

DR. VON IFFLAND ON INJURIES OF THE HEAD.

TO THE EDITORS OF THE MONTREAL MEDICAL GAZETTE.

GENTLEMEN,—The notes of the *post mortem examination* of the cases, contained in the enclosed sheets, having been taken on paper detached from that descriptive of them, I cannot, after the most diligent search, trace their place of *safe deposit*; but as the skulls are in the possession of Dr. James Douglas, I have this day directed his attention to the subject, and I have every reason to believe that he will seize the earliest opportunity of placing at your disposal an accurate exposé of the bones found fractured in their bases.

Should, however, the desired information not be received in time for subjoining it to the cases, and for appearance, *in whole*, in the June number of the *Gazette*, the conclusion may be deferred to the succeeding one,—long before the publication of which, it is more than probable, that Dr. D. will also put me in possession of such additional observations, as may form the subject of another article.

Our communications through the mail in this section, are not, I may add, very favourable to despatch.

I have the honour to be, Gentlemen,

Truly, your devoted and faithful servant,

A. VON IFFLAND, M. D.

Yamaska, (near Sorel,) 17th May, 1844.

There is no subject, from its importance and interest, within the extensive range of Surgery, which has more engaged the attention and labour of eminent and experienced Surgeons, than *injuries of the head*—injuries, not only involving the greatest obscurity and uncertainty in their diagnosis, but the sacrifice of human life. It is, however, to injuries lying entirely beyond the reach of surgical relief, that I now intend to submit two cases, which, in their nature and result, completely controvert the generally received opinion, that *fractures of the basis of the skull are universally fatal*. These, I must admit, are not of a class upon which discoveries, after death, might have placed the Surgeon in a position to save life; but such alone as afford proofs, that *non-interference*, on his part, ought not always to be reprobated, but may also be sanctioned by the result of experience.

I am well aware, that where nothing surgically can be added to the hazard of life, already perilled by certain accidents, nothing can justify the omission of such means as may bear the least probability of advantage or success, when accurate, distinctive marks invite the eye and hand of the skilful operator. Yet, in the absence of these guides, and when I seriously balance the injuries so often inflicted, and con-