIONS WITH HOMŒOPATHS.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—In reply to Mr. Coombs' letter, which appeared in your journal of last week, I reassert that I have declined meeting him in consultation solely on account of his practising homœopathy. Whether Mr. Coombs was made aware or not of that fact appears to me very unimportant. My being accidentally present with him by the side of a man dying from cerebral apoplexy in a public-house is construed by Mr. Coombs into a consultation. The fact is, I took the case in hand, and treated it entirely upon my own responsibility, and, at the request of the friends, saw the patient a second time *alone*. On the first occasion, Mr. Coombs certainly rendered assistance in spreading sinapisms, and doing other acts of kindness, for which I felt obliged; but there was no consultation. The patient was neither Mr. Coombs' nor mine—he was a club-patient of another medical man in the town, who was first sent to, but was from home.

I would with you, Mr. Editor, ask Mr. Coombs whether he does not now practise, or has never practised homœopathy, for in his letter he appears studiously to blink this question? If wishing to cultivate a "good understanding and pleasant feeling" amongst the members of the medical profession of this neighbourhood, the hand extended in fellowship must be ungloried of homœopathy.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Bedford, Feb. 1863.

H. W. SHARPIN.

### MR. HENRY SMITH'S HÆMORRHOIDAL CLAMP.

*To the Editor of THE LANCET.*

SIR,—You will oblige me by supplying an important omission in your report of the proceedings of the Medical Society of London of January 12th, at which meeting I exhibited my hæmorrhoidal clamp, and pointed out the differences between it and the one originally introduced by Mr. Curling. I not only, as your report correctly states, pointed out the main distinctive features in the construction of the instrument, but I particularly insisted that my clamp was constructed and used for the purpose, not only of fixing the hæmorrhoidal tumour in order that it might be cut away, but of thoroughly arresting hæmorrhage during the time that nitric acid or the actual cautery was being applied to the divided surface.

Mr. Curling's instrument, on the other hand, was constructed with the object simply of seizing and confining the tumour whilst nitric acid was being applied, and not with the view of preventing hæmorrhage after removal of the disease by the scissors; hence the modifications I thought fit to introduce.

I remain, Sir, your obedient servant,

Caroline-street, Bedford-square,  
Feb. 1863.

HENRY SMITH, F.R.C.S.