After her admission, leeches and a belladonna plaster were applied, and she took Extr. Conii, gr. iij., three times a day, without relieving the pain at all.

On September 18th, it was determined to remove the tumour. A longitudinal incision was made over its seat, and on dividing the deep fascia, a hard gritty tumour was seen in the internal popliteal nerve, the nervous fibres passing over it in bands of unequal size, and thus enclosing it. On dividing the cellular cyst which enclosed it, the tumour was readily turned out. The patient was put to bed; considerable pain was felt in the wound, but that in the foot ceased shortly after the operation, some degree of numbness however remaining in the limb. She was ordered morphia at bed time.

On the 19th, there was considerable fever, and she took a saline aperient every four hours; as this did not act on the bowels, she had house medicine in the evening, which operated in the night.

On the 20th there were slight paroxysms of pain in the foot with some fever; the numbness however was much less. A slight attack of erysipelas made its appearance on the 25th, along the course of the posterior tibial nerve; but she soon began to improve, and the wound is now nearly healed, the pain in the foot having entirely disappeared.

On examining the tumour, it was found to be about the size of a small walnut, furrowed in one or two parts on the surface where the bands of nervous fibres passed over it. It weighs 228 grains, and is constituted of about two thirds phosphate and carbonate of lime, a trace of phosphate of iron, and a trace of sulphate of lime, with animal matter.

OBSERVATIONS ON THE INQUEST HELD ON THE LATE GENERAL DICK, AND ON THE CAUSE OF DEATH.

By GEORGE KING Esq., Surgeon, Bath.

The disinterment or exhumation of a human body is a subject at all times calculated to rouse the attention and feelings of the public, and to create a stir in the neighbourhood where it takes place. It is therefore not at all remarkable that the recent disinterment at the cemetery in the vicinity of Bath, of the body of the late Lieutenant-General Dick, should have become the general topic of conversation among the inhabitants of a city in which he had been for so many years a distinguished resident; and I can easily imagine that the exhumation of a body after such a lengthened interment, for the purpose of being inspected by a surgeon, and in the presence of a scientific chemist, under an order from the coroner, would produce some little excitement in the medical world, as well as in the minds of the public. Although the exhumation of a body seventeen months after its interment, and the posthumous inspection of it could be of very little use in a practical point of view to the medical practitioner, to the pathologist it must be a subject of the highest importance, and to the analytical chemist a matter of the greatest possible interest.

The peculiar circumstances connected with the death of the late General, the disinterment of the body, its examination by a surgeon, and the subsequent investigation at the coroner's inquest, are subjects that I think may legitimately be brought forward for dis-

cussion at a meeting of a medical society held in a city where these circumstances occurred, and justify my bringing the case before them this evening. Most of the members present have no doubt read the depositions of the servant and the medical evidence given at the inquest. Some may also have had an opportunity of witnessing the examination of the body, and consequently are enabled to form some idea as to the probable or real cause of death, and I hope they will give us the benefit of their opinions; for while we have the certificates of two physicians, ascribing the cause to serous apoplexy, and the verdict of the jury that the deceased had died from inflammation of the stomach and bowels, the doctors and the jury are at fault, and the question must still remain undecided. The jury, in my opinion, have proved themselves to be sensible, good and true men, possessing the power of perception, and judgment to use it, for they neither acted on the certificate of the physicians, nor on the directions of the coroner, but gave a verdict according to the evidence brought before them, which was, "that the brain was shrunk and reduced to a pulpy mass, still its anatomical parts admitted of demonstration; (how a brain reduced to a pulpy mass, which must have changed its structure, was to be anatomically demonstrated, I have yet to learn;) *no disease* could be detected; there was no effusion of blood; and the serum found in the ventricles was rather less than what would be found in a healthy brain. Death was not caused by sanguineous apoplexy; whether it was caused by serous apoplexy might be matter of opinion; there was no serous effusion." Here then, we have nothing in the evidence given by the medical gentlemen who had been requested by the coroner to examine the body to justify them, (the jury,) in returning a verdict, that serous apoplexy was or had been the cause of the General's death. On the contrary they had negative evidence that the physicians were wrong, and that the deceased had not died of serous apoplexy, as the medical witness did not feel himself in a position to say whether death might or might not have resulted from serous apoplexy. The jury were therefore, very naturally led to seek for some other cause, upon which they could find a verdict, and they as naturally hit upon the only one on which they had the slightest possible evidence to found their verdict—viz., "inflammation of the stomach and bowels, (and they very wisely added a codicil,) but how produced there is no evidence to show."

To justify such a verdict, they had ample evidence, for they were told by the medical witness, that the stomach externally presented a purplish red appearance, the vessels being very considerably congested in the duodenum and the small intestines. He found patches of inflammation an inch and a half or two inches in size, and also said there was inflammation enough to cause death.

From the presence of this eminent chemist, the inquest derived its principle importance; and his evidence went to prove that the abdominal viscera, and their contents, had been submitted to, and chemically examined by him, and no trace of poison could be detected; and he stated that there was inflammation in the stomach, and that the end of the œsophagus attached to the stomach was also inflamed. This was enough, I should say, to make an impression on the minds of the jury with such statements and evidence before them. I do not see that

twelve non-medical men could come to any other conclusion than they did.

