MR. CURLING'S WORK ON THE TESTIS.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—In a review of my work on the Diseases of the Testis, which has lately appeared in your Journal, I find some misstatements which so unfairly affect the character of the work that I am reluctantly induced to notice them. With your general opinion of the merits of the treatise, as an author I will not venture to quarrel, though I might fairly question the justice of designating simply as a "compilation," a work which contains no less than eighty original cases, besides references to many others not detailed, and in which the symptoms and treatment of most of the diseases are described from personal observation, implying considerable experience, and from the examination of hundreds of morbid testes.

The reviewer states that, "the first chapter on the anatomy of the testis and its coverings presents nothing that is new or is not to be found in the elementary works." Allow me to ask him what elementary work contains an account of the structure of the gubernaculum and descent of the testis, as my investigations have led me to describe it, except the last edition of Mr. Wilson's Anatomist's Vade Mecum, in which that excellent author has given a brief description of my views as originally published in the "Lancet." Again he remarks, "Nor do we find any practical deductions from anatomy, which, we think, is the only excuse for filling surgical treatises with anatomical details." This observation is certainly not made with much consistency by a critic who has just previously commended the systematic character of the work, and complained of the leading English surgeons mixing up diagnosis with treatment and wandering from this to symptoms. The fact is, the second part of the treatise, in which the morbid anatomy and symptoms and treatment of the disease of the testis are described, is full of practical deductions from the anatomy. The descriptions of the imperfect descent of the testis, of the mode of formation of the various kinds of hydrocele, of the liability of the tunics to inflammation in different affections, of the influence of the tunics in modifying the various diseases of the testis, &c., are plainly practical deductions from the anatomy introduced in their proper places.

In considering the treatment of *acute* orchitis I have remarked, "In the gonorrhoeal form of the affection all means which may have been resorted to in order to arrest the discharge must be abandoned." The reviewer is pleased to call this recommendation injudicious, and the doctrine an antiquated one. I maintain that it is sound surgery, but would excuse the writer differing in opinion from me if his observations on the above quotation had not given a meaning to it which is not implied, and which it was by no means intended to convey. The remark applies to the treatment of *acute* orchitis, of the early stage of the disease—a period at which, in my judgment, the use of active injections and of copaiba and cubebs should be for a time abandoned; and on this point I believe all practical surgeons are agreed. The reviewer observes, "Surely if the irritation in the urethra, extending along the vas deferens, is the cause of the orchitis, the treatment should consist in combatting not only the effect but

the cause; reasoning dictates such a course, practice corroborates it, and in chronic orchitis we maintain no other plan will succeed." True enough; but I was not treating of chronic orchitis, nor recommending the cause to be neglected. It is clear that the reviewer misunderstands the application of the passage, and consequently reasons erroneously upon it; and if he had read the work attentively he would have found that, at page 287, I have called attention to the urethra as the source of the disease in chronic cases of consecutive orchitis, and recommended the surgeon to direct his treatment to it.

The reviewer, who appears to have a foolish horror of mercury, in finding fault with my recommendation of its use in acute consecutive orchitis after the more active symptoms have subsided, adduces as an objection to this treatment the injury it is capable of effecting in scrofulous constitutions; but he might have done me the justice to add that in the succeeding chapter (page 333), I have remarked that "in strumous affections generally the influence of mercury is usually prejudicial;" and that I have not stated that mercury is constantly necessary in the cases referred to.

I am unjustly accused of copying opinions from Ricord and Mr. Acton, the sources being very incidentally mentioned; but not a single example or proof is adduced, and I positively deny the charge. My opinions may, for aught I know, have occasionally accorded with theirs; but even if so, that is not sufficient to justify such an accusation. Upon some points I know I differ from Ricord; for instance, as to the testis, which is more commonly attacked with inflammation.

Your readers must have been surprised at the opinion expressed by the reviewer, in his anxiety to disparage my work, that in treating of morbid anatomy woodcuts "may be very pretty, but surely are not called for or likely to assist us, as in treatises on anatomy or midwifery." Mr. Liston, Mr. Bransby Cooper, and Mr. Fergusson have not thought so, and, like myself, have gladly availed themselves of the talents of that clever artist, Mr. Bagg, to illustrate subjects of morbid anatomy in their works. I am satisfied that no description, however graphic, could convey to the mind the same clear impression of the parts represented as the figures at pages 188, 242, 294, 522, &c., of my treatise.

I must observe, in conclusion, that the gentleman who penned the review is evidently a person of small experience, both as a writer and as a surgeon, or he would scarcely have written two such sentences as the following:—"The result of our own experience in the use of Lallemand's instrument is fraught with little or no danger." "The cases of spontaneous cure are so few that the surgeon is not justified in resorting to it." The perusal of these sentences, in addition to the preceding comments, will, I believe, lead your intelligent readers to question the pretensions of the writer to the critical office which he has assumed.

I am, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

T. B. CURLING.

37, New Broad-street,
July 27, 1843: