MALIGNANT PUERPERAL FEVER.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL.

GENTLEMEN,—Towards the end of Mr. Fisher's remarks upon his interesting but dreadful cases of malignant puerperal fever, he proposes a modified plan of treatment, which he recommends for adoption upon a re-occurrence of such like cases. I quite agree with him in what he says about general bleeding, upon the use of leeches, upon soothing and supporting the system, &c. At the same time, I think one other modification would have made the plan of treatment laid down by him more judicious still. Mr. F. advises the internal exhibition of mercury (with the exception of a ten-grain dose of calomel to begin with), to be superseded by inunction, on account of the violent irritation which it produced, when given by the mouth, to the intestinal mucous membrane. To guard against, more effectually still, that complication, which has such a *very lowering tendency*, I would suggest that, instead of the very free exhibition of purgative medicines (alluding more particularly to Case V.), we should content ourselves with an *efficient but gentle* clearing of the bowels by mild means—such, for instance, as castor oil and turpentine in combination, followed by enemata.

Should you deem the above remarks worthy a place in your Journal, you will oblige me by their insertion.

I remain, Gentlemen,

Your obedient servant,

GEORGE HORTON.

Bromsgrove, Nov. 14, 1843.

PROVINCIAL MEDICAL JOURNAL

SATURDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 1843.

We hardly know whether our respected associate, Dr. Jeffreys, will have thought the subject we are about to notice worthy his attention; but as it is to his exertions that we are indebted for a knowledge of what promises to be a valuable addition to our remedial means, and as the importance of these have been attempted to be undervalued, we are induced to make some observations upon a controversy which has recently arisen in respect to them. The matico, as the members of the Provincial Association well know, is a new remedy of great power, both externally as a styptic, and internally as an astringent, and was first introduced to public attention nearly five years ago by Dr. Jeffreys, who, in the "Lancet" of January 5, 1839, gave a short notice of its employment in South America as an application to wounds, for the purpose of checking hæmorrhage. At the anniversary of the Newton Branch of the Provincial Association, held in the month of June of the same year, the subject was again alluded to, and brought before the meeting. After an ineffectual attempt to introduce the matico more generally in September, 1840, arising from a

spurious substitute having been sent from Valparaiso, Dr. Jeffreys at last succeeded in procuring a supply of the genuine article, and immediately, with great liberality, distributed specimens of the herb for trial amongst the members of the Association and others, whose opportunities or inclination might lead them to submit its reputed virtues to the test.

A good description of the characters of the plant, which appears to be the piper angustifolium of the Flora Peruviana, accompanied with a lithograph engraving, and an account of the results of the trials made with it, are given by Dr. Jeffreys in the last volume of the "Transactions of the Provincial Association;" and really we scarcely see how greater publicity could be given than through the medium of a work which commands an immediate circulation amongst upwards of fifteen hundred members of the profession belonging to almost every town of note in the kingdom. Some information of the employment of the herb amongst the Peruvians seems to have been obtained by Dr. Lane, of Lancaster, "about four years ago;" but, according to his own statement, he is indebted to the liberality originally shown by Dr. Jeffreys, in the distribution of the matico to the Lancaster Infirmary, for a knowledge of where the drug might be obtained, and for such a supply of it as could be readily transmitted in a letter, and was, at any rate, sufficient to make him acquainted with its external appearance. Now, without doing more than simply referring to the indefinite use of the term "about four years"—sufficiently indefinite, by the way, for one who complains of a similar want of precision in another—it is quite clear that, for any personal knowledge of the medicine which he may possess, and for the opportunity of trying its effects, Dr. Lane is indebted to the exertions previously made by Dr. Jeffreys—first, in procuring the importation of the genuine matico; and, secondly, in distributing, at considerable expense, specimens of the same throughout the country.

The experiments of Dr. Lane are valuable, as confirming what had been before advanced by Dr. Jeffreys and his correspondents, and as extending the application of the remedy to some other forms of disease; and we cannot but express our regret that, in bringing forward the merits of a new remedial agent, Dr. Lane should have been so ill-advised as to omit all mention of the name of the individual who, he well knew, had been mainly instrumental in introducing it into notice. The subsequent attack, when the omission was pointed out to him, upon so estimable an individual as Dr. Jeffreys, is quite unworthy of a member of our profession, and is certainly not justified by the tone of the remarks which were made by Dr. Scott, in giving the brief history of the introduction of the matico by Dr. Jeffreys, and which were rendered necessary by Dr. Lane's professed ignorance of, or imperfect ac-