But it is to be regretted, on account of the relatives, that such a verdict should have been given, as it is impossible that such an amount of inflammation, as stated, could have existed in any human being without some symptom having shown itself during life, however aged or torpid the subject might have been; and although it is in evidence that decomposition had not much advanced, and I admit the fresh and vascular appearance of the stomach and intestines at the first view, as I saw them, yet I fear that we are not sufficiently acquainted with morbid appearances, and the changes in structure that may take place seventeen months after death, to say that this was inflammation, as it would appear a day or two after death. We all know that a person may die from inflammation of the stomach and bowels, but not, I should say, without some manifestation of it, at least hours before death. I therefore, as the jury chose to differ with the physicians, and to treat their certificate with indifference, I choose also to differ with them, and to deny that inflammation of the stomach and bowels was the cause of death.

Having done this, I think I am bound in honour to the physicians, and in justice to the gentlemen of the jury, to state my reasons for giving such a positive denial. But before I do this, I will give a short history of the preparatory proceedings of this very important and interesting investigation.

We are told by the witnesses "that the abdominal viscera were removed with great care, and placed in a vessel, sealed, and delivered over to the custody of Mr. Herepath." Now the careful removal was this, after a ligature had been applied in the usual manner, in order to secure the contents of the stomach and bowels, the whole of the abdominal viscera were consigned to the vessel, which was a large narrow-mouthed stone jar; and here arose a difficulty, for it was found impossible to get so large a mass into the jar, and after divers turnings, twistings, pressings, and several ineffectual attempts to force the viscera into the vessel, it was given up, and a larger one was procured from the city, and the whole mass put into it, and handed over to the chemist, to be conveyed to Bristol, and there to undergo a careful and minute examination.

It is singular that the witnesses were not asked whether this pressing, cramming, and removal of such a delicate part of the human body as the stomach and intestines, which had already become partially decomposed, was at all calculated to assist them in detecting what had been the disease in these viscera during the life time of the subject, or to lead to the elucidation of the cause of death. For aught they knew, the result of this investigation might have implicated parties connected with the family of the deceased, and led to their being placed at the bar of a higher tribunal than the one from which they had received their authority, and there to answer and to account to a jury of their country for the appearances and discoveries made. Happily this has been averted by the verdict of the jury, and society spared the sight of such a spectacle.

One of the most extraordinary circumstances of this very extraordinary investigation is, that the contents of the cavity of the chest or thoracic viscera should have been passed over so slightly, and so few questions put to the witnesses relating to them. In this cavity is

situated one of the most important organs of the human frame—the heart; the very fountain of life, and the source of vitality, the extinction of which is the sole object of this inquiry. As rupture and other affections of the heart are so frequently supposed to be the cause of sudden death, the most minute inspection of it and its appendages should have taken place *then and there*. We are told that on the right side of the cavity of the chest there was found about half an ounce of bloody serum. Now, if seventeen months after death half an ounce of serum could be found there, it is not at all improbable there might have been half a pound at the time of death. We are also told there was no congested blood found. In the pericardium fresh blood was found, which had not lost its colouring matter; this no doubt was the remains of what had filled it the moment before death. After much evidence, I must confess I am surprised that another question should have been asked as to the cause of sudden death. The fact is, that the moment the thoracic viscera were exposed to view, this *semi-fluid* substance, or what is called by the witness fresh blood, was to be seen in the region of the heart; and all present seemed most anxious to ascertain from whence it arose, and concluded that it had been the cause of death. After it had been removed by the sponge, Mr. Barrett wished to trace its origin or source, but not being provided with a probe, he could not proceed; I handed him one from my pocket case, with which search was made, but no trace of it could be discovered, and it was presumed that the blood had escaped from a hole which had been made in the pulmonary vein, during the dissection. I cannot bring my mind to believe that blood would escape from the pulmonary vein or any other blood-vessel of a body that had been buried seventeen months, let the orifice or hole be made ever so large. Having proof of the existence of bloody serum in the cavity of the chest, and fresh blood being found in the pericardium seventeen months after death, I think we need not be at a loss for the cause of syncope and death of an old gentleman eighty years of age.

I have no other object in view in bringing this subject and statement of facts before the Association than to ascertain whether, after hearing them, their opinion is in accordance with my own—that is, that the seat of the affection which caused the sudden death of the late General Dick was not in the cranium, nor in the abdominal cavity, but in the thorax. Should this be the result of our discussion, it will no doubt satisfy the public mind, relieve the relatives from a stigma reflected on them by the verdict of the jury, and I hope will bring the conviction that our respected citizen, died from causes over which no human power could have had any control.

These remarks were written for the purpose of being read at the meeting of the Bath and Bristol Branch of the Provincial Medical and Surgical Association, which was held in Bath, on Thursday evening, the 25th of September, the first meeting since the occurrence took place; but Dr. Blackmore having read a paper on the same subject, the present communication was withdrawn. Should you consider it of sufficient public interest for our Journal, you will oblige me by inserting it.

I am, Sir, your obedient servant,

Bath, Oct. 2, 1845.

GEORGE KING.