of the eye, with the usual symptoms of pain and intolerance of light, &c. &c. The anterior chamber was rather hazy, the lens was opaque, but its surface too clouded to be distinctly defined. The mode of treatment was clearly indicated. I recommended leeches, fomentations, mercury till the gums were affected, and the application of an opiate solution within the lids. The patient gave the following account of himself:—

He had for some time been the subject of cataract in the left eye; being desirous of its removal, he had consulted Mr. John Soden, of Bath, who advised him, as his power of seeing with the right eye was very perfect, not to undergo an operation upon the left. Having seen in the Bath newspapers an article copied from the "*Literary Gazette*," stating upon the *authority of the editor* of that periodical, that a certain physician in London cured cataracts by the application of the vapor of prussic acid, he went to London and placed himself under the care of this practitioner, who gave him every encouragement to believe that the cataract would speedily be dissolved, and who daily applied the prussic acid, expressing himself satisfied with the progress of the cure. At the end of two or three weeks, finding his eye not improved, Mr. C. said he could remain no longer in London; the physician then *performed an operation* upon the cataract with an instrument, which was followed by the violent inflammation I saw, and while suffering from it he was obliged to return into the country.

This is the history with which my notes of Mr. C.'s case, when I first saw him, furnish me. But that I might not misstate his account I will quote his own words, subsequently conveyed to me in a letter, omitting some natural expressions of indignation, and giving him credit for sincerity in declaring his wish to have publicity given to his case, not for "the gratification of private revenge," but "for the benefit of others."

"For four consecutive weeks did he apply the prussic acid to my eye. The method which he practised was this. I applied to him; he examined the eye, and professed to restore it to perfect health in a few days by the external application of prussic acid. He applied it to the eye; each successive day he appeared to discover an improvement, and repeatedly declared to me that he had known a cataract dissolve in twelve hours after the application of the acid. I consequently expected to awake some morning in the full possession of brilliant sight. He did not perform the operation which has caused me so much agony till three weeks had expired, because not till that time had the prussic acid *made the cataract to form on the surface of the eye*." Mr. C. states that during this attendance he paid the usual physicians' fees. After pursuing the plan I had prescribed for him, Mr. C. writes me word, the pain and inflammation gradually subsided, and at the date of his last letter (November 16), he expected in a few days the inflammation would be entirely removed: neither the prussic acid, however, nor the operation had dispersed the cataract.

Such, then, is one of the attempted cures of cataract by means of prussic acid. Had it been merely an instance of the failure of ordinary means, or even of a reasonable experiment in effecting the desired end, I should not have brought it forward; for all medical men have

occasionally to lament the failure of the best intended efforts for the relief of their patients. I adduce it as an example of measures utterly inadequate to the professed object, recommended and employed with the most unwarrantable promises of success, their insufficiency being admitted by recourse to an operation, which also proved unsuccessful.

The above case induced me to refer to the published statements which tempted this unfortunate patient to disregard the judicious advice of Mr. Soden, and to submit himself to the prussic acid treatment. I have in vain tried to procure in this city the opportunity of referring to the back numbers of the "*Literary Gazette*;" but "*Chambers's Edinburgh Journal*" for July 16, 1842, speaks of the "*Literary Gazette*" for July 11, 1842, as containing the account of the wonders performed by prussic acid, "the name of whose editor," says the "*Edinburgh Journal*," "is a sufficient guarantee for the accuracy of the statements." These statements are, that the editor of the "*Literary Gazette*" "*saw*" the various stages of cure advanced by the application of hydrocyanic acid to the eye in "opacities of the cornea, inflammation, cataract, amaurosis, iritis, &c. &c." The editor witnessed "the various appearances of films removing, cataracts breaking up and being gradually reabsorbed, pupils being redeveloped, and other altogether extraordinary symptoms of remedy and regeneration." "Other cases there were of the wonderful production of vision to those born blind." The editor exclaims, "Why not at once make known this discovery to the Prince of Hanover!" and concludes his article by saying, "We hesitate not strongly to recommend the wonderful discovery for the cure of blindness."

I should not have encroached upon your space with such extracts as the above had they not been from papers of good reputation, whose respectable editors cannot be aware of the extent to which they are misleading the public, the articles having no appearance of being inserted as ordinary quack advertisements.

It would be well if the conductors of our respectable periodicals would consult some judicious medical friend before they gave circulation to such extravagant statements, relating to the cure of diseases, as those now presented to the readers of the *Provincial Medical Journal*.

Bristol, November 30, 1842.

ON PREPARATIONS OF THE CITRATE OF IRON.

By M. MIALHE.

The "*Journal of Chemistry*" gives the following formula for the preparation of the citrate of iron:—Take, of crystallised citric acid, three parts; hydrated peroxide of iron, two parts; distilled water, twelve parts. Boil together until the oxide is completely dissolved; then filter and add enough of water to replace what has been evaporated, and make up twelve parts of fluid. If we wish to obtain the citrate dry, a layer of the fluid is placed on a square of glass and evaporated in the stove. The citrate of iron thus obtained is of a fine rusty red color; dissolves perfectly, though slowly, in water; is of a strongly acid taste, astringent, and slightly styptic.

Within the last few years—that is, since the citrate of iron has been introduced as an article of trade—two very distinct varieties are to be found in chemists' shops. One presents the characters just mentioned, and is the pure citrate of the peroxide of iron. The other is the preparation of a very different kind; it dissolves much more quickly in water, and the solution, instead of being of a yellowish red, is of a yellow green color; its taste is rather alkaline than ferruginous; in a word, it is a double citrate, containing a greater or less proportion of soda or ammonia.*

Now, as it seems clear that these two preparations must possess different medical properties, I think that physicians would do well if they would distinguish, in their prescriptions, the acid from the alkaline preparation.

EFFERVESCING CALYBEATE WATER.

Water, 625 scruples; dry citrate of iron, 1 scruple; citric acid, 4 scruples; bicarbonate of soda, 5 scruples; add first the citrate of iron and citric acid; then the bicarbonate of soda, taking care to cork the bottle at once, and secure the cork.†

This latter preparation has very little metallic taste, and is quite as agreeable as the Vichy water; when mixed with wine it does not render it turbid as Vichy water does, and is certainly a more active remedy.—*Bul. de Therapeutique*, August 15, 1842.

PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL

SATURDAY, DECEMBER 10, 1842.

We have this week to lay before our readers an instance of the exercise of unconstitutional and despotic authority on the part of the poor-law commission against one of their medical officers, which is, we believe, without a parallel even in the proceedings of that irresponsible body. An accusation had been made before the board of guardians of Upton-upon-Severn, Worcestershire, against Mr. Morison, of Malvern, a medical officer of one of the districts of this union, stating that he had three several times obtained a bottle of port wine on account of the union for a pauper patient, and that on each occasion he had withheld the wine, or a portion of it, from the purposes for which it was designed, and given the medicine (bark) intended to be mixed with it in water, or some other fluid. The charge was a most serious one, and unquestionably demanded a careful investigation, and one of the assistant-commissioners (Mr. Power) was sent down on the part of the poor-law commission to preside over and conduct the inquiry. The result was to be laid before the Somerset-house

board, and an immediate decision on the case promised. After an interval of three weeks, no communication that we can learn having been in the mean time made to the accused or to his legal adviser, the office is advertised as vacant. From the evidence given during the inquiry conducted by Mr. Power, it would seem that the charge originated in the private malice of one of the guardians, and if the published report, which is full, and bears every appearance of accuracy, be correct, although an adulteration of the bark mixture seems to have taken place, Mr. Morison stands completely exonerated from the charge.

The material portion of the evidence, bringing Mr. Morison in contact with the wine, is that of Hannah Costens, Elizabeth Ritt, Mr. Richard Winnall, and Hannah Hope; and however difficult it may be to account for the adulteration of the bark and wine mixtures, a candid examination and comparison of this evidence does anything rather than fix it on Mr. Morison, whose general humanity and liberality to his pauper patients were certified to by the most respectable and competent witnesses. Who the guilty party really was is another matter, and in the present state of the question we are not disposed to imitate the palpable injustice of the poor-law commission, by attempting to fix upon any individual the imputation of such a fraudulent transaction.

This, however, is not the point of general interest in the inquiry. However we may sympathise with Mr. Morison, as the victim of calumny and persecution, the bearings of the question are far wider than the mere establishing of the guilt or innocence of any single individual. The proceedings involve the violation of those principles of equity and justice which are or profess to be interwoven in the very groundwork of all our institutions. A disgraceful charge is made against an officer of a public establishment. It is investigated at a meeting presided over in the capacity of judge, by a person—appointed by whom?—by the source of all judicial power? No! but by an irresponsible board, called into existence under an act of the legislature, at variance, we hesitate not to say, with the privileges, and contrary to the feelings of a large majority of the nation. This individual summons the accused party to trial, without notice, although on application he subsequently allows a single day for the collecting of witnesses and the preparation of such a defence as the hurried and uncertain nature of the proceedings will admit of. He summons witnesses already prepared on the other side, administers oaths, and conducts the whole inquiry after the manner of a court of justice, with this single and most vital difference, that in his own individual person, or in that of his irresponsible superiors, are combined both the judge and the jury, without power on the part of the accused of challenging the one or appeal from the other.

* These observations are equally applicable to the species of citrate of iron found in English shops, and the practitioner would do well to remember the marked difference which exists between them.—*Eds.*

† This preparation seems to be very similar to the "aqua calybeata" of Messrs. Bewly and Evans, for which it may be advantageously substituted.—*Eds.*